Copyright © 2015 Anthony Bosco
First published 2015

ISBN-13:
978-1-925130-80-5

Into English Pty. Ltd.
19/2 Everton Road
Strathfield NSW 2135
Email: admin@intoenglish.com.au
www.intoenglish.com.au

Cover Design: © Patrick Mazzolo of Paddymazz Productions.

All rights reserved. No part of this material may be reproduced in Australia or in any other country by any process, electronic or otherwise, in any material form or transmitted to any other person or stored electronically in any form without the prior written permission of Into English Pty. Ltd., except as permitted by the Copyright Act 1968.

This material may contain third party copyright materials. These materials are protected by Australian and international copyright laws and may not be reproduced or transmitted in any format without the copyright owner’s specific permission. Unauthorised reproduction, transmission or commercial use of such copyright materials may result in prosecution.

Reproduction and Communication for Educational Purposes:
The Australian Copyright Act 1968 (the Act) allows a maximum of one chapter or 10% of this book, whichever is the greater, to be copied by any educational institution for its educational purposes provided that the educational institution (or the body that administers it) has given a remuneration notice to Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) under the Act.

For details of the CAL license for educational institutions contact:
Copyright Agency Limited
Level 15, 233 Castlereagh Street, Sydney NSW 2000
Telephone: (02) 9394 7600
Facsimile: (02) 9394 7601
Email: enquiry@copyright.com.au

Reproduction and Communication for Other Purposes:
Except as permitted under the Act (for example, any fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review) no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission. All inquiries should be made to the publisher at admin@intoenglish.com.au.

This book is not to be treated as a blackline master; that is, any photocopying beyond fair dealing requires prior written permission.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:
Author: Bosco, Anthony, author.
Title: The story of Tom Brennan. Student book / Anthony Bosco.
ISBN: 9781925130805 (ebook)
Series: Standard English module C: Exploring transitions series.
Target Audience: For secondary school age.
Burke, J. C.--Criticism and interpretation.
English literature--History and criticism.

Dewey Number: A823.4

Acknowledgements:
NSW Board of Studies Prescriptions 2015-2020

The materials in this book make extensive use of thinking routines to assist students in making their thinking visible. These thinking routines were developed by Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education as part of the Visible Thinking project, funded by Carpe Vitam Foundation, Artful Thinking and the Cultures of Thinking project funded by Bialik College and Abe and Vera Dorevitch. Use of these routines here is not reflective of any endorsement by Project Zero, Harvard University or any of the funding entities of their research projects.

Disclaimer:
Every effort has been made to contact the owners of copyright material and acknowledge copyright material. The publisher welcomes any information from people who believe they own copyright material in this book.

All internet addresses (URLs) cited in this book were valid at the time of publication and chosen as being appropriate for use within the secondary English classroom. However, due to the dynamic nature of the internet, some addresses may have changed, ceased to exist since publication or may inadvertently link to sites with content that could be considered offensive or inappropriate. While the authors and publisher regret any inconvenience this may cause readers, no responsibility for any such changes or unforeseeable errors can be accepted by either the authors or the publisher.
# Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................2

The Concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’ .........................................................................................3

A Close Look at The Story of Tom Brennan ..................................................................................6

The Context: Late 20th Century/Early 21st Century Rural Australia ..............................................6

Consolidating Your Understanding of the Late 20th Century/Early 21st Century Rural Australian Context ........................................................................................................................................8

Significant Motifs and Symbols .......................................................................................................9

Stage 1: Overcoming Personal Boundaries ....................................................................................11

Stage 2: New Phases of Life and New Social Contexts ................................................................17

Stage 3: Social and Societal Boundaries .......................................................................................17

Consolidating Your Understanding of The Story of Tom Brennan ..............................................29

Extended Response ..........................................................................................................................31
Introduction:
Module C: Texts and Society
Elective 2: Exploring Transitions
J.C. Burke’s The Story of Tom Brennan

In this unit of work, you will explore how individuals in this novel experience transitions into new stages of life and new worlds. In doing so, you will come to a greater understanding of how significant life changes can result in individual growth and maturity.

Module C: Elective 2 – Exploring Transitions is:

- A study of how making transitions into new stages of life, whilst challenging, enables the individual to grow and change.
- A study that requires you to focus on how composers have used textual form, features and language to communicate these transitions and influence our understanding of the significance of these transitions for the individual characters.
- A study that requires you to find related texts.
- Examined in Paper 2 of the HSC English examination. It is marked out of 20.
- Worth 20% of your final English assessment mark.

What does Paper 2 look like?

Paper 2 is a two-hour paper, which requires you to answer 3 questions that are all worth 20 marks.

- Module A – Experience Through Language
  o You are required to answer ONE question for the elective and prescribed text combination you have studied – either ‘Distinctive Voices’ or ‘Distinctively Visual’.
- Module B – Close Study of Text
  o You are required to answer the question related to the prescribed text you have studied.
- Module C – Texts and Society
  o You are required to answer ONE question for the elective and prescribed text combination you have studied – either ‘Exploring Interactions’ or ‘Exploring Transitions’.

In this unit of work you will learn about:

- The context of J.C. Burke’s novel The Story of Tom Brennan.
- How character transitions can result in a change in behaviour, attitudes and values.
- How to express your personal response to J.C. Burke’s novel The Story of Tom Brennan.
The Concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’

To begin this study:

2. Read the rubric carefully.

LET’S MAKE THINKING VISIBLE!

Core Thinking Routine: See/Think/Wonder

This routine will help you to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations about the rubric.

