REFLECTION

Character in the Corpus
Approaches and Resources

Introduction

Each of the 'Character in the Corpus' discussions in the Virtue Insight blog is supplemented by suggested questions based on previous character education pedagogical practice. These are inspired by resources created by the Jubilee Centre and those devised by teachers and by other teachers' reflections on effective teaching techniques.

Skills developed in literature require critical thinking that can be employed as a means to cultivate practical wisdom. Beyond the general benefit that character education has to educational attainment, teachers see character education and curriculum subjects as potentially mutually beneficial. Literature has a particular part to play here as a cornerstone of the humanities, one that explores human behaviour, demands critical, close analysis, and pays particular attention to literacy.

The aim is to offer teachers an introduction those virtues evident in the prose fiction of the A-level English Literature corpus.

This set of resources includes five different approaches to 'character' and how it is treated within literature, alongside touchstone passages drawn from the A-Level set texts with associated commentary detailing how character may be discussed in relation to pupils' literary studies.

Teachers may wish to use the selected touchstone passages for close critical analysis exercises that look at character. Alternatively, teachers are encouraged to seek out such passages within their own selected set text and use the commentaries as guides to frame their own approach to character education and virtue literacy.

The approaches focus on close textual analysis but point towards discussions of character as a theme throughout the text as a whole. The commentaries therefore highlight the stylistic techniques used in relation to character to satisfy A-level requirements that pupils understand how writers create certain effects. This 'critical' approach has the advantage of embedding reflection and reasoning alongside comprehension; all key components of virtue literacy.

Definition

The Jubilee Centre notes that individuals must be reflective when they practise virtue by grasping what is ethically important and acting for the right reasons: "this emphasis on acquiring judgement must be reflective and so allow for the empowerment of the ethical self through autonomous decision-making" (2017, 8). This underpins the importance of reflection in pedagogical spaces: "Schools should provide opportunities for students to not just think and do, but also understand what it means to be and become a mature, reflective person" (2017, 9).

Touchstones

The classroom resources and associated commentary are centred on a selection of 'touchstone' passages.

With regards to literary studies, the term 'touchstone' was coined by Matthew Arnold in 1853. The term was conferred on literary passages of significance in relation to their role in the development of literature or their affective qualities. The application of the term here therefore adopts Arnold's definition to the extent that it refers to selected short passages and their comparison but translates his method of evaluation to considering a passage's utility in the study of virtue. In this, it is meant rather in the Shakespearean sense of Touchstone as providing a degree of insight.

The touchstone passages below allow students to look at a particular virtue in its moral sense and also look at its stylistic features. For A-level students, the touchstones offer a way by which to navigate these different instantiations of a virtue via a set of five topics, around which the passages are organised.

1. Reality

Part of the reason literary texts concern themselves with extensive passages of reflection is their power. Literary fiction is one of the few spaces in which individuals can enter the minds of others and reflective passages are particularly effective for immersing readers in fictional worlds and having them vicariously participate in the speculation and decision-making that a plot's action poses its characters. In this, reflection is particularly informative of character motivation, motivation that in literary fiction at least is often morally-charged.

One of the key affordances of fiction then is its capacity to describe reflection; its techniques for doing so being discoverable through corpus analysis. But because such a process is abstract, writers often draw on the physical world for its exploration. Thus despite being a mental process, reflection often collocates with physical feeling. In *Frankenstein* (1818) for example, *shudder* and *reflect* collocate more than once. Another collocational feature of reflect and its cognate terms is its co-occurrence with abstract concepts, meaning that it often flags passages rich with virtue terms and exploration.

In *Sister Carrie* (1900), Theodore Dreiser uses a physical (mirrored) setting to symbolise monetary excess as well as reflection. In the following passage, something as simple as a menu prompts Carrie to consider some of the text's most complex themes:

Touchstone passage 1

One dollar fifty and two dollars seemed to be the most common figures upon this most tastefully printed bill of fare.

Carrie noticed this, and in scanning it the price of spring chicken carried her back to that other bill of fare and far different occasion when, for the first time, she sat with Drouet in a good restaurant in Chicago. It was only momentary--a sad note as out of an old song--and then it was gone. But in that flash was seen the other Carrie--poor, hungry, drifting at her wits' ends, and all Chicago a cold and closed world, from which she only wandered because she could not find work.

