The Trick is to Keep Breathing

Janice Galloway
The Trick is to Keep Breathing

by Janice Galloway

Higher Scottish Set Text
A Teaching Resource

This combined resource is a combination of work done by CEC (J Tindall) and the Education Scotland resources published on the text.

Text Information
Genre: Prose
Focus text: The Trick is to Keep Breathing
Author: Janice Galloway
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Introduction to the materials

How to use these resources

These resources offer staff routes into analysing and discussing Janice Galloway’s novel *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* with their learners. The tasks are focused on fostering learner engagement and active learning.

Staff may choose to break the novel down into sections, stopping along the way to study each part in detail. A suggested breakdown is included within these materials. To this end, some activities have been included that allow learners to ‘study as they go’, particularly for the opening section of the novel. Alternatively, staff may direct learners to read the whole novel before commencing study. This choice will be determined by staff knowledge of their learners’ needs and abilities. The learning activities found towards the end of the materials will probably be tackled more effectively after learners have read the entire novel.

Each learning activity in this resource includes an outline of what is to be learned, in terms of skills and content, as well as a possible approach to how learning could be facilitated by staff. In most cases, the suggested approach involves learners working with others to achieve their learning objective, but staff should bear in mind that this is only one possible approach to the task. Based on their knowledge of the class that they are working with, staff should decide whether the learning objectives are best achieved through independent working, pair work or group work.

A short outline of the co-operative learning strategies referred to throughout these materials is included below.

The content of the resources is designed to support learners with the following aspects of the Higher English course.

Critical reading practice

Critical reading practice questions, which are focused on selected passages from the text, have been included to help learners to consolidate their learning and to practice exam skills for the critical reading paper, section 1.

Critical essay preparation

In the event that learners are studying more than one of the Scottish set texts they may consider, with the guidance of staff, using the novel to answer one of the critical essay questions in section 2 of the critical reading paper. Sample critical essay questions have been included for staff who wish to practise essay writing with their learners.
Writing folio

The novel deals with some hard-hitting themes and could be used as a stimulus for discursive or creative writing.

Group discussion

Every learning activity in these materials can be used as an opportunity for learners to practise and refine their group discussion skills. Where possible, suggestions have been included as to how staff might use co-operative learning techniques to structure and support group discussion activities. Staff can decide when it is appropriate to use larger groups or pairs. It is also advisable that learners conduct preparation and follow-up work individually in order to clarify and consolidate their own thinking. It is important that staff have a clear idea of their expectations of what learners should achieve by the end of each activity. This will enable them to offer appropriate support to learners as they make their way through the activities.

Staff might consider building opportunities for self and peer assessment into larger group discussion tasks to help prepare learners for internal assessment of their talking skills.

Listening

One of the introductory tasks in these materials requires learners to listen to a spoken text in order to gain more background information about the novel and the author. These activities are a great opportunity for staff to discuss listening skills with learners. Staff might also consider building opportunities for self or peer assessment into these tasks to help prepare learners for internal assessment of listening.

Co-operative learning strategies

Below is a list of suggested co-operative learning strategies that could be used in the learning and teaching of this novel. As suggested above, these could allow for naturally occurring informal assessment of talking and listening. Some of these can be used in combination as part of the same task:

- think, pair, share
- clock partners
- paired reading
- placement
- three stray, one stay
- expert gallery tour
- graffiti.

Think, pair, share

- Staff pose a question/problem or learners are given a task to do individually.
Learners share their responses with their shoulder partner (i.e. the person sitting to either their left or their right).
They then have the opportunity to share their responses with their face partner (i.e. the person opposite).

**Benefits:** Widens discussion and allows learners to benefit from each others’ ideas.

### Clock partners

- This can be used as an extension of or as a version of think, pair, share.
- Learners are given a slip of paper with a blank clock face on it.
- There are boxes at 12, 3, 6 and 9 o’clock.
- Before a task begins, learners should circulate the room and make dates for each of these times with different people, putting their names in the appropriate boxes.
- Learners will share their ideas or their original group’s ideas with each new person.

**Benefits:** Mixes things up in terms of learners talking to people outside their normal group and allows them to get up and walk around the room.
Paired reading

- Both learners in a pair read a section of text.
- Person A summarises the content to person B.
- The learners discuss the content.
- They then move on to the next section but this time person B is responsible for summarising.
- They continue until the passage has been read.

Benefits: Highlights the importance of reading through a passage carefully and allows learners to check their understanding with each other.

Placement

- Each team is given a piece of paper that has been divided up, giving each learner their own writing space (A3 probably works best).
- There is also an area of common writing space in the middle.
- Each learner writes down their own ideas/response to the posed question without discussion with others.
- Learners then share their ideas with each other and decide on a common response.
- The team response is placed in the middle of the sheet in the common area.

Benefits: Encourages co-operation and considered discussion of ideas. In a practical sense, a good way of recording ideas and allowing learners to see how they have come together to form one response.

Three stray, one stay

- Three learners from a team rotate to other teams in the room.
- Learner 1 moves on one place, learner 2 moves two places and so on.
- The fourth learner stays behind at their team’s table to present the team’s response to the visiting classmates.
- The other three learners return and explain what was learned to teammates.
- The process begins again with a different learner staying behind until all learners have been able to present.

Benefits: Ensures thorough understanding of content of task by all members and develops presentation and listening skills.
Expert gallery tour

- Learners have to work in teams of four.
- Team members should be numbered 1–4.
- The class should be divided into groups with all the 1s together, 2s together etc.
- These new groups move from project to project with each learner explaining his/her team’s project when the group is at the appropriate project.
- Learners can peer assess and give feedback to each other.

Benefits: Allows for use of AifL strategies (peer and self-assessment) and allows every learner in the class the opportunity to present to others but in an intimate group rather than in front of the whole class.

Graffiti

- Each group is given a piece of A3 paper with a heading on it, e.g. name of character, theme etc.
- Learners are then given a short period of time (a few minutes) to individually jot down ideas, key words etc., associated with that thing.
- They must not spend time reading what others have written – the time allocated is for writing only.
- The sheets are then passed on to the next group who add their ideas, again without reading.
- When the sheets have been round all groups, they should be returned to the group they started off with.
- Learners in each group should read through their graffiti sheets, deleting duplicated ideas.
- Each group then gets a new sheet and collates the ideas from all groups.
- These can then be fed back to the class and photocopied as handouts.

Benefits: A quick, simple way of allowing learners to get their thoughts down on paper quietly, which acts as think time before sharing their ideas. If you want to monitor who has contributed what, learners can be given different colours of pen so you can see what each individual has come up with and ensure that everyone has participated fully in the task.

(Ed Scot)
Janice Galloway “The Trick is to Keep Breathing”

Style / Form of the novel

“The Trick is to Keep Breathing” adopts a diary style first person narration, allowing the reader to form a close relationship with the main character, Joy Stone. Structurally we are allowed access to both the private and public life, with reflections into the past written in italics, and the present recorded in normal typography.

Whilst the narrative adopts the appearance of a stream of consciousness style narration, it is in fact carefully contrived and mediated by Galloway, this is evident in the carefully constructed syntax, and often provocatively humorous yet politically charged anecdotes. Galloway’s authorial presence is felt through Joy’s narration.

Main Character: Joy Stone

Joy Stone is a teacher who after the accidental drowning of her partner, whilst on holiday experiences a complete nervous breakdown. Through the process of grief, Galloway examines the position of women and the roles they are required to adopt, and offers a critique of the traditional treatment of women. The opening sentence of the novel sets the tone of alienation which runs throughout, “I watch myself from the corner of the room.” There is a sense of disembodiment, and analytical distance which is maintained, though we sympathise with Joy’s situation we remain as observers to another’s obscure pain. Joy herself though severely depressed is scarcely emotional, her distress and pain is recorded with an almost aloof coldness, we do not witness the extremes of emotion she occasionally mentions, such as the mark on the wall where she once threw a glass, and the times that she reports screaming with David. It is hard to imagine Joy possessed by such wild passions, this perhaps is because she has become too disembodied, and she is experiencing a complete loss of identity.

In part, this loss of identity could be derived from Joy having no place to grieve for Michael. She is not his mother - wife - sister or daughter, she is simply his mistress, which has connotations akin to being a prostitute. She has no real place in society, her parents are dead, and she is no one’s daughter, no one’s wife mother or even girlfriend. Her job is the place where she earns her definition, however she is treated at work like a little girl, asked to smile and appear happy for the benefit of the other staff, to ease their working day.

Surviving

Part of her illness is that she has stopped ‘behaving’ and refuses to be pliant and obedient, the desired state if any women. This is demonstrated through the dialogue style interactions she reproduces, which appear like scenes from a drama. Most of these interactions occur between Joy and a male, be it a doctor, psychiatrist or boss. Her refusal to
assume the desired role demonstrates her disengagement with societal norms. Galloway’s authorial presence is felt in these sometimes humorous sometimes despairing interactions.

Galloway offers a close examination of the ritualistic norms expected of women, the preparation of tea for the health visitor requires a lot of effort, but as Joy notes "it's a set routine so I don’t need to think. It just uses my body and runs itself," the whole process is so expected, it has become ingrained and internalised. The house must be scrubbed thoroughly "until my hands are swollen from cold water" then the biscuits must be carefully selected and bought and tastefully arranged, and afterwards are thrown out, no longer useful.

Joy also engages in a lengthy bathing ritual, akin to a religious cleansing, the dirt and sin scrubbed away, once a blank canvas she repaints herself with makeup, drawing on the smile, and colouring in the eyes, until she feels she is acceptable for male eyes. Though the work and effort behind such preparations is kept secret, and taken for granted by the world. As Joy notes towards the end of the novel, "neat phrases hide hard work' here expectation hides hard work.

In this novel Joy is stripped of everything, stripped of all normal sustenance, Galloway notes that she wished to examine what would keep this woman getting out of bed every day, it is because there is no other choice, we have to take what small pittance there is on offer and build on it. This, Galloway believes is heroism, what makes human beings great. This is an essentially feminist take on greatness, the examination and appreciation of the purportedly small actions which make life.

Joy emerges at the end of the novel as a women on her way to regaining her identity. This occurs when she adopts the pen, and begins to nurture herself, finding her own voice and using it.
Introduction

The use of a stream of consciousness narrative in the novel *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* prevents the text from presenting itself in obvious chapters or sections. Therefore, the resource does not present itself in a chronological order. Instead, it takes the learner through a number of techniques which can be addressed as and when the teacher/lecturer feels it suitable.

The techniques covered here include:

- Characterisation
- Theme
- Narrative Structure
- Typography
- Symbolism
- Imagery

The aim of this resource is to exemplify approaches to learning and teaching which will develop the skills sampled by the final assessment – Critical Reading, Part 2.

Learners are developing the skills they have acquired in understanding, analysis and evaluation, applying them as they respond critically to an imaginative Scottish text (prose, poetry or drama) they have studied.

In the external assessment, Critical Reading, learners will complete questions which analyse ONE of the texts/extracts presented and draw on the wider knowledge of the text and/or writer in order to evaluate its impact. There will be a mixture of restricted response questions requiring short answers and extended responses. Twenty marks are allocated to this task.

Further information about the assessment is available via the link below:


**Working with these materials will develop learners’ skills in:**

- **Understanding of the context of the text** (what the writer says)
- **Analysis of the techniques used** (how the writer says it)
- **Evaluation of the effectiveness/impact of the text** (how well, in the learner’s opinion, the writer has explored the topic/achieved his/her purpose)

Learners will have regular opportunities to assess their progress.


INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT

Links to close reading

These materials link to the following areas of close reading:

- understanding texts – information, theme, character and narrative
- summarising main points
- analysing word choice
- analysing language style
- deconstructing imagery
- explaining the effect of sentence structure.

Links to writing folio

Throughout these materials opportunities for creative or discursive writing will be highlighted, enabling practitioners to provide stimuli for folio writing pieces.

Learners may want to replicate the writer’s use of certain language techniques in their own creative writing. When giving feedback on creative writing, practitioners may highlight specific sections of the novel to model certain effects/techniques.

Note-taking

Learners should be encouraged to annotate texts or take notes using:

- notes in margins
- highlighters
- sticky notes
- mind maps

Practitioners could model the annotation process early on in the unit of work by reading a page aloud and pausing to highlight words/phrases/sentences of interest. Learners take notes at the same time. A projected image or photocopy of the practitioner’s written notes would also be useful in modelling the annotation process. Individually, learners continue to annotate the following pages before comparing notes with a partner.

Well-organised, high-quality notes made whilst learners are studying the texts should make revision at exam time more straightforward.
Pre-Reading

It may be advantageous to introduce the learners to some basic biographical information about the author, Janice Galloway. The power point provided as part of this resource should help with this introduction.

It may also help if the students are introduced to some of the difficult concepts surrounding death, loss and bereavement and mental health support before they begin reading the novel. Below is a list of websites which may be useful:

NHS Choices – Bereavement and Young People  
(http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/bereavement/Pages/young-people-bereavement.aspx)

RDFU – Cruse Bereavement Care  
(http://www.rd4u.org.uk/)

MIND – for Mental Health  
(http://www.mind.org.uk/)

Possible Writing Tasks:

Some of these themes/issues could lead to some interesting writing tasks for the writing folio or Creation and Production Outcome 1 assessment. For example:

There is not enough provision to support the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Discuss.

How has the loss of a loved one had an impact on you?

Do schools do enough to support healthy choices?
Before You Begin Reading

Discussion activity:
Titles of texts can reveal a great deal to the reader before they even begin to read them. This title obviously suggests a number of things to us – we are almost being offered some form of advice here.

Take five minutes with a partner to discuss the title. What possible advice are we being offered? When would we find ourselves not breathing? Or forgetting to breathe? Or having trouble breathing? When would we find ourselves being reminded to breathe?

Feedback your ideas/suggestions to the rest of the class.

What do you think we are being told about this novel from this title alone?

Listening activity:
Once you have spent some time thinking about all the possible connotations being offered by the title of the novel itself listen to the song “The Trick is To Keep Breathing” by the Scottish band, Garbage. This song was released in 1997 and was inspired by Galloway’s novel. When asked about the song and its meaning, Shirley Manson (the band’s lead singer and songwriter) said:

““It’s that general feeling of just keep pushing and you’ll get through it. I think everybody can connect with that feeling”.

Task:
Listen to the song and think about the mood that is created.

How would you describe it?

How has this mood been created?

Now listen to it with the lyrics in front of you.

Prediction:

Having read the lyrics and listened to the music what do you expect from this novel? What themes do you think may be conveyed? What sorts of problems/situations could the main character(s) be facing? Explain your answers.

