

# Exploring Literary Mindscapes in Gail Jones's *Sixty Lights*: a student work ebook for HSC English Extension 1



Lessons and exercises based on an exploration and evaluation of how the novel invites engagement with the interior worlds of individuals and explores notions of identity and alternative ways of thinking and being



EXPLORING LITERARY  
MINDSCAPES IN  
GAIL JONES'S *SIXTY LIGHTS*

a student work ebook for  
HSC English Extension 1

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## Welcome

This work ebook will assist you in completing activities about a study of Literary Mindscapes in Gail Jones's *Sixty Lights*.

Throughout your study of *Sixty Lights*, you will engage in a detailed analysis of the text. You will develop an understanding of how ideas, forms and language of a text interact within the text and affect the responder.

## Using this book

You can complete these activities by yourself or with the guidance of your teacher. You can complete the exercises in your English exercise book or in an electronic document like Microsoft Word or use an app such as Good Reader.

## The tools you could use

- Pen and paper or computer/laptop
- Word processing or other editing software
- Good Reader App

## Work ebook overview

This work ebook relates to the English Extension 1 course, Elective 4: Literary Mindscapes. In this elective, students are required to study at least three prescribed texts (including at least two extended print texts) as well as other texts of their own choosing. This work ebook only deals with one prescribed text: *Sixty Lights* by Gail Jones.

The work ebook begins by introducing students to the rubric (language) of the syllabus and connects these to *Sixty Lights*. Relevant readings that have influenced the writing of *Sixty Lights* are introduced and explored. Students will consider Jones's personal context, and explore how the text invites responders to engage with the interior worlds of individuals and communicate notions of identity and ways of being through key concepts such as photography, memory and grief, Victorian England, modernity, 'coming of age' novels and intertextuality. Other elements such as structure, characters, themes and setting are also addressed. As an academic, Jones was influenced by theoretical works, such as Lynda Nead's *Victorian Babylon*, Eduardo Cadava's *Words of Light*, Susan Sontag's *On Photography* and *Regarding the Pain of Others* and Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*. Students will analyse the ideas and concepts conveyed in these texts and how they relate to literary mindscapes explored in *Sixty Lights*. The last part of the work ebook focuses on Paper 1, Section II of the HSC English Extension 1 exam by guiding students through the process of writing an essay.

## Glossary

Key words	Meaning
Craft:	creative skill or ability
Artistry:	creative skill or ability
Perspective:	a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something; a point of view
Self-reflection:	a meditation or serious thought about one's character, actions, and motives
Modernisation:	refers to a model of a progressive transition from a 'pre-modern' or 'traditional' to a 'modern' society
Grief:	extreme sorrow, especially caused by the death of a loved one
Suffering:	the state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship
Mourning:	expressing sorrow or anguish over a death of a loved one
Modernity:	the ongoing process of renewal as the world is transformed by scientific progress. It involves continual destruction of the old
Modernism:	a style of writing, architecture, etc. that values the individual lived experience. It has affected all forms of creative work

Key words	Meaning
'Modern' era:	associated with the European Enlightenment, which begins roughly in the middle of the 18th century and continues today. Its emphasis is rationality, science and individualism
Structure:	how you put your plot together so that a story unfolds meaningfully
Form:	refers to the type of writing used
Style:	refers to the way a piece of writing is written, rather than the subject of the writing
Thesis:	your main argument that is sustained throughout your essay
Textual features:	the features of the text including structure and textual elements such as characterisation, storyline, themes, etc.
Photography:	the art or process of producing images by the action of radiant energy and especially light on a sensitive surface such as a film or an optical sensor
Memory:	something remembered from the past; a recollection
Bildungsroman:	a 'coming of age' story
Intertextuality:	the relationship between texts, especially literary ones
Victorian era:	a period of dramatic change (1839-48) that brought England to its highest point of development as a world power
Context:	shows society and its culture and values at the time the text was composed, and the historical events that influenced the text.
Values:	the beliefs and attitudes of the composer and may shift to reflect those of the society at the time. They are conveyed directly and indirectly through the world of the text and the characters' words and actions
Evaluate:	to attribute value or worth to something.
Theoretical influences:	critical essays that have influenced Jones's <i>Sixty Lights</i>
Camera Lucinda:	the 'truthful' camera



## Part 1: Introduction to *Sixty Lights*



<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/uknews/9252893/Photos-of-life-in-the-British-Raj-in-India-are-found-in-a-shoe-box.html?frame=2214146>

In this part you will come to understand the significance of photography as a way of legitimising coloniser's control over colonies. This image depicts a street hairdresser giving a 'Hindustani haircut' (pudding bowl), Strand Road South in Calcutta. Take note of the juxtaposition of different cultural heritages – that of England as shown through the horse and cart and India as shown through their customs and way of life.

## Understanding Literary Mindscapes

Below are key ideas that will guide you on how to approach a study of Literary Mindscapes in *Sixty Lights*.

Students have the opportunity to:

- explore and evaluate how literary texts can invite responders to engage with the interior worlds of individuals and how they perceive, think and feel about themselves and the societies in which they live
- analyse how texts communicate notions of identity and alternative ways of being and thinking through representations of the mind, including desires, motivations, emotions and memories
- consider how these diverse textual representations enable the responder to experience insight into the lives of other groups and individuals, and other times and places
- critically evaluate the values and assumptions embedded in texts and consider their own in relation to issues reflected in text
- reflect on the ways in which study of the texts may influence their own sense of identity.

