

The background of the page is composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent teal-colored geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, creating a modern, abstract design. The colors range from a light, pale teal to a darker, more saturated teal.

# CAPRA

COACHING

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**English Booklet:**

Margaret Atwood 1994 'Spotty-Handed  
Villainesses' Speech

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## Module C: The Craft of Writing

For this module you are looking at how texts are constructed, unlike other modules where you look at meaning or themes. As such, you use these texts as 'sources of inspiration' for your own writing. Thus, for this module you will learn to develop your own texts by deconstructing, analysing and imitating the texts of others. So, don't think of analysing the texts in this module through themes or ideas, instead look at the form of how they are constructed. Ask yourself questions such as; How does the composer of the text capture our attention and in what ways is this done by? What is the narrative point of view, argument, figurative language, genre, perspective and style the text is written in?

The purpose of Module C is to help you become a better writer and be able to produce texts either in discursive, persuasive or imaginative form. A lot of these texts in this module explores ideas relevant to the author's own experience of writing - this is an important idea to keep in mind for when writing your own texts. Nevertheless, it is still crucial to analyse these texts in detail in order to get a clear understanding of their meaning and what their purpose is. This through understanding the form of the text, context it is written in and its connection to the audience through such. You then apply this knowledge to understand how it deliberately shapes meaning.

## How does 'Spotty-Handed Villainesses' connect to Module C?

Margaret Atwood's speech 'Spotty-Handed Villainesses' connects to this module by the ways its form evokes emotion in the audience. This is done by the use of speech structure such as pathos (how emotion is evoked in the audience), ethos (the character of the speaker) and logos (statistics, facts and evidence). It is crucial to apply this knowledge of pathos, ethos and logos to your own writing as they are key elements of speech structure and thus test your knowledge of

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the speech in its entirety. Atwood furthers this through her use of intertextuality and allusions to well-known characters, the elliptical nature of the speech (with how ideas from the beginning of the speech are then repeated at the end) and through an academic voice.

**Context:**

Margaret Atwood is a highly successful and highly regarded Canadian poet and novelist. In her speech 'Spotty-Handed Villainesses' she addresses the ideas of 'female bad behaviour' and challenges the notion that it is 'unfeminist' to find a bad women as it can be seen to be a 'monopoly of men'. As such, it is important to understand the basic contextual features of feminism, being first wave, second wave and third wave. To put it simply, first wave feminism aligns with the suffragette movement of the 19th to 20th century. Where post World War One, women were given the right to vote and access to more legal freedom. Another crucial idea of World War One, was its impact on allowing women to enter the workforce due to total war efforts and as such exposed women to more opportunities alike to men. Second wave feminism was a period of feminist activity post World War Two, especially in 1960s America, with the aim of increasing equality for women by gaining more than enfranchisement - this particularly linked to expanding role of women in the workforce. Another key idea of second wave feminism was the invention of the pill in the 1960s which gave women access to more sexual freedom and thus evoked a stronger sense of female empowerment. Third wave feminism is arguably the state of feminism we are currently in and aims to question, reclaim and redefine ideas about womanhood, gender, beauty, sexuality, femininity and masculinity that have permeated throughout media and society.

Atwood experienced second wave feminism, however her speech aligns to ideas embedded in the third wave of feminism. As such, Atwood critiques ideas of feminism through the communication of the 'angel/whore split'. Atwood argues that third wave feminism is more balanced in nature than second wave and thus addresses third wave feminism and how women have been portrayed in literature for the past two centuries. Atwood also makes reference to the Bechdel Test, which tests if women talk to each other about more than just men in films and media productions.

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This speech has been delivered on multiple occasions also and thus what we encounter is a highly polished version that has been drafted over many times. As such, it has had a wide global impact and is well-renowned as a speech. So what we read is more alike to a carefully crafted monologue than a mere speech. This is important to consider when drafting your own work.

**Purpose:**

If there is one idea to remember about this speech, Atwood’s purpose is that she wants to encourage full expression of female characters in literature. This being women who are both bad and good (angel/whore split). Atwood argues for a truthful, balanced and realistic depiction of women and does this by critiquing texts she includes in her speech; such as Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Macbeth and the Grimm Fairy Tales. She communicates that the purpose of literature is to reflect on the complexities of life and all its intrinsic qualities - being a full expression of human traits and characteristics. This is reinforced by her argument that stories last throughout time and are inherently transient in nature. These ideas and stereotypes painted about the female character in literature still manifest today and influence our understanding of human nature.