SEE

What key words or expressions to you see in the rubric document?

THINK

What do these words make you think? What are your reactions to or initial perceptions of these ideas?

WONDER

What questions are raised in your mind? What words or expressions are unfamiliar or need clarification?
A Close Look at the Rubric

Module C: Texts and Society

The module ‘Texts and Society’ is an exploration of how individuals and events are shaped by the surrounding environment in which they take place. It is a close examination of the factors within a society, both cultural and environmental, which impact upon people and define their values, attitudes and beliefs. An individual’s choice to either conform to or challenge the values and attitudes of their society will come to determine their identity and place in the world.

Elective 2: Exploring Transitions

The elective ‘Exploring Transitions’ is an investigation into of the “the ways in which individuals experience transitions into new phases of life and social contexts”\(^1\). These texts examine how different experiences may shape or reshape an individual’s perception of themselves and the world around them. In moving from a formative context or milieu, the central protagonist(s) encounter obstacles or barriers, which they must negotiate in order to transition from the known into the new and unknown; a world which is beyond their comfort zone. “These transitions may be challenging, confronting, exciting or transformative and may result in growth, change and a range of consequences for the individual and others”\(^2\).

Exploring Transitions within the Context of the Bildungsroman Journey

The concept of the bildungsroman journey is central to JC Brennan’s novel *The Story of Tom Brennan*. This narrative progression charts the growth of an individual from a state of immaturity or naivety to a state of greater maturity or maturation. It is about ‘growing up’ or going through the stages of changing or transforming one’s attitudes and beliefs, one’s identity and one’s behaviours. Set amidst the milieu of rural/regional Australia in the late 20\(^{th}\) century/early 21\(^{st}\) century, the story presents the reader with situations, events and personalities that are at once both specific to that context as well as universal. The titular protagonist, Tom, struggles to venture beyond the confines of his ‘survivor-guilt’ and the ‘darkness’ of pain, regret and self-blame that has come to characterise his life since the car accident that changed his life and that of his family forever.

Tom and his family are made to feel no longer welcome in their home town, despite being well-respected members of the community before the night Tom’s brother, Daniel, caused the death and injury of a number of young people. Seeking refuge in a new town, Tom and his family come to realise that leaving their past behind and the emotional ‘wreckage’ caused by Daniel’s accident is not as simple as just relocating themselves physically. As the narrative progresses, Tom comes to rediscover what it means to be “Tom Brennan” and to move out of the liminal state filled with “blackness” that comes in the wake of that tragic night and into a new phase of his life; one which acknowledges he

---

\(^1\) NSW Board of Studies Prescriptions 2015-2020 p. 15
\(^2\) Ibid p. 15
can never return to the way things were, but that also looks to the future with hope and the chance to move into new physical and emotional ‘worlds’.

When composing responses for this elective, it is important to incorporate a selection of the following key terms:

- Interactions/Relationships/Links/Connections
- Values/Attitudes/Beliefs
- Perspective/Outlook/Point of View
- Change/Transformation/Progression
- Confronting/Challenging/Exciting/Frightening
- Immaturity/Maturity
- Society/Context/Environment/Milieu
- Obstacles/Challenges/Limitations
- Identity/Sense of Self/Self-Perception
- Consequences/Effects/Impact
- Mentor/Guide
- Conformity/Non-conformity

In order to effectively compose a response in relation to this elective, we have divided the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’ in J.C. Burke’s novel *The Story of Tom Brennan* into three distinct stages:

1. Overcoming Personal Boundaries
2. Social and Societal Boundaries
3. New Phases of Life and Social Contexts

This approach of dividing the novel into a linear progression of three stages is informed by the concept of the bildungsroman. It conceives of the Module ‘Texts and Society’ and the Elective ‘Exploring Transitions’ as being founded upon the journey of the individual away from their formative context toward a new stage of life and a new social context. There are other ways to approach and interpret the study of J.C. Burke’s novel *The Story of Tom Brennan* within this Module and Elective, however, this resource will use the approach outlined above.
A Close Look at *The Story of Tom Brennan*

**The Context: Late 20th Century/Early 21st Century**
**Rural Australia**

Before beginning your study of *The Story of Tom Brennan*, it is important to investigate the context, which influences the novel. This will provide you with important foundational knowledge, whilst also allowing you to appreciate the significance of the events, personalities and situations occurring in the years that function as the backdrop to the novel’s narrative.

Be sure to research and make notes on the following aspects of the novel’s context:

- Life in rural and regional New South Wales. You may wish to pick a specific place such as Temora, Mumbil (a possible inspiration for the fictional town of Mumbilli in the novel), Bourke, or a similarly sized town. Especially, in relation to population size and physical remoteness.
- Information, including statistics, on alcohol abuse by young people aged 16-25.
- Information, including statistics, in relation to fatal motor vehicle accidents involving young people aged 16-25.
- Information, including statistics, in relation to clinical depression suffered by young men in Australia. Especially, young men living in rural and regional areas.
- Internet and mobile phone technology between the years of 1995-2005.