On the walls were designs in colour, square spots of robin's-egg blue, set in ornate frames of gilt, whose corners were elaborate mouldings of fruit and flowers, with fat cupids hovering in angelic comfort. On the ceilings were coloured traceries with more gilt, leading to a centre where spread a cluster of lights--incandescent globes mingled with glittering prisms and stucco tendrils of gilt. The floor was of a reddish hue, waxed and polished, and in every direction were mirrors--tall, brilliant, bevel-edged mirrors--reflecting and re-reflecting forms, faces, and candelabra a score and a hundred times.

The tables were not so remarkable in themselves, and yet the imprint of Sherry upon the napery, the name of Tiffany upon the silverware, the name of Haviland upon the china, and over all the glow of the small, red-shaded candelabra and the reflected tints of the walls on garments and faces, made them seem remarkable. Each waiter added an air of exclusiveness and elegance by the manner in which he bowed, scraped, touched, and trifled with things. The exclusively personal attention which he devoted to each one, standing half bent, ear to one side, elbows akimbo, saying: "Soup--green turtle, yes. One portion, yes. Oysters--certainly--half-dozen--yes. Asparagus. Olives--yes."

It would be the same with each one, only Vance essayed to order for all, inviting counsel and suggestions. Carrie studied the company with open eyes. So this was high life in New York. It was so that the rich spent their days and evenings. Her poor little mind could not rise above applying each scene to all society. Every fine lady must be in the crowd on Broadway in the afternoon, in the theatre at the matinée, in the coaches and dining-halls at night. It must be glow and shine everywhere, with coaches waiting, and footmen attending, and she was out of it all. In two long years she had never even been in such a place as this.

Vance was in his element here, as Hurstwood would have been in former days. He ordered freely of soup, oysters, roast meats, and side dishes, and had several bottles of wine brought, which were set down beside the table in a wicker basket.

Ames was looking away rather abstractedly at the crowd and showed an interesting profile to Carrie. His forehead was high, his nose rather large and strong, his chin moderately pleasing. He had a good, wide, well-shaped mouth, and his dark-brown hair was parted slightly on one side. He seemed to have the least touch of boyishness to Carrie, and yet he was a man full grown.

"Do you know," he said, turning back to Carrie, after his reflection, "I sometimes think it is a shame for people to spend so much money this way."

Carrie looked at him a moment with the faintest touch of surprise at his seriousness. He seemed to be thinking about something over which she had never pondered.

(Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*, Chapter 32)

The mirrored setting here offers a literal reflection, one that exposes and confronts its characters with a world of indulgence and excess. It is in those reflections that the characters “seem remarkable”. What makes this passage so striking however is its use of

juxtaposition; a juxtaposition between wealth and poverty that prompts reflection on social disparities. The use of the setting as a metaphor for the characters' excess and reflection, creates a polished literary language that contrasts sharply with the ordinariness of the dialogue (i.e., food orders). Both polish and mirroring are evident in Dreiser's use of repetition both of vocabulary and clause structure.

The language Dreiser selects is therefore purposively provocative. Calling the chapter "THE FEAST OF BELSHAZZAR: A SEER TO TRANSLATE" sets Carrie up as a character bestowed with particular insight and indulges in the type of excess the novel scrutinises in society. Such contrasts act as springboards to reflection. In this chapter, Carrie sees play in which she wishes to emulate the rich characters on stage; aspirations to wealth is what motivates Carrie.

Carrie repeatedly reflects: the passage is typical of these reflections and the literary techniques (rhetorical *what-ifs*, Free Indirect Thought) that prompt reader speculation. Whilst many of her reflections are misguided or driven by jealousy, they most profoundly concern genuine worries about poverty. Chapter 26 similarly concerns itself with being able to afford to eat. Indeed, throughout the novel, readers are attuned to recognise food as symbolising the physical realities of Carrie's struggle:

Touchstone passage 2

It was some time before she could collect her thoughts, but when she did, this truth began to take on importance. She was quite alone. Suppose Drouet did not come back? Suppose she should never hear anything more of him? This fine arrangement of chambers would not last long. She would have to quit them.