In their responding and composing, students:

- explore, analyse, experiment with and critically evaluate their prescribed text and other appropriate texts
- write their own imaginative compositions that represent the interior worlds of others.

Students have the opportunity to learn to:

- prepare for the HSC English Extension 1 examination Paper 1, Section II
- practise identifying theoretical influences in *Sixty Lights*
- practise answering HSC examination style questions.





You might like to read over the rubric from the NSW Education Standards Authority's (NESA) *English Stage 6—Prescriptions: Modules, Electives and Texts, Higher School Certificate 2019–2023*, p. 32.

The link is below.

<https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/wcm/connect/f2ef71a2-ca7c-4b96-92f6-398fe141925c/english-stage-6-prescriptions-2019-2023.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=>

## Task 1.1: Understanding key terms

Complete the following task.

1. What do you understand the following key words to mean? Jot your ideas down.
  - context – personal, social, cultural and historical
  - values
  - evaluate.

## Task 1.2: Understanding the syllabus

Complete the following task.

1. Re-read the syllabus and rubric carefully.
2. Choose three statements from the syllabus that stand out to you as being significant. Complete the following task:
  - a. Write these statements below. These may form the basis for your thesis about Literary Mindscapes.
  - b. Write what you think these statements mean to you.
3. Refer to notes from the Marking Centre for your exams from last year (when they become available). Pay careful attention to the characteristics of best responses. Consider what the Marking Centre deems valuable.
4. Write notes about the key characteristics that are significant for you when you write your essay.

## How literary mindscapes are shown in literature

When you read a great book, you don't escape from life, you plunge deeper into it. There may be a superficial escape – into different countries, mores, speech patterns – but what you are essentially doing is furthering your understanding of life's subtleties, paradoxes, joys, pains and truths. Reading and life are not separate but symbiotic.

Julian Barnes, *A Life with Books*

<https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/21418162-a-life-with-books>

In the next five parts of this unit, we explore the textual elements of *Sixty Lights* in depth in order to evaluate the ways literary mindscapes are represented.

Critical and creative understanding of literary mindscapes will be explored through analytical and creative interactions with the texts. Keep in mind that your focus is textual representation of mindscapes in literature. In this course you are arguing your informed ideas about:

- ways literary texts invite responders to engage with the interior worlds of individuals and how they perceive, think and feel about themselves and the societies in which they live
- notions of identity, the relationships we have with others, and the capacity for insights texts offer that influence and shape our own sense of identity.

This means you will be reading and viewing a wide range of texts that represent literary mindscapes as well as a range of academic writing about these types of text. Throughout the work ebook you will have opportunities to compose your own texts that creatively explore literary mindscapes and write extended responses to the texts you study.

As you make your way through *Sixty Lights*, consider the following:

**Key question:** What is reality: in what ways are inner and outer worlds interrelated?

Below is an overview of the aspects we will need to consider in a study of literary mindscapes and why.

- **Structure:** in *Sixty Lights*, Jones mirrors the structure of modernist novels, which are arranged like memories. This 'memory text' is not linear and only loosely chronological. Instead it is fan-shaped, elliptical, paratactical (the placing together of sentences, clauses, or phrases without using conjunctions). It puts focus on her subjects as literary mindscapes: memory, grief and art. In this way, the structure develops the interior world of the characters.
- **Textual elements:** the structure coheres through its interrelationship with details of the text. These are the textual elements represented through the following:
  - \* **Tropes:** metaphoric and symbolic meaning created through fans, mirrors, colours and necklaces, for instance.
  - \* **Characterisation:** Jones's characters remind us of the protagonist in Victorian 'coming of age' novels.
  - \* **Narration:** Jones uses third person voice that allows us to move with the character over time, with confidence that the author is in control.
  - \* **Narrative:** the storylines of major and minor characters are arranged to explore aspects of Jones's subjects: memory, grief and art.
  - \* **Place:** Jones's text follows the trade route of the Victorian Empire from Melbourne to London, London to Bombay and then back to London (the centre of the Empire).

## Literary Mindscapes and *Sixty Lights*

Photography has been used for many purposes—to memorialise, propagandise, record, lament and celebrate diverse human experience.

Lyn Jacobs, 'Gail Jones's "light writing": Memory and the Photograph'

The study of Australian writer Gail Jones's *Sixty Lights*, a modernist novel of love and death in the nineteenth century, invites us to consider the way the world can be explored through the inner and outer world of her protagonists, Lucy Strange, an image-maker or a photographer, when the art was in its infancy.

To achieve this purpose we journey with Lucy Strange into a literary world created to combine the historical social and cultural context of nineteenth century Australia, India and England. Jones explores the internal world of her characters by recording the past and present through linguistic and visual codes and the changing technologies of sharing perception. This is shown through the mnemonic (a system such as a pattern of letters, ideas, or associations which assists in remembering something) inscriptions of photography and film.

### Task 1.3: Exploring Mindscapes in *Sixty Lights*

Complete the following task.

1. As you read the novel, make your own notes about the following aspects

- form and structure
- personal, social, historical and cultural context
- our own contexts distinctive features.

Remember that you are seeking to gain a greater understanding of the following:

- ideas about the complex relationship between individuals and society
- perspectives on the diversity of human experience
- acts of reading/valuing the text.

2. Discuss with a partner what you liked about this novel.

3. Use your brainstormed notes about structure and textual elements to demonstrate that the text is worthwhile.