Use the space below to jot down your initial findings:

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
Consolidating Your Understanding of the Late 20\textsuperscript{th} Century/Early 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Rural Australian Context

**LET’S MAKE THINKING VISIBLE!**

**Core Thinking Routine: If I used to think...Now I think...**

This routine will help you to consolidate what you have learnt about so far in relation to the social, cultural and historical context of the novel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I used to think...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outline your thoughts, ideas and opinions about the social, cultural and historical context of late 20\textsuperscript{th} Century/early 21\textsuperscript{st} Century rural Australia BEFORE you conducted your research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now I think...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How have your thoughts, ideas and opinions about the social, cultural and historical context of late 20\textsuperscript{th} Century/early 21\textsuperscript{st} Century rural Australia changed as a result of the research you have conducted?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Significant Motifs and Symbols

Cars and Driving:

The impetus for the novel’s narrative is a tragic car accident. This event changes the lives of everyone in the Brennan family, as well as many others, forever. Throughout the novel Burke employs cars and driving as a motif to represent simultaneously advantageous and disadvantageous possibilities that young people gaining access to this form of freedom presents. Cars and driving present young people with a literal and metaphorical vehicle for freedom, self-expression, individuality and empowerment. However, they are also dangerous, volatile and if driven recklessly capable of causing grievous bodily harm and even death.

More specifically, Burke employs the extended metaphor of the whole Brennan family being in the same ‘car’ with Daniel. Whilst it was Daniel who was responsible for causing the tragic death and injury of other young people as a result of his drunken and rash behaviour, he is not the only one to suffer. In the wake of this accident, the whole Brennan family are low living in the emotional ‘wreckage’ that Daniel caused that night when he chose to get behind the wheel drunk. Throughout the novel, Tom and his family often feel as though they are trapped in a car driven by Daniel and heading down a road they do not want to go. As the story progresses, Tom and his family struggle to wrestle back control of their own lives and to again ‘take the wheel’ of their lives. This allows them to look towards new and different future ‘roads’, which their emancipation from the ‘car’ of grief, sorrow and regret will allow them to ‘drive’ towards.

Blackness:

Used throughout the novel to represent a state of depression, despair and hopelessness. Burke makes regular reference, especially in the first half of the novel, to Tom’s experience of ‘blackness’ in myriad and various forms. As the novel progresses, there are increasingly more references to light and brightness which is used to represent hope, purpose and a rediscovery of how to be happy within one’s life.

Black is also used to symbolise confusion and ignorance. At the outset of the novel, Tom is no longer sure of who he is or what it means to be a ‘Brennan’ or to be ‘Tom Brennan’ specifically. His mother and his sister have also lost their way, the former spending most of her time in near darkness by refusing to get out of bed and the latter by experimenting wildly with her hair and appearance. Tom transition into new worlds and phases of life sees him develop a greater sense of himself and what it means to be ‘Tom Brennan’, which is denoted by less references to darkness and blackness and more references to their antithesis, colour and brightness.
**Water:**

Water is often used in novels to symbolise purity, renewal or cleansing. Going back to Ancient Greece, the philosopher Aristotle referred to the need for a character to achieve *catharsis* (meaning a cleansing or purification) by the end of a tragic story. *The Story of Tom Brennan* ends with just such an act or cleansing, purification and renewal as Tom swims nude in the lake with Chrissy and, surrounded by “shafts of sunlight flickering across [their] skin”, they move into a new phase of their relationship by making love for the first time. Their nudity is a related symbol which represents Tom’s rebirth. By swimming nude in the river, Tom is cleansed of his hate, regret, guilt and shame. The final lines of the novel tell us that on that “morning Tom Brennan came back, forever”.

**Hills and Mountains:**

Hills and mountains act as a concrete and physical representation of Tom and his family’s emotional struggle and hardship in the wake of Daniel’s car crash. By focusing on climbing actual hills and mountains and by looking forward to climbing even greater mountains abroad, such as Everest in Nepal, Tom is able to focus upon a physical task over which he can exert control and cleanse himself of pent-up frustration and animosity. It is also worth noting the Judeo-Christian symbolism in Tom’s paternal grandmother, Gran, calling the nearby hill that Tom and Brendan (Tom’s uncle) run up and down ‘Ascension Hill’; a reference that evokes imagery of the bodily ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven over a month after his resurrection. With the help of his family, his friends and his love interest Chrissy, Tom is able to pull himself out of the nadir or despair that he has entered, just as Jesus was interred in a dark cave after his crucifixion, and re-enter the light just as Jesus did through his resurrection.
Stage 1: Overcoming Personal Boundaries

The focus of this stage is to introduce the responder to the central protagonist(s) and their identity in the initial stages of their journey. The fears and aspirations of the protagonist(s) will reflect and/or challenge the values and attitudes of the society they have grown up in. This formative context has shaped their perceptions of both themselves and the world around them. Protagonist(s) impose personal boundaries or limitations upon themselves in accordance with the hegemonic beliefs, values, practices, customs or attitudes of the society in which they exist.

Personal boundaries limit one’s potential for self-expression or self-potentiation. The process of challenging, confronting or overcoming these personal boundaries reshapes the protagonist(s) perspective of themselves and their world, leading to a change in their identity and the way that they are perceived by others. Overcoming personal boundaries is an integral component of transitioning into new phases of life and social contexts, as an individual must combat their own fears in order to achieve growth, change and a range of other consequences that that will affect both themselves and others.

In the instance of J.C. Burke’s novel The Story of Tom Brennan, one could potentially perceive everything that occurs after the ‘Prologue’ as an experience of a new phase of life and/or a new world. This is because the titular protagonist Tom Brennan leaves his formative context or milieu of Mumbilli along with his family as a consequence of the fatal “accident” for which Daniel Brennan is responsible. However, the move to Coghill is only a new world for Tom and his family in the physical sense. Tom carries the ‘ghosts’ of his tragic recent past along with him and feels as estranged from the ‘world’ of Coghill as he did from his home-town of Mumbilli.