Once you have finished reading the novel you should return to your initial thoughts and see if your predictions were accurate.
“The Trick is To Keep Breathing” by Garbage

She's not the kind of girl
Who likes to tell the world
About the way she feels about herself

She takes a little time
In making up her mind
She doesn't want to fight against the tide

Lately I'm not the only one
I say never trust anyone
Always the one who has to drag her down
Maybe you'll get what you want this time around

Can't bear to face the truth
So sick, he cannot move
And when it hurts he takes it out on you

And lately I'm not the only one
I say never trust anyone
Always the one who has to drag her down
Maybe you'll get what you want this time around

The trick is to keep breathing
The trick is to keep breathing

She knows the human heart
And how to read the stars
Now everything's about to fall apart

I won't be the one who's going to let you down
Maybe you'll get what you want this time around
(The trick is to keep breathing)

I won't be the one who's going to let you down
(The trick is to keep breathing)
Maybe you'll get what you want this time around

The trick is to keep breathing (x7)

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBz8iXdddqY)
**The First Page:**

*I can’t remember the last week with any clarity.*

*I want to be able to remember it because it was the last time anything was in any way unremarkable. Eating and drinking routinely, sleeping when I wanted to. It would be nice to remember but I don’t.*

*Now I remember everything all the time. You never know what you might need to recollect later, when the significance of the moment might appear. They never give you any warning.*

*They never give you any warning.*

**Paired discussion:**

This is the very first page of the novel. Before you read any further discuss the following. One of you should take notes and be prepared to feed back to the rest of the class:

1. What do you think the narrator is trying to explain here? Why?
2. What tone do you think is being conveyed here? Explain how you have reached your conclusions.
3. Does anything seem interesting about the sentence structure here?
4. Why open the novel in this way? What do you think it is telling us about what is to come?
Introduction to the text

Background and context

Janice Galloway – a brief biography

Janice Galloway is a leading Scottish novelist of her generation. Her novel *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* was recently voted one of the ten best Scottish novels of the last 50 years. She was born in 1955 in Saltcoats, Ayrshire. *This is not about me* is a memoir of her childhood up to the last year of primary school, and *All Made Up* tells of her teenage years. After Glasgow University, Galloway taught for ten years before being encouraged to pursue a writing career.

The novels and short stories of Janice Galloway have won many awards. She is recognised as one of the most inventive and talented writers living and working in Great Britain, and she has published novels, short stories, prose-poetry, non-fiction and libretti.

Janice Galloway’s official website might also be of interest: http://www.galloway.1to1.org/Janice_Galloway_Official_site/Start.html

Pre-reading task

*The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, published in 1989, and was Janice Galloway’s first novel. In order to gain a better understanding of the novel and its narrator, Joy Stone, it may be helpful for learners to listen/watch and take notes from the website below, which features an interview with Janice Galloway:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=wevwlgS8KfE

Learners should watch this interview, making notes under the following headings:

- biographical details
- process of writing
- author’s view of Joy Stone
- use of typographical features
- narrative techniques.

The notes could be used to write a short report (approximately 400 words) on Janice Galloway and her view of the writing process, especially in relation to this text.
Understanding Joy’s story

The timeline on the following page can be used as a guide for staff and learners as they make their way through the activities. It can be referred to in order to provide a basic context for the analytical activities that follow. Some of these activities require learners to re-read specific extracts from the novel while others demand that learners draw conclusions from evidence occurring across the range of the whole text.

Please note that the same page references are used to divide the novel into sections for some of the activities that feature in these materials.
Timeline for the novel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page reference</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pages 6–57</td>
<td>We meet Joy in the early stages of her breakdown. The timespan of this section runs from a Wednesday night to a Monday morning. During this time we spend a lot of time alone with Joy in her house (which is actually the rented house of her dead lover, Michael). However, she also goes to work as a teacher; has an appointment in the house with a health visitor; visits Ellen (her best friend’s mother) and goes to her Saturday job at a bookmakers. She receives a visit from an unnamed lover, who never returns to the story again. When she is alone she spends a lot of time thinking about the past and the present. She experiences vivid flashbacks to the time of Michael’s death, which are laid out in italics. At the end of this section, Joy goes to an appointment with her GP, Dr Stead, who discusses her prescription, the health visitor and her awaited referral to Foresthouse, a psychiatric hospital.</td>
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<tr>
<td>57–72</td>
<td>Joy’s much older sister Myra visits. This is the only occasion in the novel that we meet her. We gather that Myra has her own issues with her mental health. She was pregnant at the same time that her mother was pregnant with Joy but she lost her child. As Joy was growing up Myra abused her physically and mentally. Joy is afraid of Myra and even tries to call her ex-fiancé, Paul, to appeal for help. Paul does not offer much help, and Joy and Myra end up spending the evening talking and getting drunk together.</td>
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<tr>
<td>72–101</td>
<td>Things start to deteriorate in Joy’s job at school. The head teacher speaks to her, concerned that she wrote an inappropriate letter to the minister following a memorial service for Michael. Joy stops going to school and her state of mind worsens. She visits Ellen, looking for comfort. Ellen offers company and food, which Joy deliberately vomits into the toilet. Her physical health worsens too, she is losing weight, her gums are bleeding and her nails are flaking. She attempts to visit Ellen again but doesn’t quite make it. Her boss Tony takes her out on a date to the dog track. She avoids inviting him into her house afterwards. In the morning she wakes up disoriented, a glass smashed in her bathroom, and finds that her referral to Foresthouse has finally arrived.</td>
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<tr>
<td>101–128</td>
<td>Joy goes to Foresthouse for a consultation. After talking with various friends she decides to go in to stay there for a while. In a rather difficult conversation, she tells the full story of her illness to a doctor. We don’t hear all of the details but it begins with her own mother’s attempted suicide and ends with Michael’s drowning. When she returns to stay at the hospital she ends up going through this whole introductory process again with a nurse and then with another doctor. When she takes her place on the ward, time passes slowly and it isn’t really clear what the routines and procedures of the wards are supposed to be. Joy asks to speak to another doctor, who ends up treating her quite flippantly, leaving her in the dark as to what her treatment on the ward is meant to be. She gets to know some of the other patients and health workers, attending a</td>
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<td><strong>INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Halloween party and a ward meeting. After a week she gets a pass to go home for the weekend.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>128–138</strong> During her short stay at home Joy goes to work at the bookies and visits Ellen. We find out about her relationship with David. David is 19 and a former pupil of Joy's school. She had an affair with him while she was still with Paul and has had a casual relationship with him ever since. After Michael's death, David visits Joy to be supportive and their meetings usually end in sex. David visits Joy while she is spending the weekend at home to find out how she is. He offers to visit her in hospital. This encounter does not end in sex although it seems that Joy was hoping that it would.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>138–172</strong> Joy returns to Foresthouse but the lack of structure and routine continues to bother her. She keeps a diary marking events as they pass. She sees a gynaecologist who discusses the possibility with her that she might be pregnant. David comes to visit her but she doesn’t mention this to him. Later an ultrasound confirms that she isn’t. She tries to avoid getting to know people but find herself more and more involved in the ward community, taking part in occupational therapy and getting to know the staff and patients. During another brief visit home she receives a letter from Marianne and goes to the bookies. Joy establishes a weekend routine which involves work and meeting up with David. Their physical relationship resumes, though Joy realises that it needs to stop. An evening out planned for the patients on the ward causes Joy a lot of anxiety. She has another upsetting appointment with one of the doctors (‘Doctor Three’) during which she confronts him asking what sort of treatments she should expect to receive. She is given no satisfactory answer and this puts her further on edge before the ward outing. Following the evening out, another doctor hands Joy a book called <em>Courage and Bereavement</em>, which she reads, causing her further anguish.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>172–178</strong> During one weekend at home Joy agrees to go on a date with Tony, reasoning that she shouldn’t bother David while he is doing exams and that she should accept Tony’s kindness at face value. The date ends with Joy giving in to Tony and having sex with him. The encounter is extremely unpleasant and disturbing, and Joy ends up crying uncontrollably. Tony offers very little comfort. The next day Joy feels for the first time that she would prefer to be at Foresthouse.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Page Range</td>
<td>Textual Content</td>
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<td>------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>177–188</td>
<td>On returning to Foresthouse, Joy seems more integrated into life there, receiving visitors, talking with health workers and other patients. The ward is changing, however, because some patients are being discharged in the lead up to Christmas. She experiences a really distressing episode whilst vomiting up her supper one night. At this point she experiences a flashback to the exact moment that she discovered that Michael was dead. She is escorted back to her bed. Still in distress, she searches for some pills that she has been stockpiling but they have been taken away. Eventually she is sedated by a nurse.</td>
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<tr>
<td>189–216</td>
<td>Joy returns home for a long weekend this time. It is her birthday. She spends a lot of time with some difficult memories: of the night that Michael left his wife and of the day that Michael died. She reflects on the history of depression throughout the female line of her family. She has decided to commit suicide by taking an overdose of paracetemol but is rescued from this fate by David. A visit to Ellen after that ends up with her spending the night in Marianne’s old bedroom. After that Joy continues to go to work at the bookies but rejects Tony’s advances. She is more assertive when he calls her in the middle of the night asking if he can come round. Joy’s most recent italicised flashback takes the form of a fantasy or dream where she imagines that she is walking with Michael towards his grave. He disappears into nothing at the end of it. Paul comes to visit, delivering to her the last of the items that were left behind in Spain. Joy confronts Paul about the awkwardness between them and the state of their friendship. The scene ends with her screaming at the top of her lungs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>216–217</td>
<td>Joy returns to the cottage for the first time in order to start tidying up.</td>
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<tr>
<td>218–227</td>
<td>Joy goes back to Foresthouse for a final stretch. She can be observed being more open and more giving towards the other people around her. A colleague from school visits her and she seems less self-involved and more interested in what he has to say. She continues to have flashbacks/fantasies. The last one seems like she is saying a goodbye to Michael.</td>
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<tr>
<td>228–235</td>
<td>Joy returns to Michael’s house for Christmas. There is both a feeling of hope for her future and a sense that there is still work to be done. She cheers up her surroundings with Christmas lights and turns the heating on rather than letting herself get cold in the front room. Her final flashback revisits the last moments that she spent with Michael alive, leading up to the moment that he walks off to the swimming pool. Alone with her thoughts again, Joy is more positive and looks to the future. She resolves that she will learn to swim.</td>
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The opening of the novel

Read the opening pages of the novel from ‘I can’t remember …’ (page 6) to ‘... takes a long time’ (page 8).

**Page 6**

1. Why does the narrator wish to remember the last week?
2. What might be considered odd in these opening ten lines?

**Page 7**

3. What is unusual about the opening sentence?
4. Choose two details from the description of the room and explain how they contribute to our first impressions of the narrator.
5. By referring to the third paragraph, describe how the writer creates a sense of urgency.

**Page 8**

6. Discuss the extent to which you feel the writer has been successful in conveying a vivid sense of the narrator. You should refer closely to the writer’s style and techniques in the first two paragraphs.
7. By referring to the final paragraph, explain how the writer creates a negative impression of the narrator’s situation.
Suggested answers

What follows are simply suggestions and by no means exhaustive; learners may come up with other answers, which should be judged on their merits.

1. It was the last time things were ordinary/normal and her life was following an everyday routine.

2. The narrator appears to contradict herself. There is even at this very early stage some evidence of the narrator’s conflicted state of mind: on the one hand, she tells us ‘I can’t remember’, on the other hand, she says ‘Now I remember everything all the time.’

3. The content is strange – we do not normally watch ourselves. The layout on the page is strange with the gap between ‘room’ and ‘sitting’ which starts to create the narrator’s sense of alienation.

4. Possible answers include (two should be chosen):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The room is in darkness (apart from moonlight)</th>
<th>Joy cannot face the emptiness of the room when the light is on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequacy of the curtains</td>
<td>Joy lacks the drive to change them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glowing furniture compared to ‘bits of sunk ship rising out of the wash of green’/carpet – ‘Now it looks like seaweed’/‘black patch. Liquid black. Still wet.’</td>
<td>First example of water imagery, which will recur throughout the text and remind the reader of Joy’s constant thoughts of Michael’s accident (not a possible answer for learners on first reading)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. 
- The precise time is given – 03.25.
- The use of the verb ‘flash’ suggests the sudden and short-lived nature of the time display.
- The writer’s use of a series of short sentences adds to the sense of haste and time running out for the narrator if she is to sleep before rising for work.
- ‘The fact remains it’s so late it’s early ...’ wry juxtaposition of ‘late’ and ‘early’ which make the narrator’s decision to go to bed all the more pressing.
- Repetition of ‘I have to’

6. While it is possible for learners to argue that the writer has been unsuccessful, it will be more a more fruitful line of argument to discuss the writer’s success in conveying a vivid sense of the narrator.
• Simplicity of the opening – ‘I have to concentrate’ suggests the narrator’s difficulty in achieving the simplest movement.
• ‘one finger at a time’ indicates that the tiniest movement has to be thought through by the narrator – there seems to be no possibility of unconscious action.
• Use of present participles and gerundives (‘releasing’, ‘rebalancing’, ‘tilting’, ‘adjusting’, ‘redistributing’) suggests that nothing is fixed or settled for the narrator – everything is in a state of flux or change.
• ‘Hands are bastards’ suggests the narrator’s frustration and anger at what she perceives to be her physical frailty.
• Lack of a finite verb in the sentence beginning ‘The muscles in the thighs …’ suggests the ongoing effort which each action takes.
• ‘Square window …’ shows that the narrator observes every single detail on the way to bed.
• Use of personal pronoun ‘you’ at this point draws the reader in and encourages us to identify with her.
• The narrator’s tactic of either ascending very quickly or feeling the need to count the individual stairs suggests an almost superstitious view of a simple physical action and hints at an obsessive aspect of her personality.
• ‘haul’ and ‘rope’ suggest the enormous physical effort which the narrator must make simply to climb the stairs.
• ‘oose’ suggests water again (as in question 4) and there is a sinister quality to the phrases ‘strings of oose’ and ‘waving ghost arms’. The narrator is unable to shake off thoughts of the nature of the recent tragedy in her life.

7. Possible answers which convey a negative impression of the narrator’s situation:
• ‘Five doors’ might suggest a range of options, but all the doors are ‘closed’ – the narrator appears to have no choice in her situation.
• There is an eerie quality to the ‘rattling and tapping’ which suggests fear being aroused in the narrator.
• The narrator cannot even bear to look at her own reflection in the bathroom mirror.

Use of ‘slice’ and ‘cardboard’ suggest that the narrator does not see herself as human. The narrator is desperate for change as indicated by ‘checking for a change in the sky’.

While listening for the birds would appear a positive sign, the narrative is sufficiently realistic to admit: ‘It always takes a long time.’
Opening of the novel (pgs 6-29)

Once you have read the opening of the novel stop and think about what we have already discovered about the main character and Galloway’s stylistic devices.

Questions to consider:

PLOT

1. Explain how the part of the narrative presented in italics allows the reader to piece together the details of the events leading up to Joy’s present state of mind. Why has this part of Joy’s story been presented in this way?

2. Why does Joy reveal gradually, indirectly and almost unwillingly the cause of her depression?

CHARACTERISATION AND TONE

Introducing Joy’s character

The aim of this task is for you to begin to understand the complexity of Joy’s character. Having read the first section of the novel, up to the end of page 57, consider to what extent the following character traits apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Disagree strongly</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>humorous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analytical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obsessive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pessimistic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intelligent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controlling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out of control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has a warped perception of people and situation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of the traits you think DO apply to Joy, find evidence to support your ideas from your reading so far. This could be tackled in pairs or groups. If you think there are traits that should be added to the list, include them, with evidence, in your notes.

If you think any of the traits DO NOT apply to Joy, explain (in some detail) why you think that.

It will be helpful to return attention to these notes later in the study of the novel when attempting tasks on setting and narrative techniques.
Introduction to Galloway’s narrative techniques

Not only is the first person narrative structure critical to a deep understanding of the text, the range of unconventional typographical features are a key factor in analysing the text. Joy’s narrative is not linear or chronological. In fact, when you first encounter it, you will probably find it chaotic and challenging to follow. You might feel that there is no discernible ‘story’.

Galloway breaks with convention from the opening pages of the novel in a number of ways by italicising parts of the narrative, playing with the layout of text on the page and including annotations in the margin, amongst others. In general, the fractured nature of the narrative style echoes the fractured nature of Joy’s state of mind.

