



# CAIUS EXPLORE

## Modern and Medieval Languages

### **The Task:**

Write an essay about your response to a work of literature or visual art. You can write about the work as a whole or about a particular part of the work. How did the work (or passage/scene) generate an effect on you as a reader or spectator? How did the work create a sense of connection with you (especially, perhaps, in our own times of enforced distance)?

### **The Subject Matter: it's your choice!**

Possible subjects include any published literary material, films, exhibitions, paintings, drama and dance performances, and TV shows. The original language or cultural context of the work under consideration must be one of the main languages and/or cultures taught by the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, or Portuguese).

The emphasis of your essay must be on this work, although you are welcome to refer to other works for comparison and to give context (for example, in discussing a film you might want to refer to other films as well as critical texts, but your essay must focus on the main film).

Your essay should not be on – although it might refer to – something that you have studied or are currently studying in the classroom or offering as A-Level (or equivalent) coursework. Instead, this is an opportunity to write about something that enables you to explore beyond the limits of your course. Perhaps you could explore and write about another work by a writer, filmmaker or artist you have studied? Or you could write about the work of a favourite creative artist whose work doesn't appear on your A-level course. You might have come across interesting works on the internet during lockdown and want to think in a more analytical way about your response?

### **Some material on reader/spectator response to get you thinking:**

When thinking about the way in which you, as a reader or spectator, have responded or reacted to a piece of creative writing or art, you might find it interesting to draw on the following material:

1. A podcast by the literary critic Rita Felski on literature and attachment: ['Art and Attunement', by Professor Rita Felski, University of Virginia and Southern Denmark | University of Oxford Podcasts - Audio and Video Lectures](#)
2. For further reading on this, the introductory chapter to Felski's latest book, *Hooked: Art and Attachment* (Chicago, 2020), is worth a look.
3. For a lively introduction to 'reception aesthetics' or 'reception theory', take a look at pages 74-90 of Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory. An Introduction* (Oxford, 1983).
4. If you are writing about film, you might like to think about how the film engages with the viewer's senses, and/or with the materiality and tactility of bodies and objects onscreen. There is a good article by the film critic Martine Beugnet which offers an accessible introduction to spectatorial response (in relation to contemporary French cinema, but her approach is very applicable beyond that).

Readings 2, 3 and 4 are all available if you [sign up here](#), and we will send it to you by email.

### **How long should the essay be?**

Between 1,500 and 2,000 words.

### **How can I write a good essay?**

Take your time to observe carefully, pay attention to details and develop your ideas with reference to the material about which you are writing. Draw up a plan of your argument before you start writing. Think about how you can make your writing expressive and effective. You can do this by making sure that you have expressed your ideas as clearly as possible. Short and clear phrases are preferable to long, rambling sentences. Try as far as possible to choose the precise noun or verb rather than the first word that comes to mind.

If you are writing about work in a language that you are currently studying at school, quotations from the work under consideration should be kept in the original language. If you are not currently studying the relevant language at school, quotations can be given in translation.