As a bildungsroman novel, The Story of Tom Brennan is more concerned with Tom’s coming of age and the formation, or re-formation, of his identity as a young man. As such, this student book is focused upon examining the progression of Tom movement into new phases or life and/or new worlds that change, challenge, confront and transform him emotionally and psychologically. To begin the journey out of the “blackness” of fear, self-loathing and insecurity that has plagued him ever since the night of his brother’s “accident”, Tom must first overcome personal boundaries. This section of the student book focuses upon the events, situations and personalities Tom Brennan encounters from the ‘Prologue’ to chapter ‘Eight’ of J.C. Burke’s novel.
## LETʼS MAKE THINKING VISIBLE!

### Core Thinking Routine: See/Think/Wonder

This routine will help you to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations about the scenes and scenarios from the ‘Prologue’ to chapter ‘Eight’ of *The Story of Tom Brennan* that are relevant to ‘Stage 1: Overcoming Personal Boundaries’.

**SEE**

What do you see that is challenging, confronting, exciting or transformative for Tom in these chapters? Record down direct quotes, making sure to keep them brief (8-12 words) and to record them accurately. Also, donʼt forget to write down the page number, in case you need to find it again later.

**THINK**

What language forms and features do you think Burke has used to communicate the significance of this event, personality or situation? What effect/s do these techniques have upon you?

**WONDER**

How do you think these examples link to the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’? Make sure to use the language of the rubric in your responses.
Prologue

1. What obstacles, challenges or boundaries are introduced at the outset of the novel for Tom and his family? Provide evidence in the form of direct quotations from the novel.

2. What tone/mood is established by Burke at the outset of the novel? How does the composer achieve this? Identify 2-3 language features used to create this effect.

3. The novel employs the symbolism of cars and driving to represent Tom Brennan’s experience of transitioning into new worlds and experiences. What do you think the act of silently “push[ing] our Ford Falcon station wagon out of the garage, past the ugly words that told us we were no longer wanted” represents or symbolises in relation to Tom’s life and experience of the world at this point in his journey?

One, Two & Three

1. A ‘cynic’ is a person whose perspective of the world is characterised by a general distrust of others and a lack of faith and/or hope. Cynics often focus on the bad or the corrupt in others; believing that people are motivated primarily by selfish desires. What evidence is there from these two chapters that Tom’s has become cynical in his perspective of the world? Provide evidence in the form of direct quotations from the novel.

2. What information and details about Tom’s ‘backstory’ are revealed in these chapters? Explore how your perspective of Tom has been changed or transformed by these revelations.

3. What evidence is there from these chapters that Tom is suffering from depression? Try to find at least three examples.

4. “‘He’s doing Year Eleven again,’ Gran reminded. ‘On account of the…the interruptions.’” From Gran’s use of the euphemism “interruptions” and her self-conscious elliptical pause, we get the impression that Gran is ashamed or embarrassed of what has happened to her family.

   a. Explore how Gran’s unwillingness to speak directly, openly and honestly, about what has happened to the Brennan family creates a barrier preventing Tom from overcoming his own struggles.
   
   b. Consider how this reluctance to face the situation might apply to other family members besides Gran and how this impacts on Tom.

5. Why do you think chapter ‘One’ ends with the image, “Dad started to fold the napkins over and over again”? What do you think this might symbolise?
6. “I tried to smile but it didn’t come out right. I was like one of those drum-playing rabbits you see on TV commercials. Except they’d forgotten to put the super-charged batteries in me so I was on the downhill slide”.

What do we learn about Tom’s view of himself and the world through Burke’s use of simile?

7. In these chapters, Burke establishes the symbols of blackness and emptiness, which become motifs throughout the novel.
   a. Find at least ONE example of each from these chapters.
   b. Explain what you think is represented by each symbol in relation to the personal boundaries that Tom is challenged and confronted by.

8. An achronological narrative form is one in which events and situations are not placed in the order in which they occurred. Instead, they are organised or arranged in the order that the composer believes will have the greatest dramatic and emotional impact. The text will jump back and forward in time, often following the main character’s train-of-thought. Given that this text is a bildungsroman, why do you think J.C. Burke has chosen to compose her novel in the form of an achronological first-person narrative? Make sure to explore the effect this has had upon you (the responder) in your answer to this question.

**Four, Five and Six**

1. The term ‘interstices’ refers to an in-between place, one which is often very restrictive and limiting. What evidence is there from chapter ‘Four’ that Tom is caught in a painful interstices between the “past” and the “present”?

2. In what ways is Tom challenged and confronted by his visits with Fin in these chapters?

3. “I turned on the tap and put my head under, drenching my face and hair, tasting water mixed with my sweat and fear.” Water is often used as a symbol in texts, both because it relatable to all and because it carries a number of cultural and religious connotations.

---

**‘MIMESIS’ & ‘DIEGESIS’**

The Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle identified two distinctive forms of story-telling. One is ‘mimesis’ which means ‘imitation’. When composers use ‘mimesis’ they show their audience events, personalities and situations and allow us to experience them through direct dramatic representation. The other form of story-telling is ‘diegesis’. ‘Diegesis’ involves the summary or narration of events, personalities and situations. When composers use ‘diegesis’ they tell us about things indirectly by having a character, persona or voice give us their summary or their version of a story.