In the early stages of reading, you should explore this range of narrative techniques, if only to appreciate how many different ones there are and to begin to analyse how effective they are.

A full guide to a range of Galloway’s narrative techniques can be found here.

‘I am the problem’ and
‘I throw the cup in the bin in case the person it cuts is not me’ and
‘I tell lies all the time’.

1. Identify the tone. What do these utterances suggest about Joy’s state of mind?

2. ‘This Is The Way Things Are’ and ‘You Always Expect Too Much’.
   Who is saying these words? Why are they presented in capital letters?

3. Consider Joy’s TONE when she says of her workplace, ‘This is where I earn my definition’.

4. What does this suggest about her attitude to:
   • Her job
   • Herself?

5. Find other examples of wit, irony or a sardonic, self-deprecating TONE.

6. What effect has depression had on Joy physically?
   (Consider the ritual of the meeting with the health visitor and the utterances: ‘I can’t be trusted with custard creams’, ‘Handling mealtimes is a problem’ and ‘Unless I’ve eaten the night before’.)

7. Joy Stone: is this name ironic?
TYPOGRAPHY
The writer presents the thoughts and feelings of Joy using a stream of consciousness technique. The actual thoughts of the character are presented visually on the page. Later in the novel for example, details of her lover’s death appear in the margins, perhaps to suggest that these are thoughts Joy wishes to ignore or suppress.

Consider the effect of the following typographical techniques. In each case, try to suggest how they help convey the workings of Joy’s mind:

- Lists
- Thought balloons
- Signs
- Scripts.

One of the most interesting typographical techniques is the repeated ‘OOO’ marker which punctuates Joy’s narrative throughout the novel. What might these “O”s represent?

(CLUES: Look at the scenes in italics recounting Michael’s death. Remember that Joy thinks very little of herself…)

Read pages 9–40, making brief notes of the variety of typographical and narrative techniques used by Janice Galloway in her presentation of the narrator and her situation.

Possible notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Plot/character development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Page 9 Use of italics</td>
<td>Recalling Michael and the accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 10 Diary entry</td>
<td>Joy seeks to keep track of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 11/page 17 Note to self</td>
<td>Phone Dr Stead/health visitor 12.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 11 School sign squint</td>
<td>Joy’s desire for order/work defines her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 12 Numbered list</td>
<td>Joy’s attempt to understand exactly what she does</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 14 Visual representation of the house number and the marks left</td>
<td>Joy’s almost obsessive attention to minute details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 15 Postcard layout</td>
<td>Importance to Joy of any communication from the outside world (Marianne in the States)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 16 List of TV programmes</td>
<td>‘Choice’ but no comfort for Joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 20 HAH! ; arranging tea tray; speech bubble</td>
<td>Joy’s awareness of and attention to the most trivial of details mean she does not have to confront the reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 21</td>
<td>Dramascript with range of alternatives provided and the narrative links as stage directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joy’s recognition that in any conversation the speakers can take the topic under discussion in different directions, and she feels as though she is merely playing a part and living up to the health visitor’s expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page 23</th>
<th>Maxim: You Always Expect Too Much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joy attempts to impose order on a world that has become chaotic for her by the use of clichés and well-known sayings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page 26</th>
<th>This is The Way Things Are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Star sign predictions which highlight the falseness of fiction when contrasted with Joy’s real situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The outside world continues with its own concerns and attempts at makeovers, regardless of the human tragedy experienced by Joy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page 27</th>
<th>Letters to the problem page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joy is reduced to tears by a reminder of her own problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you will observe in your note-making, several features are repeated.

**Personal note-making**

As you read on, you should make notes whenever you notice these narrative techniques being used again. You can jot down the aspects of plot or character development that are revealed. These notes can be revisited in the follow-up task on narrative style and even in themselves will form an essential component for revision for the critical reading or critical essay papers.

**IMAGERY**

Joy’s lover drowned while they were on holiday together. The novel is entitled ‘The Trick is to Keep Breathing’. What might the significance of this title be?

Trace the development of images of liquid and water throughout these opening pages. Provide examples.

**EVALUATION**

How successful has Galloway been in creating curiosity on the part of the reader (think of the way she reveals the exact details of Michael’s death gradually through the italicised sections)?

How successful are Galloway’s typographical techniques in offering a realistic portrait of the workings of a person’s mind? Provide textual evidence and reasons to justify your conclusions.

How successful is Galloway in assuming the persona of a character and presenting a sense of this character through TONE?
Food, Glorious Food...

Below is a short passage describing Joy’s very unhealthy relationship with food. It is at this point the reader begins to understand that Joy is not only struggling with the loss of Michael, but that she is also struggling to take hold of an eating disorder.

There was a can of vegetable soup in the cupboard: individual size. I found the opener and dug it into the top, lifting it higher with each turn of the handle. Some of the stuff inside smeared on my knuckle. It felt slimy, unpleasant. Inside the can the surface was a kind of flattened jelly, dark red with bits of green and yellow poking through. Watery stuff like plasma started seeping up the sides of the viscous block. It didn’t look like food at all. I slid one finger into it to the depth of a nail. The top creased and some of the pink fluid slopped up and over the jagged lip of the can. It was sickening but pleasantly so. Like a little kid playing with mud. The next thing I knew I had pushed my hand right inside the can. The semi-solid mush seethed and slumped over the sides and onto the worktop as my nails tipped the bottom and the torn rim scored the skin. I had to withdraw carefully. Soup stung into the cuts so I used my other hand and scooped up as much of the mess as I could and cradled it across the room, red soup and blood dripping onto the lino. There, my cupped hands over the sink, I split my fingers and let the puree slither, spattering unevenly onto the white porcelain. I was learning something as I stared at what I was doing; the most obvious thing yet it had never dawned on me till I stood here, bug-eyed at the sink, congealing soup up to my wrists. I didn’t need to eat.

I didn’t need to eat.

The Trick is to Keep Breathing – pg 38

In pairs, read through this passage and highlight any words, phrases or images that help to show why Joy is having such as issue with eating this tin of soup. Once you have done this add them to the table below and explain why the language is so effective here. There is an example to get you started.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“individual size”</td>
<td>Joy chooses to draw attention to the size of the tin to remind us that she is cooking for one now; conveying the theme of isolation that reoccurs throughout the text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Telephone - Pages 55-57

In these pages, Joy outlines the impact and importance the telephone has had on her life.

1. Explain what the telephone has meant to Joy throughout her life so far. (Childhood, in her relationship with Paul; her relationship with her mother; her relationship with Michael)
2. Explain the telephone’s symbolic meaning to Joy now.

Joy and Myra – Pages 58 - 72

We meet Joy’s sister on page 58.

General Notes
1. Make notes showing what we learn about Myra. Use quotes as evidence.
2. Make notes showing what we learn about Joy’s feelings towards Myra. Use quotes as evidence.
3. Make notes showing what we learn about Joy and Myra’s relationship. Use quotes as evidence.

Specific Questions
4. In the scripted conversation on the phone, why is the speaker referred to as ‘Phone’?
5. How do you know Joy knew it was Myra on the phone?
6. Pick out examples of word choice and explain how they show Joy’s reaction to Myra.
7. Why does Joy brush her teeth after Myra has called?
8. How does the writer demonstrate the passage of time between the call and Myra appearing at the door? Use quotes to back up your points.
9. How does the writer use language to show the dramatic impact Myra has made by her arrival?
10. Look at the flashbacks in this section. For each, summarise what happens and then explain why it has been included in this section.

The Mushrooms – Pages 63-65

1. Pick out language that shows how the mushrooms are numerous.
2. Pick out language that shows the mushrooms are taking over.
3. Discuss what you think this could symbolise.

Critical Essay Questions

1. Choose a novel where the author’s use of symbolism is effective in conveying a key issue. Show how symbolism is used and explain how it effectively conveys a key issue.
2. Choose a novel where a key incident shows the relationship between two family members. Analyse what happens in this incident and show how the author effectively creates a relationship between the two family members.
Possible answers

The Telephone - Pages 55-57

In these pages, Joy outlines the impact and importance the telephone has had on her life.

1. Explain what the telephone has meant to Joy throughout her life so far. (Childhood, in her relationship with Paul; her relationship with her mother; her relationship with Michael)
   - Child – status – if you own one, you have status. She didn’t own one – sign of her family’s lack of wealth/status. It was an aspirational object. It was a goal to have one. Perhaps a metaphor for the lack of communication in her childhood.
   - She saw having a phone in Paul’s flat as success. She has achieved something, even if it was through having a man in her life: success linked to being in a relationship.
   - Got a phone put in for her mother. Opens communications with her mother who is ill. Doesn’t make communication any better: Joy phones her mother from the top of a mountain – mother doesn’t understand what’s going on and hangs up. Joy’s mother leaves the phone off the hook – Joy can’t get through to her. Phone off the hook after her mother dies shows the now permanent gap in communication. Emphasises the distance between them.
   - Phone in the cottage – Late night whispered relationship started on the telephone. Also used when Michael told his wife – the phone call ‘she knows’ she was physically sick. A catalyst for their moving in together and the change of their lives.

2. Explain the telephone’s symbolic meaning to Joy now.
   - In Michael’s house – hates it because she never knows who is calling – doesn’t want to talk about how she’s feeling and hates the intrusion into her life. It frightens her. Then Myra phones and it’s like a horror movie!

Joy and Myra – Pages 58 - 72

We meet Joy’s sister on page 58.
   General Notes
   11. Make notes showing what we learn about Myra. Use quotes as evidence.

   12. Make notes showing what we learn about Joy’s feelings towards Myra. Use quotes as evidence.

   13. Make notes showing what we learn about Joy and Myra’s relationship. Use quotes as evidence.
Specific Questions
14. In the scripted conversation on the phone, why is the speaker referred to as ‘Phone’?
   - Could be anyone on the other side
   - Could also suggest the phone itself is a threat
   - Anonymous – uncertain – creates suspense

15. How do you know Joy knew it was Myra on the phone?
   - “don’t be silly. I’m your sister’ – definitely knows
   - The speaker knows about her and is trying to find out that she’s ok – possibly knows
   - [Swallowing: trying to sound firm] – more than likely knows

16. Pick out examples of word choice and explain how they show Joy’s reaction to Myra

17. Why does Joy brush her teeth after Myra has called?

18. How does the writer demonstrate the passage of time between the call and Myra appearing at the door? Use quotes to back up your points.

19. How does the writer use language to show the dramatic impact Myra has made by her arrival?

20. Look at the flashbacks in this section. For each, summarise what happens and then explain why it has been included in this section.

The Mushrooms – Pages 63-65

4. Pick out language that shows how the mushrooms are numerous.
5. Pick out language that shows the mushrooms are taking over.
6. Discuss what you think this could symbolise.
The Service for Michael Fisher (Part One)

Pg 72-76

1. How does the writer create awkwardness in the interaction between Mr Peach and Joy?
2. How would you describe Joy’s mental state during this conversation? Give evidence.
3. Give a quote which shows that things haven’t gone well at the service.
4. How can you tell that time has passed between the first interview and the second?
5. How has Mr Peach’s behaviour changed towards Joy? Give evidence.
6. Describe Joy’s behaviour.
7. What appear to be Joy’s main issues with the service?
8. Comment on the advice Mr Peach gives to Joy.

The Tarot Cards (Pg 77)

Joy is given the Hanged Man in reverse, the Wheel of Fortune reversed, the Fool and the Empress. Find out what each of these mean and explain what message Joy has been given by the cards.

The Service for Michael Fisher (Part Two)

Pg 77–79

1. Identify unusual features of typography and explain why they have been used.
2. Show how Joy’s preparation for the service shows how unreal she finds the situation.
3. Show how the writer’s use of language shows Joy’s breakdown during the service.
4. Explain what you think has happened at the service.
The Memorial Service

The day of the service was overcast but warm. I laid out my clothes like a little girl, smoothing the seams neat. Perfume, ear-rings, ring. Roses and lily-of-the-valley. When the bell for assembly rang I was ready, hands stiff on the buttons of my new black jacket, fussing the bow of the blouse. I couldn’t get rid of the smile: it was stuck like one of those threats people make to kids about the wind changing etc etc. so I paced up and down in my room, waiting with this aching face.

When David came we walked across the tarmac to the hall without touching. He was trying to be collected and not look as though he was there specifically for me. The hall doors were closing when we shuffled in the back, late. At the front there was a black lectern with flowers. Everyone stood up. The minister raised his hands and held them outstretched, looking us in the corporate eye.

It didn’t make sense to begin with. I couldn’t place the accent: the vowel sounds in no pattern I could recognise or anticipate. Like a badly-dubbed movie. Looking didn’t help: his face was the colour of a baked bean with the sauce washed off. I looked at the flowers round the lectern instead and caught sight of Norma Fisher in the front row. I almost waved. But the Rev must have known I wasn’t paying attention. He raised his voice.

WE ARE HERE TODAY TO MOURN THE LOSS OF A DEAR COLLEAGUE

The unmistakable air of someone drawing events to a close. He stretched the arms out again and made a longer and more intense pause than usual. The sun filled up in the overhead windows and outlined the white hair with silver. I thought we were home and dry.

THIS SERVICE HAS BEEN ONE OF
JOY AND CELEBRATION AS
WELL AS SORROW

I noticed he rolled his eyes unpleasantly

THOUGH THE SORROW IS
UPPERMOST IN OUR HEARTS. AS
WE CLOSE, LET US THINK OF
WHAT MICHAEL FISHER
BROUGHT TO OUR LIVES. BUT
MORE ESPECIALLY IN THESE
MOMENTS OF SILENCE

and his arms began to stretch out towards the front rows

EXTEND OUR SYMPATHIES, OUR
HEARTS AND OUR LOVE

the arms stretching further like Jesus commanding Lazarus

ESPECIALLY OUR LOVE

a split-second awareness that something terrible was about to happen

TO HIS WIFE AND FAMILY
Half-way into the silence for Norma Fisher, my arms were weightless. The rest came piecemeal as the moral started to compute.

1. The Rev Dogsbody had chosen this service to perform a miracle.
2. He’d run time backwards, cleansed, absolved and got rid of the ground-in stain.
3. And the stain was me.

I didn’t exist. The miracle had wiped me out.

The first symptom of non-existence is weightlessness.
The second is singing in the ears, a quiet acceptance of the unreality of all things. Then the third takes over in earnest.
The third is shaking.

David had hold of my arm and we were walking too fast down the white corridor, the mural on the stairs. Something in my mouth, gagging with the salt taste. Thick salt bands across my mouth were Sean’s fingers. I could hear breath in my ears, gagging with the salt taste and someone yelling.

I knew it couldn’t be me.
I didn’t exist.
The miracle had wiped me out.

This section is a really interesting section for a number of reasons.