Quote	Technique	Analysis
"Spotty-Handed Villainesses"	Title → alludes to Shakespeare’s play ‘Macbeth’ and the character Lady Macbeth	Lady Macbeth → represents the evil and manipulative character of women  Communicates the idea that malevolence within female characters is something that seems to have forgotten with the rise of extreme feminism. Reveals how women can have ambition and power through

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		devious and evil acts
<p>"When she was good, she was very good, very good. And when she was bad, she was horrid!"</p>	<p>Allusion/intertextuality to nursery rhyme → at the opening of her address</p> <p>Personal anecdote → appeals to pathos of the audience = able to relate</p>	<p>Establishes the satirical subtext and the extreme moral dichotomy of women as either pure and innocent or evil</p> <p>Satire → Reveals how that is not a true depiction of women</p> <p>Nursery rhyme → goes back through history and how women have been represented over time Aids credibility</p>
<p>"Angel/Whore split"</p>	<p>Juxtaposition</p>	<p>Good and bad dichotomy → sets up the message and purpose of her speech</p>

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<p>“Every artist is, among other things, a con-artist.</p>	<p>Word play Declarative statement</p>	<p>This idea that artists do not depict the realities of the world</p>
<p>“average jail sentence in the U.S. for men who kill their wives is four years, but for women...- it’s twenty.”</p>	<p>Dash → adds emphasis to highlight the inequality Logos → uses statistics and facts to reinforce argument</p>	<p>Highlights inequality Atwood doesn’t overused logos throughout her speech, which makes this more powerful – the hyphens create a pause to make the audience consider this injustice</p>
<p>“(bad females) exist in life, so why shouldn’t they exist in literature?”</p>	<p>Rhetorical question → reinforces standpoint and causes the audience to consider the representation of women in texts</p>	<p>Logos → adds factuality and truth to her judgement Reveals how the depiction of women needs to be versatile and truthful  Reveals how women are fully dimensional</p>
<p>“Life is short, art is long.”</p>	<p>Juxtaposition of short and long calls out to artists/writers to tell truthful stories</p>	<p>Reveals that the depiction of women over time prevails into the next generation and as a result can heavily impacted how women are seen  Highlights the profound impact fiction has on society and its magnitude</p>

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*Then, although it was still the end of the story, I put it at the beginning of the novel, as if I needed to tell the end first in order to go on and tell the rest. Lydia Davis, The End of the Story: A Novel Collected Stories by Lydia Davis © Lydia Davis (Penguin, London)*

Use this sentence as a stimulus for the opening of an imaginative, discursive or persuasive piece of writing that begins with the end. In your response, you must include at least ONE literary device or stylistic feature that you have explored during your study of a prescribed text in Module C.

**Key me up**

I sat with Society this morning, and asked a simple question: what should I do after school? He was dressed in an imposing suit, as though our conversation was going to dictate the future of humanity. I, a very simple human being at the tender age of 17, was merely wondering what my goals should be over the next decade or two. I was expecting a sequence of sterytopical, vague responses: go to a good university, get good marks, get a job, get married, have a couple of kids if necessary. By surprise, his suit rose with the vigour of a man possessed by the power of millions,

“Woman stand still. Woman sit down. Be not as you are. Be as I would have you. Divide your soul in two, and disseminate them equally: You Angel, You Whore. Balance is redundant in a universe made by us, so stop trying to gangle the keys of freedom to which there is no door.”

An overtly ontological statement for an abstract concept, but engaging nonetheless. His accusative tone seemed to stare me down and I, in hope of pleasing everyone around me, nodded and agreed.

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Woman move. Woman stand up. Be as you are, not as another would have you. Do not divide your soul into two dichotomous beings: No Angel, No Whore. Balance is the point, the portal to a universe made all on your own. The cosmic gangling of keys begs you closer to the many doors which could be yours: artist, lawyer, doctor, human. I threw Society out of my door this morning, and at the tender age of 17 decided what I would do for the many decades of my life: me.