To her credit, be it said, she never once counted on Hurstwood. She could only approach that subject with a pang of sorrow and regret. For a truth, she was rather shocked and frightened by this evidence of human depravity. He would have tricked her without turning an eyelash. She would have been led into a newer and worse situation. And yet she could not keep out the pictures of his looks and manners. Only this one deed seemed strange and miserable. It contrasted sharply with all she felt and knew concerning the man.

But she was alone. That was the greater thought just at present. How about that? Would she go out to work again? Would she begin to look around in the business district? The stage! Oh, yes. Drouet had spoken about that. Was there any hope there? She moved to and fro, in deep and varied thoughts, while the minutes slipped away and night fell completely. She had had nothing to eat, and yet there she sat, thinking it over.

She remembered that she was hungry and went to the little cupboard in the rear room where were the remains of one of their breakfasts. She looked at these things with certain misgivings. The contemplation of food had more significance than usual.

While she was eating she began to wonder how much money she had. It struck her as exceedingly important, and without ado she went to look for her purse. It was on the dresser, and in it were seven dollars in bills and some change. She quailed as she thought of the insignificance of the amount and rejoiced because the rent was paid until the end of the month. She began also to think what she would have done if she had gone out into the street when she first started. By the side of that situation, as she looked at it now, the present seemed agreeable. She had a little time at least, and then, perhaps, everything would come out all right, after all.

(Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*, Chapter 26)

Again, the passage uses physical metaphors to describe the abstract mechanics of reflection ("collect her thoughts") to underscore the actual realities (i.e., hunger) of abstract social concerns (i.e., poverty). Note also the proliferation of "ifs" regarding what might have happened if Carrie had taken one course of action over another. Fiction rehearses these capacities for speculation that underpin moral reasoning. Finally, the use of Free Indirect Thought – whereby the narration adopts the language and consciousness of characters – blurs the centre of reflection and provides material to stimulate discussions around the relationship between the author, narrator and characters, and how the fictional world reflects real-world social and moral concerns.

2. Setting

This actualising of reflection through physical metaphor is often, as seen above, realised through setting. Physical space becomes a springboard for critical reflection. This idea is encoded in the very title of *A Room with a View* (1908), which details Lucy Honeychurch's grand tour of Europe as a rite of passage to a broader, more informed view of the world. In Chapter 12, Forster uses the physical setting of a reflective pool "pure enough to reflect the sky" in a passage that illustrates the way in which reflection acts as a flag for abstract concepts, like fate:

Touchstone passage 3

Mr. Beebe felt bound to assist his young friend, and led the way out of the house and into the pine-woods. How glorious it was! For a little time the voice of old Mr. Emerson

pursued them dispensing good wishes and philosophy. It ceased, and they only heard the fair wind blowing the bracken and the trees. Mr. Beebe, who could be silent, but who could not bear silence, was compelled to chatter, since the expedition looked like a failure, and neither of his companions would utter a word. He spoke of Florence. George attended gravely, assenting or dissenting with slight but determined gestures that were as inexplicable as the motions of the tree-tops above their heads.

"And what a coincidence that you should meet Mr. Vyse! Did you realize that you would find all the Pension Bertolini down here?"

"I did not. Miss Lavish told me."

"When I was a young man, I always meant to write a 'History of Coincidence.'"

No enthusiasm.

"Though, as a matter of fact, coincidences are much rarer than we suppose. For example, it isn't purely coincidentally that you are here now, when one comes to reflect."

To his relief, George began to talk.

"It is. I have reflected. It is Fate. Everything is Fate. We are flung together by Fate, drawn apart by Fate—flung together, drawn apart. The twelve winds blow us—we settle nothing—"

"You have not reflected at all," rapped the clergyman. "Let me give you a useful tip, Emerson: attribute nothing to Fate. Don't say, 'I didn't do this,' for you did it, ten to one. Now I'll cross-question you. Where did you first meet Miss Honeychurch and myself?"

"Italy."

"And where did you meet Mr. Vyse, who is going to marry Miss Honeychurch?"

"National Gallery."

"Looking at Italian art. There you are, and yet you talk of coincidence and Fate. You naturally seek out things Italian, and so do we and our friends. This narrows the field immeasurably we meet again in it."