1. Look at how this section has been structured. What is interesting about the structure? Why has Galloway described this event in this way?
2. How does this section add to the theme of alienation within the novel?
3. What is so powerful about the use of the word ‘stain’ here?
4. Who was Lazarus? Why is this comparison so fitting here?
5. Despite the fact that this scene is completely heartbreaking for Joy, there are very brief moments when Galloway reveals Joy’s black sense of humour in this section. Can you identify these moments? Where else in the novel do we see this humour? What does this tell us about the character of Joy?
Narrative Structure

There are all kinds of narrators:

First Person

1. The Protagonist
Relatively straightforward, this is a story the hero narrates. He'll narrate the same way he talks, but with more description and perhaps better grammar. The reader is privy to all his thoughts and opinions, which means we get to know the hero faster, and often relate to him more easily.
Example:

…I take up my pen in the year of grace 17–, and go back to the time when my father kept the “Admiral Benbow” inn, and the brown old seaman, with the saber cut, first took up his lodging under our roof.
Jim Hawkins in Treasure Island, by Robert Louis Stevenson

2. The Secondary Character
Someone close to the protagonist, but not the main hero. The same things in the above type apply to this type, but the focus of the story moves away from the narrator.
Example:

“Dr. Watson, Mr. Sherlock Holmes,” said Stamford, introducing us. “How are you?” he said cordially, gripping my hand with a strength for which I should hardly have given him credit. “You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive.” “How on earth did you know that?” I asked in astonishment. “Never mind,” said he, chuckling to himself.
Watson in A Study in Scarlet, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Third Person

Third person omniscient
This type knows all, peeking into the lives of major and minor characters, reading everyone’s thoughts. This enables the writer to explore multiple facets of the story in depth. Cornelia Funke’s Inkheart trilogy, for example.

Third person limited
This type knows only what the main character, or characters, know. This is more restrictive, but increases suspense and intrigue, because the reader only solves the mystery at the same time the characters do. 1984, by George Orwell, is a good example.
The following types can fall into either omniscient or limited:

3. **The Detached Observer**
A detached third person narrator sticks to telling the story, and never inserts his own opinions—never slips in an “I” or a “me” except in direct dialogue. You probably won’t notice voice at all. It’s fruitless to give an excerpt showing what a writer didn’t do, but Orwell’s *1984* is, again, a good example.

4. **The Commentator**
This type never physically enters the story, but freely adds in his own amusing commentary. Allows voice without the complication of using an existing character.

Example:

> The curtains of his bed were drawn aside; and Scrooge, starting up into a half-recumbent attitude, found himself face-to-face with the unearthly visitor who drew them: as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow.

* A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens

**Somewhere in Between**

Or maybe the narrator isn’t a strict “third person,” but is involved in the story in some way.

5. **The Interviewer**
This type has collected the details of the story after it happened, such as by interviewing the characters. This lends a sense of reality to the story.

Example:

> It brought both a smell and a sound, a musical sound. Edmund and Eustace would never talk about it afterwards. Lucy could only say, “It would break your heart.” “Why,” said I, “was it so sad?” “Sad! No,” said Lucy.

* The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, by C.S. Lewis

6. **The Secret Character**
Sometimes a narrator only pretends to be removed from the story—they may refer to themselves in third person right up to the end, but will eventually be mentioned by some other character, or revealed to be a major character, even the villain, for an extra-pleasing plot twist. Example:

> “Lemony?” Violet repeated. “They would have named me Lemony? Where did they get that idea?”
> “From someone who died, presumably,” Klaus said.

* The End, by Lemony Snicket

7. **The Unreliable Narrator**

Usually first person, but occasionally third, an unreliable narrator has a flawed point of view. That is, the writer intentionally made him biased, misinformed, insane, etc. It’s difficult to find
a single passage that illustrates this, but examples include Nelly in *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Brontë, or Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J.D. Salinger.
Narrative Structure in ‘The Trick is to Keep Breathing’

Narrative style and narrative techniques

Use of a first person narrator

What texts have you already studied which have a first person narrator?
What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of a first person narrator?

Some examples could be:

*To Kill a Mockingbird*
The narrator is a young child, Scout Finch, who cannot fully understand the adult world around her.

*Great Expectations*
Again, a young narrator called Pip is used. This time we follow him into adulthood.

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*
The narrator is Christopher, a young boy with Asperger’s syndrome. He gives us his view of events in his family.

*The Catcher in the Rye*
Holden Caulfield is the narrator. Although he is younger than Joy, he is also on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

*The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*
Agatha Christie’s ingenious use of a first person narrator. This is a text to be read, not spoiled by revelation.

Task:

1. What do you think are the advantages of a first person narrator?
   - Can establish the type of character we’re working with
   - Get to see the story from her perspective
   - Engage with the speaker
   - Innermost workings of their minds exposed – all their thoughts and feelings.

2. What do you think are the disadvantages of a first person narrator?
   - We can be given a biased view of the plot or other character – unreliable narrator.
   - Don’t get the bigger picture – no idea how others are doing/feeling/behaving/what they’re thinking.

3. Consider the statements on the chart overleaf.
   - Identify how each of these advantages/disadvantages has been shown in the novel so far.
   - Record evidence from what you have read of the novel so far to support each one.
   - When you get together with a partner to ‘pair’ you will swap ideas, adding any information to your own notes that you do not already have.
At the ‘share’ stage, either in small groups or as a whole class, you will share ideas and with the class.

This task allows you to begin to apply your analysis skills and to deepen your understanding of the way that Janice Galloway has used the first person narrator in this novel.

**Advantages and disadvantages of first person narrator:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Evidence from text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The narrator can reveal his/her innermost thoughts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The first person narrator can control how readers respond by the details that are selected and those that are omitted</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is an immediacy in the narration of events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The reader is likely to identify with the narrator</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Evidence from text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of a purely subjective view of a situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the narrator is found to be unreliable, she may not be trusted when she is completely truthful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other characters’ perceptions of the same events may be very different</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited or restricted point of view</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

Galloway has obviously employed the use of a first person narrator. We are constantly with Joy during her journey of recovery. In fact, the narrative can often feel so intense that we become Joy. This is because Galloway has used a stream of consciousness narrative. This means we see, feel and share experiences with Joy at the same time – almost like watching a film in real team.
We can completely identify with Joy’s confused state of mind as we see the constant interruptions in her life as they interrupt the narrative. This happens through Galloway’s use of typography, flashbacks and alternative narrative voices.

The table below details the techniques used. Find examples of these for your revision notes and explain how they create empathy towards Joy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Page numbers</th>
<th>Purpose of the technique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speech bubbles</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine Articles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Horoscopes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flashbacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of capital letters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary entries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unused Space on the Page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxims</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Joy’s Hands

Pg 91-92

Make a note of the descriptions of Joy’s hands, now and in the past. How do they represent her mental health?

Look for other references to her hands and show how they are symbolic of her life/health.
Imagery & Symbolism

Galloway uses a range of imagery and symbolism to great effect in this novel. She particularly focus on:

1. **Light and Dark**
2. **Water**
3. **Circles**

These reoccurring images help the reader to understand how Joy is feeling at certain points in the novel and therefore it is worth looking at them in much more detail.

1. **Light and Dark**

Before you begin look at this within the text itself, create two mind maps to show the connotations associated with both of these words.

For example:

![Mind Map](image)

Whilst reading the novel look for examples of Galloway's use of light and dark throughout the book and list them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Dark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Brightness disagrees with me: it hurts my eyes, wastes electricity and encourages moths, all sorts of things” (pg 7)</td>
<td>“Myra whirled in from the black outside, like a dervish” (pg60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is Galloway trying to use light and dark to represent in the novel?

Do Joy's feelings about being in the light change throughout the novel? Where do you begin to see any changes? When does it become obvious? What do these changes represent?
Water

Like Galloway’s use of light and dark to set the tone of this novel it is almost impossible to escape the water imagery. Joy manages to relate almost every event to water in some way.

1. First of all, why is water so obviously a major image in this novel?
2. How does water help create a certain tone within the novel? Find examples and explain the imagery.
3. Joy’s feelings towards water change as the novel progresses. Can you explain why and show where it changes?

**Imagery questions in Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation:**

In the *Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation* paper you need to be able to recognise imagery and to consider how successful the imagery is at conveying to you what the writer is trying to express.

Imagery frequently conveys more than just meaning. It is used to heighten the effect of language and is often an extension of word-choice.

Normally an image will extend to a phrase or a few words but sometimes it will be longer.

Most Higher English candidates find imagery questions especially difficult. It's not easy to 'learn' how to do them, since your ability here depends on your sensitivity to language, and this is something that has been growing gradually since you started learning to read. The following bits of advice, however, might help:

You never get any marks simply for identifying an image - the marks are always for the 'quality of comment'.

The comment must be specific to the image being asked about - vague remarks which could apply to any image will get no marks, and you get no marks for repeating the question.

When answering on imagery, try to show how the literal root or origin of the image is being used by the writer to express an idea in a metaphorical way.

3. **Circles:**

Galloway uses circles as a form of symbolism throughout the novel. Look at the following and consider the significance of these throughout the novel:

“ooo”
“The red beachball”
“The hollow of the ragged O”
“His mouth a red O”
The Importance of Names

One of the key themes in this novel is identity. Galloway uses names to provide us with more detail about specific characters and, at times, does not reveal names which add to the feelings of loss and alienation. Consider the following:

Joy Stone

1. Consider all the connotations of the name ‘Joy’. Explain why this is ironic in the novel. Is there any point when this is a suitable name for this character?
2. Consider all the connotations of the name ‘Stone’. Explain why this is a more than suitable surname.
3. Why do you think Galloway holds back from revealing the protagonist’s name until so far into the novel? What impact does this have on the reader?
4. How does Joy’s name reveal more to us about the narrative structure?

Joy Stone = Joy’s tone

Michael Fisher

5. Consider the suggestions being made here by Michael’s surname. In what way is this ironic?

Boot Hill

This is the name of the estate where Joy lives.

6. What connotations are being implied about the area in which Joy lives?
7. Find evidence from the text to help support these connotations.
8. Joy tells us the area is actually called Bourtreehill, after the bourtree which she refers to as the ‘Judas tree’. What does this add to our awareness of Joy’s feelings about the estate in which she now lives?

The Medical Professionals

The doctors and the health visitors remain anonymous. Joy chooses to never reveal their names.

1. How does Joy perceive these characters? Give textual evidence to support your ideas.
2. What impact does their anonymity have on the reader?
3. Why does she give Dr. Stead a name? What does this tell us about Joy’s perception of him in comparison to the others?

Foresthause

4. What is Galloway trying to suggest about the ‘hospital’ that Joy is admitted to?
The Ending: Pgs 234-236

The last three pages show a noticeable contrast in Joy’s tone and emotions. Compare these pages with the novel’s opening.

Create a list of bullet points to show all the obvious changes in Joy’s perception of life between these pages and the opening of the novel. Consider imagery, word choice, structure, etc.
Creative Writing Task

Now that you have spent some time examining Galloway’s use of structure, typography and interrupted narrative, you are going to try using some of these techniques in your own work.

Below there is a list of six word stories (see PowerPoint). Your task is to create the story behind the story. All of these titles can be interpreted in so many ways. Your job is to pick one of these and develop the story further.

Remember, creative writing at this level requires more planning than simply coming up with a plot. You will need to take time to develop characters, consider setting, convey theme and, perhaps the most challenging thing here is, to be confident in playing around with narrative structures and typography.

You should make notes under the following headings before even considering starting to write a full story:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plot:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is actually going to happen? What is your story?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is your story about? How can you develop a real sense of personality? How can you ensure the reader feels empathy towards your character?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the underlying message to your story? Why write this in the first place? You may find it easier to consider this before deciding on what will actually happen. How will you convey this theme through character, setting, imagery, etc.?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is telling the story? How is it being told? Is there more than one narrator?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where and when do the events take place? How does it help develop depth to your character? What role does it play in the plot?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A basic story line with a beginning, middle and end? Flashbacks? Flashforwards? Interrupted narrative? Typography?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Something else to consider is an element of realism. You can only write about what you know. For example: if you have never been to a boxing match in Las Vegas how can you bring the descriptions of the atmosphere, the emotions of the characters etc. to life? Remember that the best writers are people who have experienced what they choose to write about. Some will actively live an alternative life for a period of time to ensure they can write from what they know. At this level we are looking for depth and sophistication in your writing.

I didn’t believe in ghosts, either.


The rats knew where he was.

…and then he coughed up blood.

“Wrong number,” said an unfamiliar voice.

Laughing, they left their clothes behind.

They lived happily ever after, separately.

Family’s first overseas trip. Never landed.

Thought it was her. It wasn’t.

I thought I wouldn’t be back.

This will be my last meal.

We swam out. I swam back.
### Writing which is broadly creative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of marks</th>
<th>Marks 15–13</th>
<th>Marks 12–10</th>
<th>Marks 9–7</th>
<th>Marks 6–4</th>
<th>Marks 3–1</th>
<th>Marks 0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The creative piece demonstrates, as appropriate to genre:</td>
<td>◆ committed attention to purpose and audience</td>
<td>◆ clear attention to purpose and audience</td>
<td>◆ adequate attention to purpose and audience</td>
<td>◆ limited attention to purpose and audience</td>
<td>◆ little attention to purpose and audience</td>
<td>◆ no evidence of the skills required in terms of content, style and accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◆ strong creative qualities</td>
<td>◆ clear creative qualities</td>
<td>◆ adequate creative qualities</td>
<td>◆ limited creative qualities</td>
<td>◆ few creative qualities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◆ evident command of the genre</td>
<td>◆ insight into the genre</td>
<td>◆ understanding of the genre</td>
<td>◆ a limited use of conventions of genre</td>
<td>◆ little use of conventions of genre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◆ thematic concerns which are clearly introduced and developed</td>
<td>◆ thematic concerns which are introduced and developed</td>
<td>◆ thematic concerns which are introduced</td>
<td>◆ limited thematic concerns</td>
<td>◆ little thematic concerns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◆ ideas/feelings/experiences which are explored with a strong degree of mature reflection/self-awareness/involvement/insight/sensitivity</td>
<td>◆ ideas/feelings/experiences which are explored with a clear sense of reflection/self-awareness/involvement/insight/sensitivity</td>
<td>◆ ideas/feelings/experiences which are explored with an adequate sense of reflection and involvement</td>
<td>◆ limited ideas/feelings/experiences explored</td>
<td>◆ little evidence of exploration of ideas or feelings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◆ the writer’s personality and individuality</td>
<td>◆ limited sense of the writer’s personality</td>
<td>◆ limited sense of the writer’s personality</td>
<td>◆ limited sense of the writer’s personality</td>
<td>◆ limited sense of the writer’s personality</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Style**      |             |             |           |           |           |        |
|                | ◆ linguistic features of the chosen genre used | ◆ linguistic features of the chosen genre used | ◆ linguistic features of the chosen genre used successfully | ◆ limited linguistic features of the chosen genre | ◆ no attempt at using language effectively |               |
### Scottish Set Text – Higher

**“The Trick is to Keep Breathing” by Janice Galloway**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of marks</th>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15–13</td>
<td>12–10</td>
<td>9–7</td>
<td>6–4</td>
<td>3–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The creative piece demonstrates, as appropriate to genre:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skillfully to create a strong impact</td>
<td>♦ confident and varied expression</td>
<td>♦ used successfully to create impact</td>
<td>♦ adequate expression</td>
<td>♦ limited expression</td>
<td>♦ many errors in punctuation/syntax/spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ an effective structure which enhances the purpose/meaning</td>
<td>♦ a clear structure which enhances the purpose/meaning</td>
<td>♦ adequate structure</td>
<td>♦ a limited use of structure</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relationships and character

The aim of this activity is to help you appreciate what Joy’s relationships with other characters in the novel reveal about:

- the different elements of her character
- how her character evolves and changes.

Option 1:
- The class will be divided into small groups – maximum four learners in each group.
- Each member of the group will become an expert on a relationship between Joy and one other character.

2. Joy and Tony: 31–33, 97–100

Each group member should re-read the relevant extracts and then re-group with the other experts in the class to discuss your findings.

