

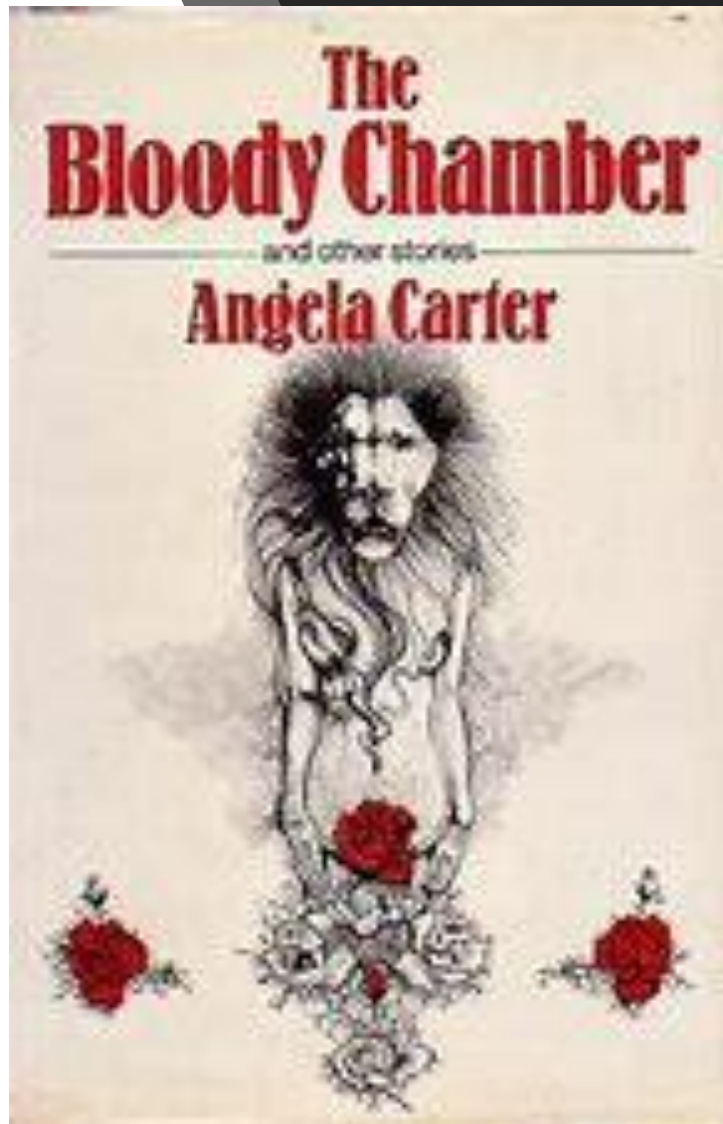
# Dive into the World of Short Stories

The activities in this unit will help you start to make the move from being a great GCSE student of Literature to being a great A Level student- and beyond. The unit is inspired by the English and Media Centre pack 'Making the Leap'.



## Making the Leap:

moving from GCSE to  
A Level Literature study



This sequence of activities is based on a short story 'The Company of Wolves' by Angela Carter. It is from a collection of short fiction 'The Bloody Chamber' by English writer Angela Carter. It was first published in the United Kingdom in 1979 and won the Cheltenham Festival Literary Prize. The stories share a theme of being closely based upon fairytales or folk tales.

The unit is designed to take about 5 hours of concentrated study, with optional extra study activities. Guidance for how long you should spend on each task is provided. Of course, you can choose to spend more time on the task independently.

The final activity is a written response to one of three essay questions. This response should then be submitted to the lead teacher for assessment.



# Activity 1: 30 minutes

A really interesting way of gaining context about texts is to explore what the authors themselves have said about the texts they have written. The internet has a wealth of material available to the A level literature student.

Imagine that whilst browsing on-line one day you come across an interview with Angela Carter. In the interview she, along with the director, Neil Jordan discuss the film adaptation of her story, 'The Company of Wolves'.