"It is Fate that I am here," persisted George. "But you can call it Italy if it makes you less unhappy."

Mr. Beebe slid away from such heavy treatment of the subject. But he was infinitely tolerant of the young, and had no desire to snub George.

"And so for this and for other reasons my 'History of Coincidence' is still to write."

Silence.

Wishing to round off the episode, he added; "We are all so glad that you have come."

Silence.

"Here we are!" called Freddy.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Mr. Beebe, mopping his brow.

(E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View*, Chapter 12)

The passage offers an example of reasoning through argument and logic. The subject matter and setting create a gravitas, the suggestion being that reflection is a lofty undertaking, with fate frequently providing the subject matter for literary novels' reflective passages. That the discussion reflects on autonomy (as opposed to fate), affirms a faith in the power of the individual beyond other (mainly societal) forces at play.

This metaphorical shift from the physical spaces to mental ones is most frequent in passages of self-reflection, as in Yates's *Revolutionary Road*:

Touchstone passage 4

There was nothing for him to do but get up and collect the glasses and retreat to the kitchen, where he petulantly wrenched and banged at the ice tray. The black kitchen window gave him a vivid reflection of his face, round and full of weakness, and he stared at it with loathing. That was when he remembered something—and the thought seemed to follow rather than precede the stricken look it caused on his mirrored face—something that shocked him and then filled him with a sense of ironic justice. The face in the glass, again seeming to anticipate rather than reflect his mood, had changed now from a look of dismay to a wise and bitter smile, and it nodded at him several times.

(Richard Yates, *Revolutionary Road*, Chapter Four)

The passage comes at a pivotal moment in the novel when Frank eviscerates psychiatry and its participation in the superficial manner in which families conceal their shortcomings. Indeed, passages of reflection often accompany pivotal plot moments as authors seek to underscore the thematic significance of their stories.

Frank, in effect, conducts a 'reading' of himself that parallels the process readers undertake with characters more generally. There's a separation between Frank and the reflection with the reflection acting independently, pronominalised as an *it* rather than a *he*. Such distancing is another important component of reflection (as opposed to, say, reasoning) whereby such removal lends perspective to the process of reflection. We readers are not admitted into Frank's mind – instead we are given the epistemically weak "seemed" (as is seen elsewhere, a favourite 'hedge' of narrators). In effect, Yates creates a grey area that creates space for speculation and reflection on Frank's character.

3. Journeying

Another way in which setting interacts with reflective passages is through journeys, essentially, settings in transition. As seen in *A Room with a View*, writers like to draw on the fact that life and narratives are both metaphorically construed as journeys. Thus just as commonplace physical objects act as a springboard to reflection, the everyday process of moving through the world can provoke thoughts or feelings that are deep and sometimes painful. McEwan's *Atonement* ends with a particularly reflective passage prompted by a taxi journey through London:

Touchstone passage 5

I have vascular dementia, the doctor told me, and there was some comfort to be had. There's the slowness of the undoing, which he must have mentioned a dozen times. Also, it's not as bad as Alzheimer's, with its mood swings and aggression. If I'm lucky, it might turn out to be somewhat benign. I might not be unhappy—just a dim old biddy in a chair, knowing nothing, expecting nothing. I had asked him to be frank, so I could not complain. Now he was hurrying me out. There were twelve people in his waiting room wanting their turn. In summary, as he helped me into my coat, he gave me the route map: loss of memory, short- and long-term, the disappearance of single words--simple nouns might be the first to go—then language itself, along with balance, and soon after, all motor control, and finally the autonomous nervous system. Bon voyage!

I wasn't distressed, not at first. On the contrary, I was elated and urgently wanted to tell my closest friends. I spent an hour on the phone breaking my news. Perhaps I was already losing my grip. It seemed so momentous. All afternoon I pottered about in my study with my housekeeping chores, and by the time I finished, there were six new box files on the shelves. Stella and John came over in the evening and we ordered in some Chinese food. Between them they drank two bottles of Morgon. I drank green

tea. My charming friends were devastated by my description of my future. They're both in their sixties, old enough to start fooling themselves that seventy-seven is still young. Today, in the taxi, as I crossed London at walking pace in the freezing rain, I thought of little else. I'm going mad, I told myself. Let me not be mad. But I couldn't really believe it. Perhaps I was nothing more than a victim of modern diagnostics; in another century it would have been said of me that I was old and therefore losing my mind. What else would I expect?