Each expert will compile a comprehensive set of notes that you will use when reporting back to their home group. It is your choice how you lay out their notes, but it is important that the notes include page references, evidence and analysis of your findings.

Experts will return to home group to report on your findings. Each group member should record notes that they will be able to follow up later in their own private study of these relationships.

These notes will be collated and emailed out.

Option 2:
- The class will be divided into groups – one group for each of the relationships below.
- Each group will become an expert on a relationship between Joy and one other character.
- The group will present a lesson to the class on this relationship.

2. Joy and Tony: 31–33, 97–100
5. Joy and her family: 56, 57-63, 66-68, 70-72, 81-82, 116, 189,
7. Joy and work colleagues:12-13, 73-76, 117-178, 224-225
### Listening Assessment: Observing a Group Presentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Evidence included?</th>
<th>✓</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Standard</th>
<th>Presentation(s)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 – Identifying and explaining the purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 – Identifying and explaining the audience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 - Identifying and explaining the main ideas and supporting details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 - Identifying and explaining the main ideas and supporting details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 – Applying knowledge and understanding of language to explain meaning and effect in depth and detail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 – Applying knowledge and understanding of language to explain meaning and effect in depth and detail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher’s notes

Joy’s relationship with Paul

Pages 41–43
- They first got together at school. They were quite rebellious, missing classes to be together.
- Joy seems more outspoken than Paul, answering a teacher back while he keeps quiet.
- When they move in together Joy becomes domesticated. She seems to take responsibility for all of the housework etc.
- As they get older they grow apart: Joy tries to get Paul to talk, while Paul draws into himself.
- The physical side of their relationship suffers and Joy feels like she is being punished. She has an affair as a result.
- Paul seems to go through her things/read her diary, making her even more paranoid. She sees him as ‘Superman’.
- ‘Now there was no talk at all, only the sound of two people suffocating into different pillows’. Even though they aren’t talking, Joy continues to work hard at keeping their flat clean and tidy.
- Joy’s misery is compounded by the fact that her mother is dying. When her mother finally dies, Paul seems like a stranger to her.
- After another affair, Paul tells her ‘I don’t need you for a thing.’
- Even after the relationship ends she continues to cook for him. She hasn’t see him so often in recent times and ‘The cupboard under the sink bulges with Chutney’.

Pages 67–68
- When Joy calls Paul for help when Myra visits he is distant.
- She thought he would be the only one to understand what Myra’s visit means to her. Telling him is ‘playing her ace’. It is as if the plea for help is part of a game that she is still playing with Paul.
- She finds out that he gave Myra her address. During the phone call he is fobbing her off.

Page 131
- When Joy recalls the beginning of her relationship with David she thinks that: ‘Maybe I was pretending he was Paul.’
- Possibly the relationship with David was a way of Joy reliving the early days of her relationship with Paul because David is of a similar age to Paul when she first met him.

Page 194
- When Joy recalls the night that Michael’s wife discovered the affair she remembers Paul being there to deliver a birthday present. ‘Paul cleaned up the mess. Crying because I was.’
- ‘Big tears when I think about Paul. I never anticipated a time when the telling of love would just be hurtful.’
- It’s suggested that even when Joy was with Michael, her relationship with Paul still continued in its own form. He still becomes upset when she is upset. He cared enough about her to buy her a birthday present.
This is Joy’s final confrontation with Paul, when he tells her the news that he is going to get married. It is a scripted dialogue and she casts herself as the ‘HARRIDAN’, suggesting that she continues to have a low opinion of herself in comparison with Paul. The stage directions reveal what Joy is thinking …

[Thinks about the times they said they’d always be friends and how hopeful it seemed then. Can’t understand the difference.]

… and what she thinks Paul is thinking

[Thinks about the times they said they’d always be friends and how naïve they were then. Can’t understand why she can’t understand.]

The script – which is Joy’s creation – reveals an acknowledgement on her part that Paul has moved on. The fact that she screams for the first time at the end of their confrontation might suggest that she is finally giving up on their relationship too. Maybe from this point she will stop trying to remain in his life?

Joy’s relationship with Tony

Joy does not begin working in the bookie’s until after Michael’s funeral when her friend, Allan, suggests this (presumably to occupy Joy’s time and take her mind off Michael’s death). ‘Sometimes Tony collects me, sometimes I walk.’ Joy appears to accept Tony’s sexual harassment because she lacks the mental strength to object at this point so soon after Michael’s death. Joy’s description of the world of the bookmaker’s shop highlights how male dominated it is. She must remain separate from the punters to ensure that it does ‘not look too inviting’. The jokes are risqué, and at work the boss Tony’s focus is on the money entering the till. Small signs of Tony’s physical interest are included by Joy – his constant physical closeness, his stroking of her hair, his suggestion of a trip to the dog track where he would entertain her in style, his deliberate forcing of Joy to thank him before he will hand over her wages.

Joy suddenly receives in dramascript form a phone call from Tony. Tony tries to persuade Joy to go that evening with him to the dog track. He is so self-confident and sleazy in his suggestive comments that he clearly thinks Joy is an easy target. He will know from his colleague, Allan, that her dead lover was a married man and therefore seems to expect Joy to be grateful for any attention from him. While Joy’s perceptive comments show that she recognises his motivation, she does not wish to cause any kind of offence because her spirits are still so low. Her loyalty to Ellen is to be commended, but it also provides an escape from Tony’s unwelcome attentions.

Tony leaves a note at Joy’s home and presumptuously tells her he will pick her up that evening.
• Galloway juxtaposes Joy’s physical revulsion as she notes physical details about Tony, while he smarmily compliments her constantly.
• The music on the car radio makes an apt contrast between Tony’s intentions and Joy’s true feelings.
• Her physical attractiveness to him is neatly counterbalanced by her anorexia and her self-harming.
• His persistence, matched by Joy’s references to his wife, creates a vivid picture of Joy under siege.

Pages 173–176
• ‘I should accept kindness for what it is.’ Joy is at such a low ebb that she equates Tony’s physical desire for her with kindness, but it is clear that she is a reluctant sexual partner.

Pages 204–205 and telephone conversation on pages 208–209
• ‘The trick is not to think … Act.’ At last Joy has the strength to say ‘No’ to Tony.
• As with the previous page, staff could study in class with learners the change in Joy as presented in her narrative at the end of the text.
Joy’s Relationships

Although we often see Joy as a very isolated lonely character, she does have a number of important relationships within the novel. These are mostly with men, but there are a few important women in her life.
What does this gender imbalance tell us about Joy?

The key relationships to examine are with:

- Tony
- David
- Marianne
- Michael

Group task:

The class will be split into home groups. There will be at least four people in each group. The home groups will then split into four ‘away’ groups with at least one person from each home group in each away group. The away groups will then become experts in each of these relationships. They will work with the page references below to explore Joy’s relationships with these key characters and create notes analysing these relationships to then share with their home groups at the end of the activity.

The notes should look at what relationship Joy has with that particular character; how it impacts on her life; how the relationship changes throughout the novel and how this relationship helps/hinders Joy’s recovery.

These page references should help the start of your discussions but you may find other areas of interest:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Page References</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>41-43, 67-68, 131, 194, 212-215</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tony</td>
<td>31-33, 97-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marianne</td>
<td>88-90, 119-121, 149-150, 179-80, 227</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>14, 63-66, 83, 107, 134, 53, 194-195, 231</td>
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</table>
**Expectations**

Throughout the entire novel Joy is faced with expectations from everyone, including herself. Sometimes this impacts on her thoughts and behaviour. She tries to live up to those expectations but when she doesn’t succeed she punishes herself: “You Always Expect Too Much”.

Think about these expectations in more detail:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>What do they expect of Joy</th>
<th>What does Joy expect of them?</th>
<th>Textual Evidence (Quote/page ref)</th>
<th>How does Joy meet/not meet these expectations?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The doctors and the hospital staff</td>
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<td>School colleagues</td>
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<td>David</td>
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<td>Ellen</td>
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<td>Joy herself</td>
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Joy’s Most Intense Breakdown (pgs 182-188):

As we read the novel we do begin to see Joy’s tone begin to make subtle shifts. We realise that she can only begin to find any real sense of recovery once she has hit absolute rock bottom.

On pages 182-188 Joy reaches a moment of realisation. This incident is the turning point for Joy.

1. What time of year is it? How does Joy feel about this? How do you know?
2. Trace Joy’s steady decline over these pages. What helps to build up this moment?
3. The flashbacks in this section show a change from present to past tense. What is significant about this?
4. Galloway uses a great deal of space between words in this section. What does this add to the overall tone? How does this silence help to build the tension?
5. ‘It’s dawning on me where I am.’ – Explain what Joy means here.
6. Explain the significance of page 188. Think about the tone. What does this add to this section as a whole?
7. Think about how the novel develops from here. Why is this moment so important? Where do we begin to see subtle changes in Joy?

Teacher’s Notes

On pages 182-188 Joy reaches a moment of realisation. This incident is the turning point for Joy.

1. What time of year is it? How does Joy feel about this? How do you know?
   Christmas/winter. Anxious. Refs to previous Christmas with Michael. When pupils go away she is ‘hysterical’. ‘keep tight control’. Unable to draw anything. Pressured to get well. Not wanting to disappoint others.

   Refs to ‘four weeks to go till Christmas’, drawing Christmas pictures, Christmas is coming repeated.

2. Trace Joy’s steady decline over these pages. What helps to build up this moment?

3. The flashbacks in this section show a change from present to past tense. What is significant about this?
   She’s starting to accept the fact that the past is the past.
4. Galloway uses a great deal of space between words in this section. What does this add to the overall tone? How does this silence help to build the tension?
   Shows the break up of her mind/shows her rapid decline…
   Pace adds to panic

5. ‘It’s dawning on me where I am.’ – Explain what Joy means here.
   Waking up/ meds taking effect/coming back to reality
   Also perhaps the turning point for her mental state.

6. Explain the significance of page 188. Think about the tone. What does this add to this section as a whole?
   (inappropriately) humorous response. Perhaps realising she’s gone too far…
   New hope – lightness and joking – a tiny glimpse of hope of recovery.

7. Think about how the novel develops from here. Why is this moment so important? Where do we begin to see subtle changes in Joy?
   She starts to get better. Slowly taking charge of her life…
   Once you hit rock bottom the only way is up… ‘there is /no going back only further/ going back only further.”
   Begins to interact more, forgive herself and others notice what she needs to change through situations to stop them going ways she is uncomfortable with, confront her fears, treat herself, do what she feels like and most importantly, take recovery into her own hands.
Analysis of the novel as a whole

Setting and character

Two important physical settings are Joy’s cottage and Michael’s house. Before Michael’s death, they had lived as a couple in both places although they never made the decision to officially move in together. Instead circumstances forced them to live together and in each case it was a temporary arrangement until things were sorted out. To begin with Michael hastily moved into Joy’s cottage when his wife Norma discovered their affair. This arrangement was to be in place until Michael was able to secure social housing and his own place to live. In the interim, Joy’s cottage became infested with dry rot, which meant that she was forced to move into Michael’s new house as soon as he secures it. Michael’s new home is in the middle of an estate called Boot Hill, which is described as an area of deprivation. Their intention is to tackle the cottage when they return from their holiday so that Joy can return there and they can both go back to living independently. Unfortunately, Michael’s death on holiday means that they never reach this point.

Galloway is a very descriptive writer and close study of each of these settings, Joy’s cottage, Michael’s house and the world immediately outside Michael’s house, reveal a lot about Joy’s character, before and after Michael’s death. In addition, making the links between the settings reveals a lot about the nature of the relationship between Joy and Michael.

The aim of this task is to analyse what the settings reveal about Joy as a character and perhaps also the relationship between Joy and Michael.

Michael’s house

1. Start at page 65. Why was it important to Joy that Michael had his own place?
2. How does the furniture and other items that they bring into the house, immediately change it? Can you make links between Michael’s house and Joy’s cottage?
3. Read pages 7–19. Now that Joy lives alone in the house, how do aspects of the house reflect her state of mind?
4. On page 19 how might the description of the house reflect the real nature of Joy’s relationship with Michael?

Boot Hill and the outside world

1. Read page 16. What impression of Bourtree Hill (‘Boot Hill’) does Galloway create?
2. Read pages 14, 25, 76 and 128–129. Collect quotations and evidence from these pages that shows that Joy finds the world immediately outside Michael’s door threatening.
3. The pink plastic fish which Joy notices in the garden on page 204 seems to be the first positive detail that she observes of the world outside the house. What do you think it might represent? Why is it significant that she pushes it back through the fence on page 233?

Joy’s cottage

Read pages 63–65.

1. Collect quotations that show how the cottage reflected Joy’s positivity when she first moved into it, having broken up with Paul.
2. How does Galloway create a sense of threat when she describes the mushrooms (dry rot) as they slowly takes over the cottage?
3. Make links between the emerging dry rot in the cottage and Joy’s character. Make links between the emerging dry rot and her relationship with Michael. What is Galloway suggesting about their future together?
4. Do you think that Joy’s relationship with Michael would have survived had he not died on holiday? Whatever your answer is, you must justify it with evidence from the text as a whole.

Read pages 216–217
1. How does Galloway use language to create contrast when describing Joy’s return to the cottage?
2. Re-read from ‘A flat headed Toadstool …’ to ‘… Hound Dog’. How does Joy’s handling of the mushroom contrast to her previous reaction to the dry rot when Michael was still alive?
3. What change in Joy’s character do you think is being revealed here?
Teacher notes on key passages related to setting

**Michael’s house and ‘Boot Hill’**
- **Page 7–8** The ‘ancient’ and ‘threadbare’ rug is described as well as curtains too small for the window. ‘Five doors radiate from the top of the landing and every door is closed.’
- **Page 13** Galloway describes ‘Boot Hill’, an area of deprivation that is chaotic and remote from the rest of the city. Other passages in the novel describe elements of this world encroaching on Joy’s life inside Michael’s house. Some details of these are included below.
- **Pages 14–15** Description of the dirt, leaves and insects gathered on the porch as if the outside world is trying to get in.
- **Page 18** Joy, in a cleaning frenzy, preparing for the health visitor, comments that the living room ‘never looks right’.
- **Pages 18–19** Joy recounts the difficulty that she had keeping the tenancy after Michael’s death. This stresses the idea that she never quite became a permanent fixture in that house and was therefore never fully permanent in his life.
- **Page 19** This idea is developed when Joy describes the temporary and mismatched nature of the furnishings in the house. The items are a mixture of old and new, just like Joy and Michael’s relationship must be a mixture of the old baggage of previous relationships and the hopes they have for their new relationship. The house is big and suits neither a couple nor a man living on his own.
- **Page 25** Joy goes to the police because she is disturbed by the noises of the outside world.
- **Page 65** At first Michael’s house is ‘cheerful, bright and full of windows’ but they went on to ‘cover the chairs with sheets’. ‘We hung ancient curtains held together with stour’. Elements of Joy’s cottage seem to be transferred to Michael’s house.
- **Page 76** Joy describes the wild noises of kids and dogs from outside which disturb her while she is in her house.
- **Page 204** For the first time Joy notices something positive in the world outside of Michael’s house: the pink and blue plastic toy fish dropped by the little girl next door. This stands in stark contrast to the dirt, noise and chaos that she usually notices in the immediate surroundings of Boot Hill.
- **Page 234** In the closing pages Joy brings new things into the house, including Christmas tree lights. The bright colours of the twinkling lights contrast with previous descriptions of the house. The house is still cold but Joy is doing more to keep warm. She considers bringing a rug from the cottage or a duvet from upstairs. She has the heating on. Earlier in the novel she seemed to let herself get cold without much regard for her own comfort.