- Click on the screen shot and listen to the interview and make some research notes prior to reading the short story 'The Company of Wolves'.
- Make a note of anything you find interesting that either Carter or Jordan say and create a series of questions that you might consider before reading the short story. **Some examples to get you started can be found on the next slide.**



# Example:

## Angela Carter Interview: My Notes



Interesting ideas from the interview:

- Nil Jordan comments that Angela Carter's reading of the fairy-tale is 'wickedly intelligent'
- Carter talks about the wolves representing 'otherness' for example: the forest opposed to the village

Questions to consider before reading the story:

- The opening sequence of the film feels very macabre- why might the story have sinister themes? And what might these themes be given that it is based on a fairy tale?
- Why has Carter chosen this particular fairy tale to re-write?



# Activity 2: 30 minutes

Now read the story. Sometimes as a student of literature you'll be asked to pause, to reflect on what you have just read, to predict what you think will happen. Other times you will want simply to immerse yourself in a story and read it in one setting, before thinking about what it means, how it is written and how it makes you feel. In this case, the choice is up to you.

As soon as you have finished reading, start to explore your response either in writing or by recording your thinking out loud on your phone.

Pull together your thinking by crystallising for yourself what you think the story is about. Write this into a paragraph of your thoughts....

'The Company of Wolves' is about.... and....because...but it could also be about.... because...

*Remember, you are being asked for YOUR thoughts on the story so you cannot be wrong but you do need to be able to justify your ideas.*



# Activity 3: 45 minutes

- I. All of the following words and phrases appear in the story. Use a large dictionary, e.g. a Collins or Oxford Concise, to find out what they mean:

carnivore incarnate	benighted	wraith
aria	trepidation	acrid
canticles	irremediable	solstice
phosphorescent	metamorphosis	lycanthrope
pentacle	fungi	cuneiform
wideawake hat	disingenuously	pious
prophylactic	feral muzzle	vellum
diabolic	threnody	integument
prothalamion	Liebstd	Walpurgisnacht

Example:  
Feral= ferocious,  
wild, savage.  
Muzzle = nose ,  
mouth jaw of animal  
such as wolf or dog.  
'His feral muzzle is as  
sharp as a knife'

Now re-read the story to see the vocabulary in context of the text

# Activity 4: Annotate the text or make notes for each of the questions: 60 minutes

As the story opens, what two colours do the wolf's eyes reflect; what objects do they reflect and what might the reflections mean?

Why, as the narrator says, should you be frightened of the wolves?

The narrator gives some examples of how wolves can be the enemy of humans. List three.

In the fourth example (of a man who vanished on his wedding night), why has the groom gone outside?

How is an eerie setting created for the man's disappearance?

What did his wife do because he didn't return?

What happened on the winter solstice?

What is a werewolf and how long is his natural lifespan?

A new story begins with 'It is midwinter...' Which fairy story do the first two paragraphs remind you of?

The colour red has already been referred to a number of times. What connotations does it have in the story as a whole (e.g. red for danger, q.2) and in particular in the second paragraph of this new story?

What simile is used to describe the girl's entry into the forest and what does it suggest?

Describe the man she meets there.

Quote the first indication you have that this man might be a werewolf.

# Activity 4: Annotate the text or make notes for each of the questions

Find two more suggestions that he might be a werewolf.

What does the man do to grandmother?

How does the writer use the language of a fairy story when the girl arrives at her grandmother's cottage?

How does the writer create an eerie atmosphere when the girl looks through the window at the wolves? Think of: sights (e.g. colours), sounds, movement, literary devices (e.g. alliteration, similes) and how these contribute to the scene.

At the end of the story, why does the wolf not eat the girl?

How else does this story end differently from the traditional fairy tale version?



# Activity 5: 75 minutes

1. Choose an essay title.
2. **Plan your response. Suggested planning pro-formas have been provided.** Effective literature students start with their own ideas AND make use of the wealth of on-line and paper based study packs available.

On the next slide are two on-line resources that you can use to support your planning for your response. Do NOT plagiarise ideas- use the guides and articles to inspire and further your own analysis of the text.

The slides after have planning pro-formas you may choose to use.

**How does Angela Carter present the character of the Wolf in 'The Company of Wolves'?**

**Or**

**How does Angela Carter retell the classic fairy tale 'Little Red Riding Hood' as a feminist story?**

**Or**

**How is 'The Company of Wolves' a Gothic piece of literature?**

<https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/angela-carters-wolf-tales>

The British Library on-line is a fabulous resource for A Level students in many subjects.

NOA A Level students are able to make use of the English and Media Centre E-magazine and its archives which include articles and e-clips.

