

Information on Individual Reading

Your reading of a literary text will be evaluated by a **handout and an oral exam**. You may use information from the internet or other sources for your preparation, or consult a German translation. But you should have read the original text closely and be well familiar with it. **Your own ideas, your individual reaction to the reading and your ability to talk freely will be rated more highly than your competence in copying or reciting Wikipedia and secondary literature.**

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the exam or the handout, feel free to contact me by mail, phone, or after a lesson.

Oral Exam (50% Mark)

Deadlines : May 15 (Emerald) and June 15 (Ruby). Contact me in order to arrange a suitable date once you're ready .

The exam lasts 10-15 minutes and will be taken individually outside class hours. To those of you who take the matura-exam in English, it should provide an idea of what they have to expect.

You will receive a short excerpt of your text, which you can prepare for five minutes (15 minutes at the matura-exam). It will be the aim of our discussion to show that you have read the text and given some thought to it.

You won't have to know the novel by heart nor to have a perfect interpretation of it ready nor to know the answer to all the questions that it raises. I don't know all the answers either and we may well spend some time discussing open questions.

Requirements | What I Expect You to Know

Since most of you read a novel, the criteria listed here correspond to this genre. Should someone prefer to read a poem (or poems), a play or an essay, let me know, and we can fix the criteria for that genre.

The **plot**: ("what happens?")—you should be able to give a plot summary

The **protagonists**: Who are the main characters; what are they like and how do they relate to one another?

Important issues and the **main theme**: In *Twelve*, e.g., sex and drugs are important issues, but they are not the main theme. The main theme could be something like: "How the violence inherent in a society turns into a mass killing," or: "The difficulties of rich Long Island kids to find their identity and values."

Structure: Is the text divided into different parts or chapters? How are the different parts related? How do the transitions from one chapter to the next take place?

Time: Is the chronological succession of events respected? Are there flashbacks? You should be able to apply Genette's notions and terminology on narrative time (**prolepsis, analepsis, pause, scene, summary, ellipsis**; compare my handout of February 3, 2012).

Language & style: Standard English or regionally coloured, colloquial or literary, vulgar or refined, fantastic or realistic, romantic or prosaic, fiery or philosophical, fast or slow-moving, very detailed or summarizing and elliptic?

The **narrator**. What kind(s) of **focalization** does your text show (**internal, external or zero focalization**, compare my handout of February 3, 2012)?

First person narrator: is he or she the **protagonist** or merely a **witness**, or does the narrator not appear at all as a character in the novel?

Third person narrator: Do we perceive the information, opinions and value judgements as filtered through one of the characters only, or does the narrator have the ability to slip into the mind of different characters (**omniscient narrator**)? *Twelve* shows an omniscient narrator, The main focalizing character is Mike, but there are also other focalizers. In chapters 46 and 48, e.g., Andrew is the focalizer (and not Sven), and in other chapters Claude, Hunter, Chris, Molly or Jessica take on this function.

Does the narrator take a detached and matter-of-fact stance, or does he or she get emotionally involved?

Does the text show **social criticism**; does it have a **message** ?

Terminology: you should be able to handle basic literary terms like **irony, suspense, sarcasm, satire**, etc.

The **Author**—not a detailed biography and bibliography, but a general idea of her or his life and work.

Setting and **Socio-Historical Context** (*Whisky Galore*, e.g., is set in the Second World War in rural Scotland, and on two islands. All these three contexts influence the novel).

Written Part (50% Mark)

Deadlines: May 11 (Emerald), June 10 (Ruby). Send me your handout in electronic form (Word or Open Office). It should be roughly two pages long and should contain:

A mini-biography of the author

A plot summary of about five sentences.*

“Technical” information: the issues of **theme, structure, protagonists, language and style, structure, treatment of time, narrator’s position, socio-historical context** should all be part of your handout, but you decide the extent to which you bring in each one of them.

Your **personal assessment*** of the text: how was the reading process for you, what difficulties did you encounter, what are the strong points, the highlights of the text, what are its weaknesses? Would you recommend it as *Maturlektüre* or not?—and why, or why not?

A representative text sample of about half a page. Say why you think the quotation is representative of the text as a whole.

***While you will have to rely on secondary sources at least to some extent for other parts of your handout (e.g., author’s biography or historical context), these two parts should be formulated by you and reflect your individual reading experience.**