**Joy’s cottage**
- **Page 63** Joy recalls the sense of freedom that she felt when she moved into the cottage at first, having extricated herself from her relationship with Paul.
- **Page 64** They notice the first mushroom growing out of the cottage wall. Joy breaks it off. When they discover another Michael cuts it and it leaves ‘a little pink trail like anaemic blood’. As things get worse, Joy becomes scared and doesn’t like Michael to touch the mushrooms. He continues to prod and cut at them in secret.
- **Page 216** The description of Joy’s cottage when she returns to start cleaning up is mixed and full of contrast. On the one hand the colour of the décor still coordinates, there is a ‘Home Sweet Home’ sign on the wall which makes Joy recall happy memories with Marianne and she plays cheerful music as she cleans. On the other hand the house is full of damp, decay and spores and all of the wallpaper is coming off the walls.
Page 217 The critical point of the account is when Joy destroys the mushroom growing out of the mantelpiece – something that she was afraid to do before. The description is vivid and includes personification to make the mushroom and the fungus throughout the house seem more menacing.
Evaluating Joy’s relationships and what they reveal about her character

This task is a follow up to the task on relationships and character. The aim this time is for you to begin to evaluate the impact of each relationship on the development of Joy’s character. To complete this task, you will need to be able to access your notes on all of the relationships. You will need these notes to help them to answer fully the questions on the following page.

You may be asked to do all the questions yourself or to take a pair/group approach.

**Tony**
1. Why did Joy finally submit to Tony’s advances?
2. How has Joy’s relationship with Tony changed by the end of the novel?
3. What does this tell you about the way in which Joy’s character is changing?

**Paul**
1. List the unhealthy elements of Joy’s seven-year relationship with Paul.
2. Read again the scripted confrontation between Joy and Paul on pages 212–215. How has the scripting technique been used effectively here? How does it reveal that Joy is finally facing up to the truth about their relationship now?
3. Which relationship do you think has had more impact on Joy’s current state of mind: her relationship with Michael or her relationship with Paul?

**Marianne**
1. ‘What will I do while I’m lasting Marianne? What will I do?’ Why doesn’t Joy appeal directly in this way to anyone else that she has a relationship with?
2. How do Joy’s letters to Marianne change over the course of the novel?
3. What are the differences between Joy’s letters to Marianne and the letters that Joy receives from Marianne?
4. What makes Joy’s relationship with Marianne different to those that she has with the men in her life?

**Michael**
1. What evidence is there that both Joy and Michael have reservations about being in a relationship once their secret is out in the open?
2. What are the main differences between the relationship that Joy had with Michael and the relationship that she had previously with Paul?
3. Had Michael not died, do you think that their relationship would have lasted? Think about both sides of the argument and give reasons.

**Myra (pages 57–63)**
1. Analyse the effectiveness of Galloway’s use of a script in conveying Joy’s reactions to her sister.
2. In your own words, explain why Joy and Myra have such a troubled relationship.
3. ‘Maybe that was why she hit me so much. I don’t know. Hands like shovels. Myra left marks. None of them show.’ Analyse the effectiveness of Galloway’s use of sentence structure and imagery in conveying Myra’s abuse of Joy.
4. Analyse how Galloway uses language on pages 60 and 61 to convey Myra’s forbidding appearance and personality.
Note: Remember to consider the context of setting when evaluating this relationship.
Analysis and evaluation of narrative style and narrative techniques – teacher’s notes

In the early stages of their study of the novel, learners began to explore Galloway’s use of unconventional narrative techniques. Since attempting that activity, learners should have been encouraged to continue to make their own notes on these techniques as their reading has proceeded.

Closer study of the novel reveals that Galloway employs this range of narrative techniques throughout the text. Some are repeated quite regularly, for example the italicised flashbacks to Michael’s death, while others, such as Joy’s annotations in the margin, are used less frequently but can intensify the tension at certain points in the novel.

The table on the next page maps out Galloway’s use of a range of different techniques across the text. Studying these techniques in action will help learners to deepen their appreciation of the character and themes of the novel, as well as preparing them for the critical reading paper, section 1. An overview of their use across the whole text should aid them in tackling the final question in this section of the paper. A guide to a wide range of the techniques is provided. In addition, some exemplar activities on some of these techniques have also been included. Staff may use these activities as a model for creating alternative activities on some of the other techniques. The aim of these activities is to give learners the opportunity to consolidate their learning and develop their analysis and evaluation of this very distinct feature of the text.
## Map of narrative techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Visual representations</th>
<th>Scripted conversations</th>
<th>What Joy is reading</th>
<th>Maxims</th>
<th>Marking of time</th>
<th>Annotations</th>
<th>Flashbacks to Michael's death</th>
<th>Irregular layout of text</th>
<th>Listing</th>
<th>Unfinished sentences</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>6–50</td>
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Visual representations

Occasionally, Galloway will break convention and include images/diagrams of what Joys sees. For example, the squint sign at the school entrance and the appearance of Michael’s front door before and after Joy removed the house number are shown. The inclusion of a speech bubble during Joy’s encounter with the health visitor, when the health visitor says ‘Well?’ is comedic, making the reader think of the character almost like a cartoon. These visual representations are all clever in their own way, suggesting various connotations from comedy to pathos whenever they feature, and they are worth exploring further with learners.

Scripted conversations

This device is used quite regularly throughout the book to convey conversations between Joy and the health visitor, Dr Stead, Myra, Paul, her boss at school, Tony (on the phone) and Dr Three. Learners should think about the reasons why Galloway might employ this convention, usually associated with the drama genre, within her novel. Arguably the effect is different every time it’s used but some general thoughts are that it might be a way of Joy distancing herself from events that she finds stressful. It is as if she is outside of the situation, watching herself on a ‘stage’. Another consideration is that, as the ‘creator’ of these scripts, Joy is able to put words into the mouths of her ‘co-actors’. Particularly in the case of the doctors that she sees, she seems to report her perception of what they are saying to her, rather than reporting what they actually say. This tells us a lot about how Joy feels about herself and is a very effective way of conveying how skewed her perceptions of people and events become when she is at the height of her illness.

What Joy is reading

Often, we read with Joy. This technique is very powerful as it brings us very close to her, we are seeing through her eyes. She states that she reads anything and everything, and we are given insight into her reading of magazine problem pages, horoscopes and, at one point, a self-help book titled *Courage and Bereavement*. Her reactions to what she is reading are revealed both explicitly and implicitly. When reading the problem pages, for example, we are with Joy when she stops reading one problem before reaching the end, hastily moving on to the next.

Maxims

A maxim is an expression of general truth or principle. Formulating maxims for her own life seems to be just one way of Joy imposing some control over the chaos of her mind. In the early stages of the novel she repeats ‘This is the Way Things are Now’ as events unfold. Later, at Foresthouse, she diversifies, telling herself ‘general truths’ such as: ‘The More SomethingHurts, the More it can Teach me’ and ‘Persistence is the Only Thing That Works’. She seems to be trying to teach herself how to cope, yet her own life lessons seem to be punitive. She is a little less hard on herself towards the end: ‘It’s OK to have Bad Days’ though she still balances this with ‘Everything Worth Having is Hard as Nails.’ Learners could consider the pattern that emerges in Joy’s creations and recitation of these maxims over the course of the novel. They
should think about how this pattern relates to the progression of Joy’s breakdown and recovery.

**Marking of time**

Particularly in the early stages of the novel and when Joy first goes to Foresthouse, she marks time as it passes, so that her narrative seems to be structured more like a diary entry. The effect in both cases is to slow down the pace of events and events are explored hour by hour. Later, when at Foresthouse, this marking of time much more closely resembles a diary and documents day-by-day events on the ward. This speeds the pace up, and the content of the ‘diary’ seems to indicate that each day is eventful. Joy becomes more accustomed to life at Foresthouse, such as it is.

**Annotations**

Occasionally, notes appear in the margin as the accompaniment to the main body of text. A student might do this as they are reading a textbook in order to record the thoughts they are having as they read. Here, it seems as if Joy is recording her additional thoughts as she recalls different events. The text of the annotations is always fractured and we are never able to read full sentences. It seems that some words have been cut off the edge of the page. Learners might consider that this mimics the fractured nature of Joy’s own thoughts. This device is used less often than the others, appearing briefly on page 50 and making another quick appearance as Joy recalls the memorial service. Appearances become more regular when Joy begins her treatment at Foresthouse. At this point the content of the annotations seems to centre on a ‘feeling of déjà vu’. Galloway’s use of the device intensifies during the retelling of the events of Joy’s outing to dinner with Tony, which culminates in date rape. Annotations at this point mention ‘warnings’, ‘the worst’ happening and ‘we can only blame ourselves’. Learners might make links between the content of all of these ‘fractured’ annotations and Joy’s reading, maybe of magazine articles, but most likely her reading of books like *Courage and Bereavement* and the other self-help books that she mentions on pages 195–196. The fact that the link can be made seems to suggest that there is the potential for Joy to pull her tangle of thoughts together. It would be useful for learners to consider how successful Joy has been in doing this by the end of the novel.

**Flashbacks and dreams of Michael's death**

Joy’s flashbacks to the moments leading up to and the period immediately following Michael’s death are a regular occurrence throughout the novel. Learners should note the events that are occurring in real time in Joy’s life as links could be made between these and the nature of her memories. It could be that there are certain circumstances that trigger these flashbacks. Another useful exercise would be to note how the content of the memory changes over the course of the novel. To begin with, when she remembers the moments when she discovers that Michael is dead, she avoids admitting that the body on the tiles is Michael. The imagery used is very disturbing and creates an uneasy atmosphere. Joy seems to remember many irrelevant details from the scene too, such as the flowers by the swimming pool. As the novel progresses, Joy recalls the immediate aftermath, the way she was treated in midst of the
funeral arrangements. Later the flashbacks take the form of dreams, where Joy imagines herself back with Michael. The final flashback begins with the words ‘The night before he died …’ Joy remembers clearly events from that evening leading right up to the next morning when Michael leaves her side to go for a swim. The atmosphere is not distressing as in earlier recollections of this time. By recalling the event in this way, Joy seems to say a real goodbye to Michael and there is a sense that she has accepted his death. Links could be made between the changes in the memory and the change in Joy’s character over time. Learners could track the flashbacks throughout the novel, making links between the way that the flashbacks evolve and Joy’s grieving process.

Irregular layout of text

Galloway sometimes strays from using regular sentences and paragraphs, choosing to arrange the words in a certain shape or pattern in order to create an effect. Examples include Joy’s laying out of the tea things when the health visitor arrives at the house. The sloping appearance of the list of items seems to suggest that the process is routine and comfortable for Joy until the pattern is disrupted (page 20) because she realises that she has no biscuits. She appears to scream:

the biscuits
the biscuits

At other times, there is no discernible visual pattern on the page. For example, when Joy returns to Foresthouse following her distressing encounter with Tony, she seems to have a difficult episode where she completely loses control of her thoughts. Neither the words on the pages nor the visual pattern that they are arranged in seem to make any sense. There are many instances of this technique at work in the novel and learners could analyse a number of examples, trying to determine how the layout affects the meaning in each case.
Activity 1: Narrative techniques – Scripted conversations

Re-read pages 50–54.
In this activity, you will focus on Galloway’s use of the scripting technique. For each example, explain how effectively this scripting technique reveals elements of Joy’s character. You must use quotations in your answer.

You could use the following prompts to guide their analysis of character:
- her skewed perception of other people and their intentions
- her compulsiveness and worrying
- her dark sense of humour in the face of adversity
- her feelings of detachment from herself.

Note that the extract has four distinct ‘scripts’:
- pages 50–51: the way Joy remembers a typical appointment with Dr Stead
- pages 51–52: first ‘rehearsal’ for this appointment with Dr Stead
- page 52–53: second ‘rehearsal for this appointment with Dr Stead
- pages 53–54: the actual conversation with Dr Stead (non-scripted).
Activity 2: Narrative techniques – Flashbacks and dreams

This activity aims to deepen your understanding of the use of flashbacks and dreams as a narrative technique. You will explore how the technique is used effectively to reveal aspects of Joy’s character and how that character changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Content of flashback/dream</th>
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| 6–57    | 9: Joy recalls the moment that Michael got up to go swimming while she continued sunbathing.  
16/17: She looks over at the pool and notices men circling around it. She doesn’t know yet what they are staring at.  
29: The same moment again. Time moves very slowly between Joy putting her shirt on and a little boy dragging her towards Michael's body, which is in the middle of the circle of men.  
39: She continues to walk towards the circle. She finally arrives there and sees Michael's body lying on the ground. |
| 72–101  | 80: The moment that she realises he’s dead.  
99: Another very brief flash to that moment.  
101: Joy’s memories shift to the journey home from the holiday after Michael’s death. |
| 101–128 | 118: Joy recalls waiting for Michael’s body to be returned to the UK. She recalls being shut out of the preparations for his funeral by his wife and family. |
| 128–138 | 138: The italicised sections start to take on the character of dreams. |
| 138–172 | 152: Joy dreams that Michael is in bed with her.  
166: Joy remembers what Michael’s body looked like just after his death. She wonders if he might have committed suicide. |
| 172–178 | No flashbacks or dreams. |
| 177–188 | 184: Another memory of Michael’s body in the hospital. The structure is more broken up and irregular here.  
185: She recalls the hospital again and the moment that she discovered he was dead. |
| 189–216 | 210: Joy dreams that she is with Michael in a secluded spot and he is taking her to a site where ‘someone’ is buried. |
| 216–217 | No flashbacks or dreams. |
| 218–227 | 223: Joy dreams that she is on a ship and hears Michael’s voice talking to her. When she does see him he appears as he did when he was laid out beside the swimming pool after drowning. She realises that he is not really there.  
226: She dreams that Michael is telling her that they can continue to meet secretly in a derelict building. However, she realises again that the man speaking to her is not Michael. |
| 228–235 | 231: Joy recalls her time with Michael, starting from the night before his drowning right up to the moment he walks away from her to go swimming. |
Questions on flashbacks and dreams

1. a) Look back over all of the flashbacks that occur between pages 9 and 99. When read in sequence they deal with the moments immediately before and after Michael’s drowning. Joy observes a range of details from the moments as they pass. Write down some that you find particularly striking.

b) Write down any images or ideas that are repeated across the flashbacks.

c) Reflect on your findings so far. What is being revealed about Joy’s character at this stage in the novel through the way in which she remembers Michael’s death?

2. Contrast the flashbacks on pages 166 and 184. What are the differences in structure and layout? In each case, think about recent events in Joy’s life. How have they had an impact on the way that she remembers Michael’s death?

3. Look at Joy’s dreams on pages 210, 223 and 226. What do the content of these dreams tell us about the stage of ‘recovery’ that Joy has reached?

4. What makes the final flashback on page 231 different to all of the other flashbacks and dreams? What does it suggest about Joy’s future?
The effectiveness of the ending of the novel

Possible approach

The aim of this learning activity is help learners to evaluate how effectively Galloway ends the novel, with reference to all of the literary techniques and devices that they have studied (outlined below). A further line of investigation could be for learners to decide how close Joy has come to recovery from her illness and to what extent she still has work to do.

The activity would work well with the think, pair, share approach or with clock partners.