<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk>

Log in to the E-Magazine:

Username: NOALibrary

Password: Library2018

Search the emagazine archive for: The Company of Wolves or Angela Carter for relevant articles.

What is the debate/task/title of the essay?

What does the question in the task actually asking me to explore and consider?

What is the writer's purpose/intent in writing the text?

Key words and terminology I will use when writing about the text:

My Argument 1:

Evidence/references I will use?

Methods being used? Language? Structure?

Argument 2:

Evidence/references? (start/middle/end)

Methods?

Argument 3:

Evidence/references? (start/middle/end)

Methods?

What connections could I make between text and the context it is written in or my own context as a reader?

How does the writer want me to think/feel by the end of the text? Why?

Are there any critical interpretations by the author or other writer's I could include?

Can I look at the text from a critical viewpoint such as a feminist or Marxist reader?

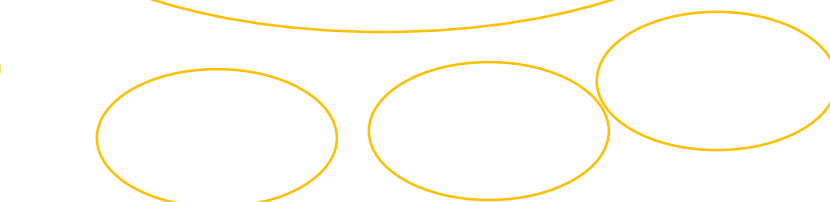
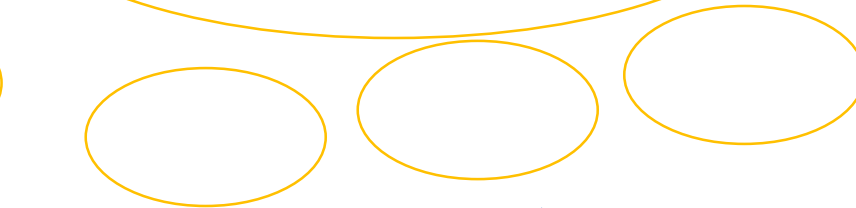
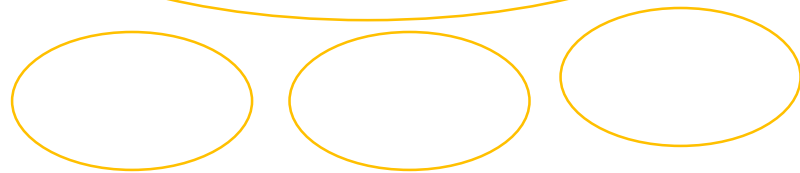
# Question

THESIS STATEMENT

POINT 1 &  
evidence

POINT 2 &  
evidence

POINT 3 &  
evidence



SUPPORTING QUOTES/METHOD

SUPPORTING QUOTES/METHOD

SUPPORTING QUOTES/METHOD

Activity 6: Essay response: 60 minutes.

Once you have completed your essay, submit it for assessment.

Use you plan to write your full response to your chosen essay.

Start with a really interesting Thesis statement or introductory argument.

Remember to explore and develop your ideas using What? How? Why? questions as you write and include thoughtful and detailed analysis of language and structure method.

Thesis Statement:

Angela Carter's "The Company of Wolves" is a feminist and gothic retelling of the classic fairy tale "Little Red Riding-Hood". Carter's story involves the werewolf as sexual predator, a symbol for both danger and desire, over which a young girl triumphs, employing her new found sexual power and giving in to the symbol of carnal desire. This is definitely a new twist upon the original tale, in which the helpless girl and her grandmother are freed from the belly of a wolf by a passing man, as they were unable to fend for themselves.

# Optional Extra Study for this unit

One of the joys of literature studies is that whilst you are reading one text, you are often introduced to other texts or new ideas or resources that you then want to go and explore yourself.

Some suggestions....

Read other stories from Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber'. Lots of these are available as free PDF downloads.

Research traditions related to Wolves in Literature.

Explore the English and Media Centre e-magazine for articles about feminist readings of texts you have read or would like to read.

Read some of the original cautionary or fairy tales or read or watch other texts based on these stories. For example: Little Red Cap a poem by Carol Anne Duffy and the film 'Tale of Tales' based on old Italian fairy tales- not to mention everything Disney!