J.C. Burke uses a combination of ‘mimesis’ and ‘diegesis’ in these chapters to give her audience insight into how Tom is thinking and feeling. Search through these three chapters for examples of Burke’s use of ‘diegesis’ and ‘mimesis’. Try to find at least THREE examples of each. For each example, explain what the effect upon you (the responder) is and what you come to understand about Tom’s life and experience of the world.
a. Explore what you think the aquatic symbolism in the above quotation is intended to represent.

b. How does this relate to Tom’s struggle to overcome personal boundaries?

4. Tom’s mother appears also to be suffering from a deep depression and has retreated, like Tom, into her own ‘cave’. Tom finds his mother almost unrecognisable and is growing to resent her lying in bed all day, wallowing in her grief and neglecting her family.

During their conversation in chapter ‘Six’, Tom’s mother says to him: “‘Daniel was behind the wheel,’ she whispered. ‘And he had no right to be.’” Literally, she is referring to the fatal night of Daniel’s “accident”. However, her statement has broader metaphorical implications. Discuss with a partner, in a group or with the whole class what other connotations and allusions may be present in this quote.

5. In chapter ‘Six’, Tom visits the local swimming pool. The motif of water is used again here, but it carries different associations and values than in previous chapters. What values, attitudes, ideas or ways of thinking is water used to represent in chapter “Six”?

6. At the end of chapter ‘Six’, Tom chats awkwardly with Chrissy as they wait in line to use the showers at the local swimming pool. Tom again notices Chrissy’s “white teeth”. Chrissy asks about Tom’s “grandad” and Tom feels horrible for being reminded of the lie he told her when they last met, and the shame that motivated his dishonesty. The chapter ends with “the black curtain descending down on” Tom. Consider the ideas, values, attitudes and ways of thinking associated with the contrasting colour symbolism of “white” and “black” used by Burke.

**Seven & Eight**

1. What do you think is motivating Tom’s father and his Uncle Brendan’s enthusiasm to have Tom play football again?

2. Why does “Sunday morning” bother Tom so much?

3. “The clouds were out and a storm was threatening.” Explore what is being suggested or evinced in relation to Tom’s personal boundaries and fears by Burke’s use of pathetic fallacy in this quote.

4. Discuss the significance of Tom’s declaration “‘I want to see Daniel this weekend.’” in relation to Tom overcoming personal boundaries.

**DEBATE**

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” (Lao Tzu)

Has Tom Brennan begun to change by the end of chapter ‘Eight’ or has he remained unaltered by his experiences thus far? Choose sides and debate whether Tom has started upon his “journey of a thousand steps” or if he is yet to take a “single step”. Make sure to provide specific examples from the text in support of your arguments.
5. What other evidence can you find in these two chapters that Tom has overcome some of his personal fears and boundaries?

6. What evidence can you find that Tom is still struggling to “get in step with [his new] life” in Coghill?

**LET’S MAKE THINKING VISIBLE!**

**Core Thinking Routine: Concepts/Connections/Challenges/Changes**

This routine will help you to develop your understanding of the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’ and how *The Story of Tom Brennan* connects to this concept. After finishing your analysis of the above chapters from the novel, complete the visible thinking routine below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPTS</th>
<th>CONNECTIONS</th>
<th>CHALLENGES</th>
<th>CHANGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - What key concepts in relation to ‘Exploring Transitions’ are present in these chapter from the novel?  
- What are Tom’s significant experiences in overcoming personal boundaries? | - How do these concepts and experiences connect to the ‘Exploring Transitions’ rubric and to your developing understanding of the concept?  
- How do the significant events, personalities and situations you have analysed in these chapters connect with your related text/s? | - In your opinion, what are the most significant personal obstacles/boundaries faced by Tom in these chapters?  
- How have these chapters challenged your perspective of yourself and the world?  
Be sure to consider your interactions with the following:  
  o New knowledge and ideas  
  o Shifts in attitudes and beliefs | - In what ways have these chapters changed or altered your understanding of the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’?  
- How have these chapters shifted, altered or changed your attitudes and beliefs? For example, in relation to:  
  o Under-age drinking  
  o Family pressure and expectations  
  o Traditions and cultural customs, e.g. Gran’s devout Catholicism  
  o Adolescence and growing up |
Stage 2: Social & Societal Boundaries

The focus of this stage is the central protagonist(s) process of re-negotiating their perspective of the social and/or societal groups that characterise their milieu. Social/societal boundaries often exist in tandem with personal boundaries, but it is important to differentiate one from the other for the purpose of clarity, enabling you to compose a more effective response. At this point in the protagonist’s experience of transitioning into new phases of life and social contexts, they have either overcome or begun to overcome their ‘Personal Boundaries’ (Stage 1).

Protagonist(s) have social or societal boundaries imposed upon them in accordance with the hegemonic beliefs, values, practices, customs or attitudes of the society in which they exist. Examples of values and/or attitudes that may limit an individual’s freedom or sense of self include:

- Discrimination and judgement
- Guilt, regret and shame
- Insecurity
- Family expectations that are, or may seem, unfair
- The consequences or repercussions of other people’s actions, decisions or choices

These values and attitudes exist because many people believe that solidarity (a confluence in world view amongst people) is the most effective way to ensure societal stability, security and safety. Protagonist(s) wishing to transition into new phases of life and social contexts wish to do and say things which challenge the ‘status quo’ of the society in which they live. They often encounter resistance and resentment by those who wish to maintain order and control as a consequence of their ambitions, dreams or desires.