- Relationship with Tony
- Relationship with Paul
- Flashbacks/dreams
- Settings: Joy's cottage and Michael's house
- Joy's maxims
- What Joy is reading
- How Joy copes with a difficult situation: meeting Norma Fisher

Themes

The aim of this activity is for you to pull together their learning from across the text to show how it links to particular themes. Once you have reviewed your findings, you should attempt to draw some conclusions as to what Janice Galloway's key messages are.

Your teacher will assign each group of four one of the themes below. Each group member should be assigned a number 1–4. It doesn't matter if there is more than one group tackling a single theme. They will have a time limit in which to research their own notes, as well as the text, to find evidence of their theme in action. They must prepare a flipchart/note page which they will refer to during an ‘expert gallery tour’.

When all of the posters are displayed, all of the number 1s will come together, as well as all of the number 2s and so on. These new groups will work their way round the displays. When the new group arrives at the display of an individual member, that learner must take on the role of teacher, presenting the group’s findings to the rest. At this point staff can step in to support groups as appropriate.

Themes in The Trick is to Keep Breathing

- Bereavement
- Survival
- Mental Ill-health
- Self-perception
A guide for staff

The Trick is to Keep Breathing is a very powerful novel about how a young woman copes after losing everything good in her life. The story of Joy’s rapidly deteriorating mental health will be hard-hitting for some learners. Janice Galloway’s writing is extremely engaging and should stimulate a lot of interesting discussion around overlapping themes that are sometimes difficult to talk about, but certainly worth sharing with young people.

Bereavement

Joy’s depression seems to stem from the loss of her partner, Michael Fisher. We discover other contributing factors from earlier in Joy’s life that can also explain her unhappiness, but we can conclude that Michael’s death must have set her current distress in motion. Over the course of the novel we see Joy move through different stages of bereavement. What is interesting is that, at times, Joy seems to be recovering only to get worse a few pages later. To begin with Joy seems to ponder over every detail of the moments of Michael’s death without actually dealing with the fact that he is dead. Towards the end there are signs that she has accepted that he is no longer there. Arguably, her recovery is not complete. Even though Joy has made a lot of changes in her life, some old habits still remain.

Survival

Despite her worsening situation, it is clear that Joy employs a number of coping mechanisms to get herself through difficult times. Some are successful while others are counter-productive. She is compulsively clean and tidy, a habit that developed when she lived with her ex-fiancé Paul. She keeps Michael’s council house immaculately clean, although she is never satisfied with her work. She likes to keep her hands busy with newspaper clippings, baking and sewing. She obsesses over her own cleanliness and appearance too and has developed bulimia. Each of these is a way of Joy imposing control over the situation. This is also shown in her need to list things, often as a way of ordering her thoughts. Sometimes the effect is humourous, while at other times the effort seems futile because her situation is so desperate. She is also reluctant to fully accept the help of others. She often convinces herself that the help of doctors isn’t going to work, or decides to tell people what she thinks they want to hear. We might conclude that Joy is resisting help because it would mean saying goodbye to Michael. She maybe sees her current pain as all that she has left of him.

Mental ill-health

Joy’s thoughts and actions are often irrational and beyond her control. She has compulsions and obsessions, as mentioned above. Some of her behaviour is self-destructive: she engages in self-harm and alcoholism. She stops eating properly, occasionally engaging in bingeing and bulimia. In moments of distress, her train of thought drifts, disrupted by difficult memories. Occasionally we find her trying to deal with multiple memories at the same time and Galloway makes clear the distress that this causes. Joy also seems paranoid, often second guessing what people think of her.
As mentioned above, the novel reveals a number factors that might contribute to Joy’s depression.

Mental health is a broad topic and the websites below are included as a means of helping learners to engage with the theme.
http://www.samh.org.uk/home.aspx
http://www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk/bspace/CCC_FirstPage.jsp
http://www.seemescotland.org/

Self-perception

It becomes clear to the reader that Joy is an intelligent woman with a wicked sense of humour, yet she has a very low opinion of herself. We see this in the way she submits to the wishes of others, seeing their needs as more important than her own. This is particularly true of her relationship with her boss Tony. She portrays him as unattractive and unlikeable, yet sleeps with him because he was kind enough to take her out. Joy is clearly loved by a lot of people: Marianne is in constant contact with her, Marianne’s mother, Ellen, does her best to look out for her, David comes back into her life in an attempt to offer her support. When Joy is in hospital, colleagues and pupils come to visit her, and seem to enjoy her company. Yet all that Joy can say is that ‘maybe there is less to [her] than a lot of people think.’
Exploring Themes

**Task:** Each group is going to be assigned one of the key themes of the novel from the list below:

- Love
- Loss/Bereavment
- Survival
- Loss of Identity/Alienation
- Inner Conflict/Self-Perception

Your group must prepare a presentation for the rest of the class (approx. 30 mins) to explain how your theme is conveyed through the novel. You should consider:

- Characterisation
- Setting
- Plot
- Narrative Structure/Typography
- Imagery
- And any other appropriate feature.

In addition to this you must prepare a **handout** for the rest of the class as a revision tool. These must be emailed to your teacher or posted on Edmodo for the rest of the class to access **in advance** of your actual presentation!

Your presentations will be filmed and then assessed as a talk assessment therefore it is imperative that everyone in the group participates **equally**. Attached is a copy of the assessment criteria for talk at Higher.

Remember you are the ‘experts’ whose job it is to teach the others about your particular theme. Once you have ‘taught’ your theme you should also have a five/ten minute activity for your classmates to **demonstrate** that they have learned something from your presentations. This could be a quiz, a discussion, a think-pair-share activity, a diagram… the list is endless!

At the end of each group’s presentations the teacher shall collect in any questions which are left unanswered in the anonymous question box and the class will review them together once all the presentations are complete.

You will have **three periods** in class time to prepare these presentations with support from your teacher. Any additional time required must be arranged within the group itself.
Creation and Production

Outcome 2: Take part in detailed and complex spoken interactions

Task: Show understanding, analysis and evaluation of a key theme of the novel ‘The Trick is To Keep Breathing’ in an oral presentation to the class.

Candidate Name: ____________________________________________________________
Date: __________________________________________________________

2.1 Selecting significant ideas and content, using a format and structure appropriate to purpose and audience.

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<th>Positives</th>
<th>Next Steps?</th>
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2.2 Applying knowledge and understanding of language, in terms of language choice

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2.3 Communicating meaning at first hearing

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2.4 Using significant aspects of non-verbal communication

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Overall Comments:

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## Moods in *Trick is to Keep Breathing*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Key Scene</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear/panic/anxiety</td>
<td>Waiting to go to Dr Stead&lt;br&gt;Myra is at the door&lt;br&gt;Phoning Paul about Myra&lt;br&gt;The funeral&lt;br&gt;Hallowe’en party&lt;br&gt;Her big breakdown at Christmas&lt;br&gt;When Tony phones at night&lt;br&gt;Michael – “she knows”&lt;br&gt;In the car with Tony/after the rape&lt;br&gt;After Michael’s death in the flashbacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Michael’s aftershave&lt;br&gt;Alone at the start of the novel&lt;br&gt;On her birthday/suicide attempt&lt;br&gt;Thinking about the waves and walking into the sea&lt;br&gt;At the ski slope with Marianne&lt;br&gt;After Tony?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trapped/vulnerable</td>
<td>Myra&lt;br&gt;Phoning Paul to help with Myra&lt;br&gt;In the car with Tony&lt;br&gt;At the betting shop&lt;br&gt;Tony’s attack&lt;br&gt;Tony gives her money&lt;br&gt;At work/during the memorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of control (manic)/Not in control (passive)</td>
<td>Her biggest breakdown&lt;br&gt;Cuts herself with the soup tin&lt;br&gt;When in Foresthouse – controlled there.&lt;br&gt;Flashbacks&lt;br&gt;Myra&lt;br&gt;At the memorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat/danger (possibly sense of impending doom)</td>
<td>Myra&lt;br&gt;Tony&lt;br&gt;Mushrooms (Flashbacks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation/neglect</td>
<td>In Foresthouse&lt;br&gt;In the car with her work colleagues&lt;br&gt;Alone at the start of the novel&lt;br&gt;At the memorial</td>
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</table>
Dr telling her to get better – that he’s not going to do anything else to treat her
Hiding in the other room in Foresthouse
In Spain
On the airplane

| **Self loathing/helpless/useless/weak** | Bathing ritual
| | Blames herself for Michael’s death
| | When Michael dies
| | In the supermarket – her reflection
| | Going out with the Foresthouse patients
| | Getting ready for date with Tony
| | Maxims – you always expect too much, etc
| | Frank – I thought you had more fight than that
| | Flashbacks
| | Mr Peach
| | Mr Dick |
How to lay out your answer to a 10 mark Q.

Use headings:

**Commonality** (2 marks):

- What does the extract have in common with another part of the text?
- Say how the thing asked for in the Question appears in the extract. (1)
- Say how the thing asked for in the Question appears elsewhere. Be specific – give examples. (1)
- You don’t need to quote here – you get no marks for doing so!

**This Extract** (2 marks):

- Two quotes + comment related to the question for 1 mark each
  - “Quote” + comment (1)
  - “Quote” + comment (1)

**Rest of the text** (6 marks)

- Three quotes + comment related to the question for 1 mark each (though reference to the text will be acceptable)
  - “Quote” + detailed comment (2) x 3
    - or
  - “Quote” + shorter comment (1) x 6
    - Or
    - Combination of detailed and shorter comments with quotations

**Quote:** “the next thing I knew, I’d pushed my hand right inside the can. The semi-solid mush seethed and slumped over the sides...the torn rim scored the skin”

**Comment:**

- Joy actually **physically hurts herself** on the can, here, and seems to enjoy it. This is not a normal reaction to food. (1)
- It’s almost, though, as if she **isn’t even in control of herself** as she does this – ‘the next thing I knew’ makes it sound as if there was another force compelling her to do this. (1)

**Ref to text:** when Joy pushes her hand into the soup and squishes it about, cutting herself in the process, almost as if she can’t stop herself.

- Joy actually **physically hurts herself** on the can, here, and seems to enjoy it. This is not a normal reaction to food. (1)
- It’s almost, though, as if she **isn’t even in control of herself** as she does this she makes it sound as if there was another force compelling her to do this. (1)
If you don’t remember quotes but you remember what the text says, you can REFER TO THE TEXT instead (the marking scheme allows this).

Instead of trying to quote, write:

Ref to text: and then write what you want to say in your own words. Analyse what you learn about the thing asked in the Q from that incident/example.
Critical Reading Practice

The following questions will help you practice exam technique for Section 1 of the Critical Reading paper. In this section you will be presented with extracts from the novel and some textual analysis style questions. The last question in this section will always ask you to demonstrate you knowledge of the text as a whole and is worth 10 marks.

The First Consultation at Foresthouse (pgs 102-105)

‘I ended up in a grey brown room…’ to ‘LESSON 4: Psychiatrists are just like all the rest.’

1. Analyse how Galloway uses at least two features of language effectively to create an oppressive atmosphere. (4)
2. a. ‘All three things whispered in my ears like Angels and Devils in a TV cartoon…’. Explain how effective this image is in conveying how Joy feels about the thoughts that are running through her head. (2)
   b. Analyse a similar use of imagery on the same page. How appropriate do you find both images to the subject matter they are describing? (2)
3. Analyse how at least one example of typography is effective in conveying Joy’s feelings in this section. (2)
4. Making close reference to this section and the novel as a whole, show how Galloway conveys Joy’s need to impose control on difficult situations. (10)

Potential Answers

1. Explain how Galloway uses language effectively to create an oppressive atmosphere.
2. ‘All three things whispered in my ears like Angels and Devils in a TV cartoon…’. Explain how effective this image is in conveying how Joy feels about the thoughts that are running through her head.
3. Analyse a similar use of imagery on the same page. How appropriate do you find both images to the subject matter they are describing?
4. With close reference to page 104, describe how Joy feels as she tells her story to the doctor. Making close reference to this section and the novel as a whole, show how Galloway conveys Joy’s need to impose control on difficult situations.

Joy writes to Marianne from Foresthouse (pages 119–121)

1. ‘You can see the corridor striplight … ‘ to ‘… you’d be proud of me instead.’
   With close reference to the text on page 119, discuss how the writer makes clear Joy’s lack of certainty about the world around her at this point.
2. Discuss how language and ideas are used on page 120 to convey Joy’s state of mind.
3. Why does Joy change the ending of her letter?
4. With close reference to this extract and to elsewhere in the novel, discuss how the theme of order is explored. (10)
Joy as a Patient at Foresthouse (pgs 140-141)

‘The end room…’ to ‘…worse than children.’

1. What do the opening two paragraphs indicate about joy’s personality? You should comment on two references.
2. Discuss the means by which the writer gives us a sense of Joy’s state of mind up to the point where Joy’s journal is about to start.
3. With close reference to the first three days of Joy’s journal, discuss the means by which we learn about Joy and her situation in the hospital at this point.
4. With close reference to this extract and to other parts of the text, discuss how Joy’s interaction with two other characters reveals aspects of her character.

Joy’s most intense breakdown at Foresthouse (pages 184–187)

‘One of the nurses …’ to ‘It’s dawning on me where I am.’

1. What has been happening in Joy’s life to make her so distressed at this point in the novel?
2. Comment on the high level of detail conveyed in both of Joy’s flashbacks to Michael’s death. Explain why so many details feature.
3. How is sentence structure (or lack of it) and layout on page 184 used to convey Joy’s unwillingness to acknowledge the horror of Michael’s death?
4. ‘… it starts again …’ page 186. Explain what the ‘it’ that Joy is referring to is.
5. Read from ‘…it starts again …’ to ‘…more to COME’
   Explain what makes this Joy’s most intense episode in the novel so far.
6. With reference to this incident and the novel as a whole, show how effectively Galloway conveys the fragmented nature of Joy’s mind.
Mushrooms...

One night, he got out of bed and didn’t come back for a while. It was 2am. I got uneasy about it. I found him in the kitchenette, right at the back of the cottage, turning lilac in the cold. He was kneeling on the concrete looking at something. I kneeled down too and tried to see what it was. There was a mushroom growing out of the skirting. LOOK he said, LOOK. We didn’t know what to think. I poked it with a fork and it broke off. We went back to bed and tried to forget about it.

We were in the kitchen cooking: I was throwing spaghetti onto the roughcast to see if it was ready while he was stirring sauce. The spaghetti landed awkwardly and I saw another mushroom right next to where I had settled on the wall. LOOK I said and we both looked again. This one was more securely attached. It didn’t break the time so Michael got a knife and cut it away from the side of the window. It left a little pink trail anaemic blood where it had been growing. After a month there were little shoots all along the hallway. Mould drew lines round the tops of walls and baby mushrooms appeared overnight. I wouldn’t let him touch them because I thought they were dangerous or something. I didn’t know where they were coming from and preferred just to let them alone in case. In case. Maybe I thought they would go away if we pretended hard enough. Every so often, I would find him in the hall or the kitchen, peering down and scratching with a penknife, then trying to hide when he saw me coming. I would hear him in the bathroom, running the taps and washing his hands. He got a book from the library and read up about mushrooms.

Dry rot, he said, matter-of-factly.

Dry rot. He gave me the book so I could read about it too. It was more sinister than the name. The house was being eaten from the inside by this thing. The spores could pass through concrete and plaster and multiplied by the thousand thousand as we slept. They could take over the whole structure if they wanted. I lay awake at night wondering what was going on out there in the hall while we were in our beds. The estimates for fixing it were unbelievable. I started having trouble sleeping. I avoided looking at the walls or skirting during the day.