I'm only dying then, I'm fading into unknowing.

My taxi was cutting through the back streets of Bloomsbury, past the house where my father lived after his second marriage, and past the basement flat where I lived and worked all through the fifties. Beyond a certain age, a journey across the city becomes uncomfortably reflective. The addresses of the dead pile up. We crossed the square where Leon heroically nursed his wife, and then raised his boisterous children with a devotion that amazed us all.

One day I too will prompt a moment's reflection in the passenger of a passing cab. It's a popular shortcut, the Inner Circle of Regent's Park.

We crossed the river at Waterloo Bridge. I sat forward on the edge of my seat to take in my favourite view of the city, and as I turned my neck, downstream to St. Paul's, upstream to Big Ben, the full panoply of tourist London in between, I felt myself to be physically well and mentally intact, give or take the headaches and a little tiredness. However withered, I still feel myself to be exactly the same person I've always been. Hard to explain that to the young. We may look truly reptilian, but we're not a separate tribe.

(Ian McEwan, *Atonement*, London 1999)

Such passages can be used to model reflection in pursuit of the virtue literacy aim for students to become reflective themselves. This passage in particular is well suited to discussions that speculate on courses of action and judge characters' own judgement. The novel's titular theme of atonement can help focus these discussions, allowing students to reflect on the moral consequences of Briony's actions.

The value of using literary texts to explore reflection is their predilection to complexity and ambiguity. Reflection is portrayed as a tricky undertaking. When analysed from a corpus perspective, the word 'reflection' has a negative prosody; in other words, reflection is often viewed undesirably, or at least with suspicion. Part of the reason for this is that reflection is sometimes surreptitious, due to the ultimate unknowability of other minds, what Austen calls the "secret reflections" in *Sense and Sensibility*.

In addition, it means that reflection is sometimes vicarious or overpowering. We are told Ellena, the victim in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), we are told "silent and dejected, abandoned herself to reflection". Vivaldi misinterprets Ellena's quietness as they descend the mountain, demonstrating the double edge nature of reflection, viewed suspiciously by her aggressor as bordering on a kind of madness that would warrant her incarceration in an asylum. Interestingly, this suspicion extended to a contemporary suspicion of fiction reading: its capacity to enable reflection being viewed as vicarious and dangerous activity.

In Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), a novel similarly concerned with the fate of its female protagonist, we see a number of these features reoccur: first, the physical association, the 'abandonment' to reflection, and the use of a journey:

Touchstone passage 6

He leant back against the hives, and with upturned face made observations on the stars, whose cold pulses were beating amid the black hollows above, in serene dissociation from these two wisps of human life. He asked how far away those twinklers were, and whether God was on the other side of them. But ever and anon his childish prattle recurred to what impressed his imagination even more deeply than the wonders of creation. If Tess were made rich by marrying a gentleman, would she have money enough to buy a spyglass so large that it would draw the stars as near to her as Nettlecombe-Tout?

The renewed subject, which seemed to have impregnated the whole family, filled Tess with impatience.

"Never mind that now!" she exclaimed.

"Did you say the stars were worlds, Tess?"

"Yes."

"All like ours?"

"I don't know; but I think so. They sometimes seem to be like the apples on our stubbard-tree. Most of them splendid and sound—a few blighted."

"Which do we live on—a splendid one or a blighted one?"

"A blighted one."

"'Tis very unlucky that we didn't pitch on a sound one, when there were so many more of 'em!"

"Yes."

"Is it like that *really*, Tess?" said Abraham, turning to her much impressed, on reconsideration of this rare information. "How would it have been if we had pitched on a sound one?"

"Well, father wouldn't have coughed and creeped about as he does, and wouldn't have got too tipsy to go on this journey; and mother wouldn't have been always washing, and never getting finished."

"And you would have been a rich lady ready-made, and not have had to be made rich by marrying a gentleman?"