The central protagonist(s) seek to overcome social or societal boundaries in order to achieve non-conformist dreams or desires. This process will often result in conflict and confrontation between the protagonist and those who have influence over their lives. Changes in the way that the protagonist views themselves and their world, as well as changes to how others view them and their own perspective of the world usually result irrespective of whether they succeed or fail in overcoming their social and/or societal boundaries.
LET’S MAKE THINKING VISIBLE!

Core Thinking Routine: See/Think/Wonder

This routine will help you to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations about the scenes and scenarios from chapter ‘Nine’ to ‘Sixteen’ of *The Story of Tom Brennan* that are relevant to ‘Stage 2: Social and Societal Boundaries’.

**SEE**

What do you see that is challenging, confronting, exciting or transformative for Tom in these chapters? Record down direct quotes, making sure to keep them brief (8-12 words) and to record them accurately. Also, don't forget to write down the page number, in case you need to find it again later.

**THINK**

What language forms and/or features do you think Burke has used to communicate the significance of this event, personality or situation? What effect/s do these language forms and/or features have upon you?

**WONDER**

How do you think these examples link to the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’? Make sure to use the language of the rubric in your responses.
**Nine & Ten**

1. “A bit of regulation slapping on the back and a couple of high-fives... So there it was, my year mapped out before me... I couldn’t share their enthusiasm. If anything, it pissed me off.” At the beginning of chapter ‘Nine’, Tom discovers that he has been selected for the St. Benedict’s Rugby Union Team. What is the effect of the following language techniques used by Burke in the above quote:

   - Unemotive and mechanical diction
   - Metaphor
   - Colloquial pejorative

2. Why is Tom hiding behind “a book”?

3. Look carefully at the bitter and acrimonious language contained in the letter from Luke’s parents. What effect does this have upon Tom? You may need to look for clues throughout these chapters and use your powers of inference, as the understatement inherent in Tom’s sardonic response – “Like I said, that was a low point” – belies the profundity of the letter’s response upon him.

4. At the end of chapter ‘Nine’ Tom recalls the day that Daniel received his prison sentence.

   a. What does the judge’s sentencing statement reveal about the way that Daniel was perceived by the community of Mumbilli?
   b. What do the “Cries” of the crowd tell you about the way that Tom and his family were viewed by those they once regarded as neighbours, friends and peers after Daniel’s “accident”?

5. On a number of occasions in chapter ‘Ten’, Tom is repulsed by his own mother. He no longer feels like he recognises her, referring to her as “that woman”, and “stiffen[ing]” defensively when she embraces him. In relation to social and societal expectations of mothers, why do you think that Tom feels this way about his own mother?

6. Discuss with a partner, in a group or with the whole class how Tom visiting his brother in prison for the first time is an example of Tom overcoming social and/or societal boundaries? Make sure to give specific examples from the text in support of your ideas.

7. “A week after that visit, Daniel started at the Westleigh Peer Support Facility, and I started running with Brendan.” Consider the cause and effect relationship between Tom visiting his brother in prison for the first time and Tom deciding to begin running with his uncle Brendan.

8. “That was the most he’d ever told me about himself. Strange, you can know a person all your life yet not really know anything about them.” What does Tom learn about his family through his conversation with Brendan? How does this interaction affect the way that Tom sees himself and the world?
9. Use your imagination and powers of inference, speculate about what social and familial challenges you think the arrival of Aunty Kath, Fin’s mother, at the end of chapter ‘Ten’ will create for Tom.

Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen

1. Explain how Tom perceives Daniel and Fin’s situations differently. What does this reveal to you about Tom’s values, attitudes and belief system?

2. “We were headed for something, and the next afternoon when Dad and I got back from footy training, we ran smack into it.”
   a. What is the “it” to which Tom is referring?
   b. What do you think the use of foreshadowing in this quote tells us about Tom and the challenges he faces at this point in the novel?

3. In relation to overcoming social and/or societal boundaries, what is so significant about the Brennan’s attending church together in chapter ‘Eleven’? Make sure to consider how Tom’s attitude towards the belief system of religion has changed since the beginning of the novel.

4. What significant discoveries does Tom make about his family during chapters ‘Eleven’ and ‘Twelve’? What impact does each have upon him?

5. Chrissy’s presence has an obvious physical effect upon Tom. But, what is more important about their relationship is the emotional and psychological impact she has upon him. Discuss how Tom’s interactions with Chrissy in these chapters present him with challenging, confronting, exciting and transformative opportunities for growth and change.

6. What is the symbolic significance of Tom having regained his appetite for food?

7. What does Tom learn about his new social context of Coghill as a consequence of his sister’s speech at school? Note: You will have read up until the end of chapter ‘Thirteen’ to answer this question effectively.

8. In what ways is Tom’s visit to see Daniel in chapter ‘Twelve’ different from the previous occasion? What do these changes indicate about the growth and change Tom has achieved as a consequence of having overcome both personal and social/societal boundaries?

9. “I held my arms out the window. The cool autumn air tingled the hairs along my skin and the knot in my guts started to untie.” What is the effect of Burke’s use of pathetic fallacy in this quote in evincing Tom’s changing perspective of himself and the world?
10. “I guess I was getting impatient. Maybe that was a good sign. Maybe I was finding my ticket out of the past.”

   a. To what event/situation is Tom referring in this quote?
   b. Burke has used a metaphor here to convey the impact of Tom having overcome a myriad of different personal and social/societal obstacles and boundaries by this point in the narrative. Summarise your understanding of how Tom has grown, changed or been transformed by his experiences up to and including in chapter ‘Thirteen’.