This section from the novel takes place before Michael’s death. We can see that even before the tragedy that Joy was always quite an anxious person. Highlight words and phrases to show this.

The marginalia in this section is quite obvious. What is its purpose? How does this develop throughout the rest of the novel? How does it tie back to the very first page?
Critical essay questions

1. Choose a novel in which the method of narration plays a part in its success. Describe the method of narration and explain why you feel it contributes to the success of the text as a whole.

2. Choose a novel in which a central character is experiencing difficulties in his or her life. Explain briefly the nature of the difficulties and discuss how the character’s response to the situation extends your understanding of him/her.

3. Choose a novel in which symbolism contributes to its impact. Explain how the writer uses symbolism and why it is important to your appreciation of the text.

4. Choose a novel in which the central character has aroused a variety of emotions in you. Explain how the writer has created a character who has made you feel various emotions, and discuss how this contributes to your appreciation of the text as a whole.

5. Choose a novel in which loss or isolation or loneliness plays a significant part. Explain how the writer makes you aware of this aspect of the text and discuss how the writer’s exploration of it enhances your understanding of the text as a whole.
The Trick is to Keep Breathing by Janice Galloway
Revision Notes

Read to p17
• Discuss the way(s) in which Joy is alienated. Think about setting, her relationships with others (work and personal e.g. Marianne, women in the car, men at the bookies, especially Tony) and society in general.

Read to page 22
• Comment on the lead up to the health visitor’s visit and the visit itself. Use quotes to back up your points.
• What do we learn about Joy?
• Why is their conversation set out this way?
• How effective is this as a way of expressing her feelings of alienation?

P23-43
• Identify the ways she is marginalized in her part-time job.
• Think about her relationship with Paul. Why does the relationship break down?
• Consider why ‘You Always Expect Too Much’ (p23) is written like this. Find more examples.
• What do they tell us about Joy?
  What purpose(s) do the lists that Joy makes serve? (P37-39)

p46-48
• Comment on how the language used in The Bathing Ritual’ defines Joy’s view of this experience.
• Analyse how the language emphasizes the theme of isolation.
• What does the "sometimes" at the edge of P49 tell us about Joy?

P50-53
• Consider why Joy can’t communicate with the doctor.

P55-57 ("You can never be too careful")
• What does the phone symbolise in the novel?
- Examine how the paragraph at the bottom of P57 onto P58 makes clear Joys feelings about the phone.
- What does this reveal about Joy?

P58-72
- Comment on Joy’s relationship with her sister.
- Analyse how the language conveys how she feels about Myra.

P72-79
- What is the attitude of the headmaster towards Joy?
- How does the memorial service affect her?
- Analyse how what happens at the memorial service reinforces the theme of superficiality within the novel.

Read page 84-87
- What is the purpose of the 'Health Update; Ultimate Diet' on

Read p92-100
- Discuss Joy’s relationship with Tony.
- Why does Joy leave a note for the doctor?

Read p103-108
- Why does Joy call the doctor 'Doctor 1'?
- Why does Joy tell him about her mother?
- What further insight does this give us into Joy's background?
  "You have to try" (p103)
- What does Joy mean by this?
- To what extent does she try?
- What is the effect of 'the mouth said' on p103?
- How does the paragraph at the top of p104 continue the effect?
- Find other quotes which have the same effect on p105.
- What is Joy's attitude to the phone on p109? How does the language convey her attitude?
- What does this attitude tell us about her?

Page 110 - 'Sometimes, that feeling, déjà vu'
- Why is that here beside this particular paragraph?
- What is the effect of giving Joy pyjamas for an 11 year old girl?

Pg 120 – 142
- How is ward ID different from the rest of the hospital? (p120 & 125). Use quotes to support your answer.
- Examine the conversation Joy has with the male nurse on Pg 137 about her pyjamas. Why is this exchange ironic?
- Think about Joy’s feelings about the hospital, how she interacts with David & Ellen etc. How does Joy feel when she is with David?
- Comment on David's relationship with Joy. Use quotes to back up your answer.

Pg 149 – 156
• How does Joy act when the man comes to collect Michaels' things on behalf of Norma? Find other examples of this sentiment.
• Why is this a recurring theme in the book?
• Find three quotes on p156 which highlight Joy's feelings of alienation.

Pg 173 -184
• Examine the language used to describe the interaction between Joy and Tony on p173-176.
• How does this reinforce our idea of Joy's relationships with men?
• In what way is the writing on the edge of the page linked to what is happening in the story?
• What does "People know who I am." (p181) suggest about Joy?
• "I want to be held, I want to be found" (p184) How is this sentiment different to what Joy has expressed before?
• How does Joy convey how disconnected she feels from herself?

• What does Joy’s re-telling of her family history suggest?
• Read Pg 198. What change is there in Joy's attitude to her situation? How does this affect her?

Pg 203- 218
• What changes do we see in Joy towards the end of the novel? Use quotations as evidence.
• Read the scripted conversation on Pgs 208 and 209. How does her behaviour towards Tony change? Give quotations as evidence.
• How does Joy achieve closure with Paul?
• How does she achieve closure with Michael?
• How have her flashbacks changed?
• Read the scripted conversation which starts on pg 212. Explain what you learn about Joy and Paul during this conversation.
• How does her visit home show Joy’s development?

219 to 225
• Why are the problems from the magazine included? How does Joy change in her point of view about them?
• Show how Joy’s flashbacks now demonstrate her moving on.
• Explain the impact of Frank’s visit on Joy.

226 to 231
• Joy visits the cemetery (pg 228). Why is this significant?
• How might the ‘squares of turf’ be symbolic?
• What is her final realization at the cemetery?
• How does Joy feel when she sees Norma? Use quotations as evidence.
• We see Joy’s final flashback. What is different about this one?

Pg 232 – 236
• What is the significance of
  o Joy not going to work?
  o Joy doing laundry/tidying the house?
  o Joy moving the pink plastic fish?

J Tindall, Drummond CHS
Making marmalade for Dr Stead?
The Christmas lights?

- Joy makes plans for the future. What are they and what does this imply?
- Explain how the title of the novel is dealt with on pg 235.
- Why is it important that Joy forgives herself?
- What is the impact of the final paragraph?

Quotations

“They never give you any warning’

“Liquid black. Still wet. It seeps when I put my foot near, bleeding at the rim of leather, sucking at the sole.”

“Baked Alaska – new style. Making the most of summer’s late harvest. Our Best Ever Chocolate Cake. 7 Meals that Make in Minutes. Diet for a firmer new you! Converting a Victorian schoolhouse into a des res! How do the royals keep looking good? Kiss me Quick Lips – we show you how!”

“On Saturday I work with men.”

“His face lights up when he tells these jokes. Any other way, he looks wrong. At the funeral, wearing a black suit and tie he settled on the grass and offered me a job in the bookies. Pleasure in breaking little rules.”

“BOSS: Yes. No one is against you. You’ll antagonise people if you don’t make an effort.”

“My mouth knew more than the rest of me put together. I had to trust my mouth. I closed my eyes and the mouth said My mother walked into the sea.”

“The angels whispered Try. Dr Stead went to a lot of trouble to get you this appointment. You have to try.”

“Something about me kills people. I’m losing days and drinking too much. I’m not a proper woman...Sometimes I think I don’t exist.”

“When it was over I knew I was smiling. I had been afraid of wasting his time but I knew I had performed with dignity.”

“A good girl stripping for my pink pyjamas...The pyjamas look bloody awful. Tesco’s: girls’ aged 11. Terrible. But this can be a virtue. My renunciation of vanity. And it proves I’m trying.”

“No this what you want? I said. Will this keep you happy?”
“Half-way into the silence for Norma Fisher, my arms were weightless. The rest came piecemeal as the moral started to compute.

1. The Rev Dogsbody had chosen this service to perform a miracle.
2. He’d run time backwards, cleansed, absolved and got rid of the ground-in stain.
3. And the stain was me. I didn’t exist. The miracle had wiped me out.”

“Nothing else to tell me?” she says. “No. Nothing special,” I reply. I know that she’s going to be disappointed with that response, and I can see it in her face. I think she feels that I’m not trying hard enough, that she’s only here for a short while and I should make the most of the visit.

“I have a friend visiting tonight,” I say, wanting to make more of an effort. She’s trying hard with me, after all, and I know I’m expected to try, or how am I supposed to ever get better? She perks up. “Anyone special?” I’m not sure if she’s digging for information about a love interest. “Going out?”

“Just the pub. Have a few drinks. That kind of thing.” It’s not much, but it’s all I can come up with. “Lucky girl. I can’t remember the last time someone took me out. Lucky.” I don’t know if she’s aware of how patronising this sounds. Anyway, I’m glad I’ve been able to lie convincingly.

“I want to be held, I want to be found”

“No matter how often I think I can’t stand it anymore, I always to. There is no alternative. I don’t fall, I don’t foam at the mouth, faint, collapse or die. It’s the same for all of us. You can’t get out of the inside of your own head. Something keeps you going. Something always does”.

“where there’s no danger of people getting too
I wanted to keep my distance. People can be so unpredictable.”

'Sometimes, that feeling, déjá vu'

"He takes the screaming and holds me. I never scream any other time."

“You would think there’s a natural limit to tears: only so much the body can give at one sitting before it runs dry.”

“No matter how dark the room gets I can always see. It looks emptier when I put the lights on so I don’t do it if I can help it. Brightness disagrees with me: it hurts my eyes, wastes electricity and encourages moths, all sorts of things. I sit in the dark for a number of reasons.”

“Needing people yet being afraid of them is wearing me out.”

“where there’s no danger of people getting too
I wanted to keep my distance. People can be so unpredictable.”

“I wanted to keep my distance. People can be so unpredictable.”

“It’s asking for trouble to listen to music alone.”

“I already read everything. I read poems and plays and novels and newspapers and comic books and magazines. I read tins in supermarkets and leaflets that come through the door, unsolicited mail. None of it lasts long and it doesn’t give me answers. Reading too fast is not soothing.”

“The phone is an instrument of intrusion into order. It is a threat to control. Just when you think you are alone and safe, the call could come that changes your life. Or someone else’s. It makes the same flat, mechanical noise for everyone and gives no clues what’s waiting there on the other end of the
line. You can never be too careful."

“God isn’t fooled by mercenary goodness I told myself and went back to manic smiling.”

“it’s a set routine so I don’t need to think. It just uses my body and runs itself’

‘I am the problem’

‘I throw the cup in the bin in case the person it cuts is not me’

‘I can’t be trusted with custard creams’

‘Handling mealtimes is a problem’

“the wind howled and the doors knocked with absent hands, tapping with the draught upstairs. Something fell, thudded against the floor in the empty room.”

“She could track me down and punch me to death. Myra’s like that. She could just stand and scare me to death.”

“Hands like shovels. Myra left marks. None of them show”

“Blood sisters. Sisters grim”

“Everything was still for a long moment. The door shook and thudded heavily once or twice like something he was butting against it from the outside. It creaked as though it was splintering. I KNOW YOU’RE IN THERE”

“Myra whirled in from the black outside, like a dervish”

“I read somewhere the trick is to keep breathing, make out its not unnatural at all.”

“ooo”

“The red beachball”

“The hollow of the ragged O”

“His mouth a red O”

‘Maybe I was pretending he was Paul.’

‘Paul cleaned up the mess. Crying because I was.’

‘Big tears when I think about Paul. I never anticipated a time when the telling of love would just be hurtful.’

‘I should accept kindness for what it is.’ (Tony’s attention)

“especially for his wife especially his wife”
“sound of feathers ruffling”

“I mean NO Tony”

“Scottish Education: apportion blame that ye have not blame apportioned unto you. It wisny me, it was you/him/her/a wee man and he ran away”

“throwing off the sheets and searching, raking through a spill of make-up bag, magazines, paper and pens. Pills are missing... returns with a full needle the bitch the bitch... while the drug snakes a cold up the length of an arm.”

“oops”

‘Now I remember everything all the time. You never know what you might need to recollect later, when the significance of the moment might appear”

“She knows”

“Michael arrived that night with a plastic bag full of socks, a change of jeans and nothing else”

“I toy with suicide”

“The defendant is anxious, depressed, mildly paranoiac and suffering from low self-image”

“If you mean it, you do the thing with no escape clause. You take them all. The whole bloody Cheers.”

“If I answer I have to accept what it says about me. That I don’t want to die. That I don’t want to live very much but I don’t want to die”

“so I scream dammit.
I scream”

“my hand rises level with the mushroom cap. I watch the shaft sink easily into the head...the fungus slithers so far down the lenth of metal then heaves and drops... They are safe today but not much longer.”

“His voice is hollow overhead. He has to go now. He will try to see me again soon... My head fills with bursting bubbles... I reach for his hand and his is no longer there”.

“His mouth is a wide O, eyes open to the sky. No-one else sees and I realise he isn’t there at all. I am entirely alone on this ship, churning on through foreign water”

‘A little boy, five or six, stands with a piece of shirt in one brown fist. Tugging. ... signora you husband is dead

‘There’s a lot to do before she comes but it’s a set routine so I don’t need think’

‘This is the fourth time we have played this fucking game.”
“The house was being eaten from the inside by this thing. The spores could pass through concrete and plaster and multiplied by the thousand thousand as we slept. They could take over the whole structure if they wanted.”

‘You Always Expect Too Much’

“I look down and his mouth is a red O. White water runs through his hair.”

‘I know someone is buried here but he must never know, must never find out. His profile, the curl of hair on his collar. In the moonlight his teeth are unnaturally long, his eyes bright. The grip of his fingers hurts… My neck is numb too. / Soon the sun will rise over the edge of the hill and it will be too late to speak…’

“I don’t know where to put my clothes, how to fold them…it took three days to get him home. They had to call everyday to check. Not to me…”

“The night before he died we went walking along the sea…Lights coming and going. Fireflies. Beads on luminous thread”

“His mouth touched my neck then the shadow length ended, moved into the sun. I’m going to swim. The footsteps measured as he walked away”

“releasing pressure and rebalancing in the chair to accommodate the tilting, adjusting, redistributing pieces of myself”

I remember watching her face changing, and having to acknowledge then that something was wrong’

“I’m here and Michael isn’t. I want to get out of the cold”

“I realise for the first time I’m afraid of Norma Fisher, that she may well be afraid of me.”

“The Bowie poster hides wine stains where I threw a glass at the wall. A wee accident.”

“What will I do while I’m lasting?”

“I’m going to swim…I get hotter…I am vaguely uneasy. Shivering”

“No matter how dark the room gets I can always see.” “Brightness disagrees with me.” “The kitchen is bright, even at this time in the morning.” “I make tea in the dark”

“I’d never have figured. I thought you had more fight than that” (Frank)

“I mean it, he says, come. Must to prove you’re not cuckoo. Half of them probably think you’re in a strait jacket most of the time. They just don’t know” (Frank)

“The box for the lights sifts tinsel stuff down the front of my jeans and onto the carpet…They work first time. Pretty pinks and greens, yellow and blue, glitter on the shades making sparks.”

“I’ll make lists. Things that need to be done for next week or so. The week after that.
After that.”

“Maybe
Maybe I could learn to swim”

“I hear it quite distinctly, my own voice in the empty house. I forgive you.

Nobody needs to know I said it. Nobody needs to know”

“I hear the rise and fall, the surf beating in my lungs. Reach for the bottle. Watch the lights'