"O Aby, don't—don't talk of that any more!"Left to his reflections Abraham soon grew drowsy. Tess was not skilful in the management of a horse, but she thought that she could take upon herself the entire conduct of the load for the present and allow Abraham to go to sleep if he wished to do so. She made him a sort of nest in front of the hives, in such a manner that he could not fall, and, taking the reins into her own hands, jogged on as before.

Prince required but slight attention, lacking energy for superfluous movements of any sort. With no longer a companion to distract her, Tess fell more deeply into reverie than ever, her back leaning against the hives. The mute procession past her shoulders of trees and hedges became attached to fantastic scenes outside reality, and the occasional heave of the wind became the sigh of some immense sad soul, conterminous with the universe in space, and with history in time.

Then, examining the mesh of events in her own life, she seemed to see the vanity of her father's pride; the gentlemanly suitor awaiting herself in her mother's fancy; to see him as a grimacing personage, laughing at her poverty and her shrouded knightly ancestry. Everything grew more and more extravagant, and she no longer knew how time passed. A sudden jerk shook her in her seat, and Tess awoke from the sleep into which she, too, had fallen.

(Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Chapter 4)

Reflection here again concerns itself with the big questions relating to the universe and fate, not to mention a series of unfavourable character studies. Ultimately, such reflecting results in sleep and a collision that kills the family horse. This raises an interesting question for the A-level student as to what Hardy might be saying about the lofty practise of reflection and its relationship to everyday, real-world concerns.

Formally, the passage is filled with *verba sentiendi* (verbs of perception) which when identified can reveal the extent of reflection and the various ways in which reflection

happens. 'Point-of-view' is a literary concept with which students will be becoming familiar at A-level and can provide a useful scaffolding for thinking about how characters reflect and how that reflection is portrayed.

4. Emotion and reason

Discussing the submissive and indulgent potential of reflection addresses the virtue ethical principle that virtues must be exercised to the right degree. That reflection may be excessive provides the thrust for *Sense and Sensibility,* which in its very title, establishes a binary exploration of reflective modes: that based on reason and that based on emotion. In her two main characters, the Dashwood sisters, Austen embodies sense (cautious logic) and sensibility (emotional excess), as her original title *Elinor and Marianne*, infers.

What makes Austen's novel a still-relevant exploration of reflection is that neither sense nor sensibility are ideal modes of reflection. The excesses of both come under scrutiny. The excess of Marianne's sensibility physically manifests itself in exhaustion. Elinor's excessive sense engenders a cautionary approach to lifer that limits her opportunities and potential for happiness. Austen's conclusion seems to be something akin to Aristotle's golden mean, that is, appropriate reflection can empower, excess can disempower. The following passages

Touchstone passage 7

Mr. Dashwood's strains were more solemn. Mrs. Ferrars was the most unfortunate of women—poor Fanny had suffered agonies of sensibility—and he considered the existence of each, under such a blow, with grateful wonder.

[…]

Elinor's office was a painful one.—She was going to remove what she really believed to be her sister's chief consolation,—to give such particulars of Edward as she feared would ruin him for ever in her good opinion,-and to make Marianne, by a resemblance in their situations, which to HER fancy would seem strong, feel all her own disappointment over again. But unwelcome as such a task must be, it was necessary to be done, and Elinor therefore hastened to perform it.

She was very far from wishing to dwell on her own feelings, or to represent herself as suffering much, any otherwise than as the self-command she had practised since her first knowledge of Edward's engagement, might suggest a hint of what was practicable to Marianne. Her narration was clear and simple; and though it could not be given without emotion, it was not accompanied by violent agitation, nor impetuous grief.—

THAT belonged rather to the hearer, for Marianne listened with horror, and cried excessively. Elinor was to be the comforter of others in her own distresses, no less than in theirs; and all the comfort that could be given by assurances of her own composure of mind, and a very earnest vindication of Edward from every charge but of imprudence, was readily offered.

(Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, Chapter 37)

As with other passages, this reflective moment provides material for students to analyse behaviour and to consider how reflection induces feeling (and vice versa) as well as particular actions. The passage similarly uses the formal features discussed above, such as hedging and *verba sentiendi* to endow the reader with a broad reflective space. Indeed, of all of the stylistic techniques itemised here, Free Indirect Thought is perhaps the one most readily associated with Austen.