**Fourteen, Fifteen & Sixteen**

1. “I forced myself to get out of bed every morning to go running with Brendan... Sometimes Brendan and I talked. Other times I’d run till I saw the blackness of nothing. That’s when I’d zone out, the weight of my thoughts shedding with each kilometre, like layers of skin onto the track, leaving an empty shell.”

   a. What is Tom’s motivation for committing to running every morning?
   b. What do we learn about the effect of the exercise upon Tom’s mental state from Burke’s use of mixed metaphor in this quote?
   c. How is the “blackness of nothing” different from the “blackness” that Tom has described in previous chapters?

2. How does Tom’s attitude towards the Coghill football team and the importance of “winning” change in these chapters?

3. What do you think the opportunity to travel to Nepal with his uncle Brendan represents for Tom? Make sure to consider the symbolism of hills (e.g. Ascension Hill) and mountains in your response.

4. How has Tom’s relationship with his mother changed over the course of these chapters? Make sure to give specific examples from the text in support of your response.

5. “I noticed my arms weren’t looking bad. I gave my muscles a flex and there was a bicep sticking up on its own. I felt it. Not bad.” Discuss how Tom’s physical transformation is used by Burke as a metaphor representing his emotional and psychological transformation thus far in the narrative.

6. “‘No, Kyles,’ I whispered to her. ‘No. Don’t do that crap to yourself. It was no one’s fault.’”

   “‘Maybe Daniel was always going to do something like this. Maybe he had to fall this far.’”

   “…I can see ahead now, if you know what I mean.’”

Consider how each of these extracts from Tom’s conversation with his sister, Kylie, in chapter ‘Sixteen’ is evidence of Tom having overcome personal as well as social/societal boundaries.
7. Summarise your thoughts on the following:

a. How has Tom changed since the start of the story?
b. How has Tom grown?
c. What other consequences, both positive and negative, have there been for Tom?
d. What other consequences, both positive and negative, have there been for other people in Tom’s life?

DEBATE

“You will find peace not by trying to escape from your problems, but by confronting them courageously.” (James Donald Walters)

Has Tom Brennan begun to find peace by the end of chapter ‘Sixteen’ or is he still attempting to escape from his problems? Choose sides and debate whether Tom’s actions in this part of the novel demonstrate genuine growth and change.

Make sure to provide specific examples from the text in support of your arguments.
**LET’S MAKE THINKING VISIBLE!**

**Core Thinking Routine: Concepts/Connections/Challenges/Changes**

This routine will help you to develop your understanding of the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’ and how *The Story of Tom Brennan* connects to this concept. After finishing your analysis of the above chapters from the novel, complete the visible thinking routine below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPTS</th>
<th>CONNECTIONS</th>
<th>CHALLENGES</th>
<th>CHANGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What key concepts in relation to ‘Exploring Transitions’ are present in these chapters from the novel?</td>
<td>• How do these concepts and experiences connect to the ‘Exploring Transitions’ rubric and to your developing understanding of the concept?</td>
<td>• In your opinion, what are the most significant social challenges Tom has faced in these chapters?</td>
<td>• In what ways have these chapters from the novel changed or altered your understanding of the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are Tom’s significant experiences in overcoming social and/or societal boundaries?</td>
<td>• How do the significant events, personalities and situations you have analysed in these chapters connect with your related text/s?</td>
<td>• In what ways has Tom overcome or begun to overcome these social and societal boundaries?</td>
<td>• How have these chapters shifted, altered or changed your attitudes and beliefs? For example, in relation to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• How have these chapters from the novel challenged your perspective of yourself and the world?</td>
<td>o Discrimination and judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be sure to consider your interactions with the following:</td>
<td>o Guilt, regret and shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o New knowledge and ideas</td>
<td>o The consequences or repercussions of other’s actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Shifts in attitudes and beliefs</td>
<td>o Adolescence and growing up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Into English 2014 23
Stage 3: New Phases of Life and New Social Contexts

The focus of this stage is the experiences that the central protagonist(s) has once they venture beyond their formative context/milieu. These experiences may confront, challenge, excite, frighten or transform them. Their response to these new worlds will be a reflection of, or response to, the values and attitudes that have characterised their formative environment.

Experiencing a transition into a new phase or life or a new and different social context is not a destination but rather the beginning of a new adventure or journey. Moving from one social context or stage of life is akin to moving from one world, the world the protagonist knows and has been influenced by, into a new and extraordinary world, which may be unknown or unfamiliar in many ways. Crossing the ‘bridge’ into the ‘new world’ is often a long and painful process, characterised by a number of personal and social/societal boundaries. But these challenges do not end once the protagonist has arrived in the ‘new world’.

Experiences of the new world may re-shape the protagonist(s) physically, emotionally and/or psychologically. Whether they stay in the new world or return to their formative context, they will have been changed irrevocably by their transition into a new phase of life or social context.
**LET’S MAKE THINKING VISIBLE!**

**Core Thinking Routine: See/Think/Wonder**

This routine will help you to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations about the scenes and scenarios from chapter ‘Seventeen’ to the end of *The Story of Tom Brennan* that are relevant to ‘Stage 3: New Phases of Life and Social Contexts’.

### See

What do you see that is challenging, confronting, exciting or transformative for Tom in these chapters? Record down direct quotes, making sure to keep them brief (8-12 words) and to record them accurately. Also, don’t forget to write down the page number, in case you need to find it again later.