Touchstone passage 8

The Dashwoods were two days on the road, and Marianne bore her journey on both, without essential fatigue. Every thing that the most zealous affection, the most solicitous care could do to render her comfortable, was the office of each watchful companion, and each found their reward in her bodily ease, and her calmness of spirits. To Elinor, the observation of the latter was particularly grateful. She, who had seen her week after week so constantly suffering, oppressed by anguish of heart which she had neither courage to speak of, nor fortitude to conceal, now saw with a joy, which no other could equally share, an apparent composure of mind, which, in being the result as she trusted of serious reflection, must eventually lead her to contentment and cheerfulness.

As they approached Barton, indeed, and entered on scenes of which every field and every tree brought some peculiar, some painful recollection, she grew silent and thoughtful, and turning away her face from their notice, sat earnestly gazing through the window. But here, Elinor could neither wonder nor blame; and when she saw, as she assisted Marianne from the carriage, that she had been crying, she saw only an emotion too natural in itself to raise any thing less tender than pity, and in its unobtrusiveness entitled to praise. In the whole of her subsequent manner, she traced the direction of a mind awakened to reasonable exertion; for no sooner had they entered their common sitting-room, than Marianne turned her eyes around it with a look of resolute firmness,

as if determined at once to accustom herself to the sight of every object with which the remembrance of Willoughby could be connected.—She said little, but every sentence aimed at cheerfulness, and though a sigh sometimes escaped her, it never passed away without the atonement of a smile.

(Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, Chapter 46)

What is striking here is the way in which other virtues attach to the notion of reflection. In fact, a feature of literary texts is that virtue language tends to cluster in this way and indicates passages lucrative for character education exercises and that engage with the virtue literacy requirement that individuals arbitrate between virtues.

By way of contrast, the following passage sees Marianne's reflective silence transform into one of the longest passages of Direct Speech in the whole novel, a discussion between the two sisters:

Touchstone passage 9

Marianne had been two or three days at home, before the weather was fine enough for an invalid like herself to venture out. But at last a soft, genial morning appeared; such as might tempt the daughter's wishes and the mother's confidence; and Marianne, leaning on Elinor's arm, was authorised to walk as long as she could without fatigue, in the lane before the house.

The sisters set out at a pace, slow as the feebleness of Marianne in an exercise hitherto untried since her illness required;—and they had advanced only so far beyond the house as to admit a full view of the hill, the important hill behind, when pausing with her eyes turned towards it, Marianne calmly said,

"There, exactly there,"—pointing with one hand, "on that projecting mound,—there I fell; and there I first saw Willoughby."

Her voice sunk with the word, but presently reviving she added,

"I am thankful to find that I can look with so little pain on the spot!—shall we ever talk on that subject, Elinor?"—hesitatingly it was said.—"Or will it be wrong?—I can talk of it now, I hope, as I ought to do."—

Elinor tenderly invited her to be open.

"As for regret," said Marianne, "I have done with that, as far as HE is concerned. I do not mean to talk to you of what my feelings have been for him, but what they are

NOW.—At present, if I could be satisfied on one point, if I could be allowed to think that he was not ALWAYS acting a part, not ALWAYS deceiving me;—but above all, if I could be assured that he never was so VERY wicked as my fears have sometimes fancied him, since the story of that unfortunate girl"—

She stopt. Elinor joyfully treasured her words as she answered,

"If you could be assured of that, you think you should be easy."

"Yes. My peace of mind is doubly involved in it;—for not only is it horrible to suspect a person, who has been what HE has been to ME, of such designs,—but what must it make me appear to myself?—What in a situation like mine, but a most shamefully unguarded affection could expose me to"—

"How then," asked her sister, "would you account for his behaviour?"

"I would suppose him,—Oh, how gladly would I suppose him, only fickle, very, very fickle."

Elinor said no more. She was debating within herself on the eligibility of beginning her story directly, or postponing it till Marianne were in stronger health;—and they crept on for a few minutes in silence.

"I am not wishing him too much good," said Marianne at last with a sigh, "when I wish his secret reflections may be no more unpleasant than my own. He will suffer enough in them."

"Do you compare your conduct with his?"

"No. I compare it with what it ought to have been; I compare it with yours."

"Our situations have borne little resemblance."

"They have borne more than our conduct.—Do not, my dearest Elinor, let your kindness defend what I know your judgment must censure. My illness has made me think— It has given me leisure and calmness for serious recollection. Long before I was enough recovered to talk, I was perfectly able to reflect. I considered the past: I saw in my own behaviour, since the beginning of our acquaintance with him last autumn, nothing but a series of imprudence towards myself, and want of kindness to others. I saw that my own feelings had prepared my sufferings, and that my want of fortitude under them had almost led me to the grave. My illness, I well knew, had been entirely brought on by myself by such negligence of my own health, as I had felt even at the time to be wrong. Had I died,—it would have been self-destruction. I did not know my danger till the danger was removed; but with such feelings as these reflections gave me, I

wonder at my recovery,—wonder that the very eagerness of my desire to live, to have time for atonement to my God, and to you all, did not kill me at once. Had I died,—in what peculiar misery should I have left you, my nurse, my friend, my sister!—You, who had seen all the fretful selfishness of my latter days; who had known all the murmurings of my heart!—How should I have lived in YOUR remembrance!—My mother too! How could you have consoled her!—I cannot express my own abhorrence of myself. Whenever I looked towards the past, I saw some duty neglected, or some failing indulged. Every body seemed injured by me. The kindness, the unceasing kindness of Mrs. Jennings, I had repaid with ungrateful contempt. To the Middletons, to the Palmers, the Steeles, to every common acquaintance even, I had been insolent and unjust; with a heart hardened against their merits, and a temper irritated by their very attention.—To John, to Fanny,—yes, even to them, little as they deserve, I had given less than their due. But you,—you above all, above my mother, had been wronged by me. I, and only I, knew your heart and its sorrows; yet to what did it influence me?—not to any compassion that could benefit you or myself.—Your example was before me; but to what avail?—Was I more considerate of you and your comfort? Did I imitate your forbearance, or lessen your restraints, by taking any part in those offices of general complaisance or particular gratitude which you had hitherto been left to discharge alone?—No;—not less when I knew you to be unhappy, than when I had believed you at ease, did I turn away from every exertion of duty or friendship; scarcely allowing sorrow to exist but with me, regretting only that heart which had deserted and wronged me, and leaving you, for whom I professed an unbounded affection, to be miserable for my sake."

Here ceased the rapid flow of her self-reproving spirit; and Elinor, impatient to soothe, though too honest to flatter, gave her instantly that praise and support which her frankness and her contrition so well deserved. Marianne pressed her hand and replied,

"You are very good.—The future must be my proof. I have laid down my plan, and if I am capable of adhering to it—my feelings shall be governed and my temper improved. They shall no longer worry others, nor torture myself. I shall now live solely for my family. You, my mother, and Margaret, must henceforth be all the world to me; you will share my affections entirely between you. From you, from my home, I shall never again have the smallest incitement to move; and if I do mix in other society, it will be only to shew that my spirit is humbled, my heart amended, and that I can practise the civilities,

the lesser duties of life, with gentleness and forbearance. As for Willoughby—to say that I shall soon or that I shall ever forget him, would be idle. His remembrance can be overcome by no change of circumstances or opinions. But it shall be regulated, it shall be checked by religion, by reason, by constant employment."

She paused—and added in a low voice, "If I could but know HIS heart, everything would become easy."

Elinor, who had now been for some time reflecting on the propriety or impropriety of speedily hazarding her narration, without feeling at all nearer decision than at first, heard this; and perceiving that as reflection did nothing, resolution must do all, soon found herself leading to the fact.

(Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, Chapter 46)

Reflection acts as the mediating force. Austen expresses this elsewhere in the novel in the following lines: "Reflection had given calmness to her judgment, and sobered her own opinion of Willoughby's deserts; -- she wished, therefore, to declare only the simple truth, and lay open such facts as were really due to his character, without any embellishment of tenderness to lead the fancy astray." In this way, their conversation is in part a philosophical debate, reinforcing the general principle that literary texts, in spite of their fictional provenance, are ultimately engaged with real-world concerns and philosophical truths.

Assuming the key to the success of reflection is that such reflection is intentional and organised, then literary criticism comes equipped with materials, frameworks, and tools that directs critical reflection in a ways that complement the objectives of a virtue-literacy programme.