### Think

What language forms and features do you think Burke has used to communicate the significance of this event, personality or situation? What effect/s do these techniques have upon you?

### Wonder

How do you think these examples link to the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’? Make sure to use the language of the rubric in your responses.
Seventeen

1. What evidence is there from this chapter that Tom has become more empathetic towards others? Give specific examples.

2. Consider the symbolism of Tom wanting to build a new chicken coup for his grandmother. Make sure to discuss the significance of Gran’s previous chickens being named Cain and Abel.

3. “Now I knew differently... Bennie’s had reminded me that the game was better when a team was united and loving it... In many ways, they’d saved my arse.”
   
   a. How has playing football with the St. Benedict’s team changed Tom?
   b. Explore whether you think that Tom has become a new person or if you think he has simply re-discovered his old self, or if it is a combination of both.

4. There is evidence in this chapter that whilst Tom has overcome many personal and social/societal boundaries, he is still troubled by his past. Discuss what happens and how Tom is able to overcome this pain.

5. Why does the football game feel like a ‘win’ for Tom and his team-mates even though they lose?

6. “Suddenly today didn’t become the day I faced St John’s. Today became the day I kissed Chrissy Tulake.” Discuss the significance of this event in relation to Tom transitioning into a new phase of his life.

Eighteen

1. “I hated thinking of Fin as a burden, I knew it was like giving up on him. It was just such hard work... He had nothing to smile about... But the fact was, I did. Worse than that, I was actually happy. It was hard to wipe the smile off my face.”

   Not all Tom’s experiences of new phases of life and social contexts are positive ones. He is now truly and genuinely happy for the first time since the novel began. But, he is still unable to rid himself of some of the burden of regret, shame and emotional pain for what has happened to Daniel and his victims.

   Explore the ambivalence that Tom feels at this point in the novel. Make sure to refer to at least TWO other examples from this chapter in your response.

2. “… it’s …spring.” Consider how Burke further develops her use of pathetic fallacy and seasonal metaphor throughout the novel by using spring-time to symbolise Tom’s transition into a new phase of his life. In your response, be sure to connect this example to other examples of pathetic fallacy and seasonal metaphor used earlier in the novel.
**Nineteen**

1. What is the effect of Burke juxtaposing Tom doing normal things like fitness training and planning his birthday with scenes depicting Daniel and Fin’s situations?

2. “The water was cold and fresh. Somehow it felt full of promises.” Water is often used as a symbol of purification and catharsis in literature. Explore Burke’s use of aquatic symbolism/metaphor in this quote and the values and attitudes it evinces in relation to Tom’s transition into a new phase of his life.

3. “I could feel summer coming...”. Again, in this final chapter of the novel, Burke is using seasonal metaphor. It is still spring-time, but Tom is looking forward to the pending summer.
   a. What does summer represent for Tom?
   b. Consider how his anticipation of things to come is a change in his outlook on life.

4. “Sitting there, watching him [Daniel] chat away, it was hard to believe these were the eyes that had flashed such uncontrollable rage and hatred that night. That these eyes belonged to the person who did such a terrible thing.” How have Tom’s experiences of transitioning into new phases of life and social contexts resulted in positive consequences for others?

5. Tom has come to a much better understanding of his grandmother and the different ways in which she has suffered and struggled in her life. She too has come a better understanding and appreciation of her grandson. This shared empathy has resulted in their relationship being much improved. What evidence can you find in this chapter to support these claims?

6. The final scene of the book is set down by the river. Consider the symbolic significance of the following in relation to Tom’s transition into new social contexts and a new phase of life:
   a. Water
   b. Tom and Chrissy’s nakedness
   c. The allusions to Christian Baptism
   d. The physical union of Tom and Chrissy

7. “…that was the morning Tom Brennan came back, forever.” Now, that the novel is over, summarise your thoughts on what you believe are the most significant ways in which Tom’s experiences have transformed him. Be sure to reference significant events that you have explored and analysed in ‘Stage 1: Overcoming Personal Boundaries’ and ‘Stage 2: Overcoming Social and Societal Boundaries’.

**DEBATE**

“All that Tom Brennan needed to be whole and complete again was to meet Chrissy Tulake.”

Debate with a partner for and against this statement. Make sure to use specific examples from the novel in support of your points.
LET’S MAKE THINKING VISIBLE!

Core Thinking Routine: Concepts/Connections/Challenges/Changes

This routine will help you to develop your understanding of the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’ and how *The Story of Tom Brennan* connects to this concept. After finishing your analysis of the above chapters from the novel, complete the visible thinking routine below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPTS</th>
<th>CONNECTIONS</th>
<th>CHALLENGES</th>
<th>CHANGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What key concepts in relation to ‘Exploring Transitions’ are present in these chapters from the novel?</td>
<td>• How do these concepts and experiences connect to the ‘Exploring Transitions’ rubric and to your developing understanding of the concept?</td>
<td>• In your opinion, how has Tom successfully challenged prevailing attitudes in the wake of Daniel’s car accident to transition into a new stage of life?</td>
<td>• In what ways is Tom changed by the end of the novel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are Tom’s significant experiences of new phases of life and new social contexts?</td>
<td>• How do the significant events, personalities and situations you have analysed in these chapters connect with your related text/s?</td>
<td>• How have these chapters from the novel challenged your perspective of yourself and the world? Be sure to consider your interactions with the following:</td>
<td>• In what ways have these chapters from the novel changed or altered your understanding of the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o New knowledge and ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Shifts in attitudes and beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consolidating Your Understanding of  

*The Story of Tom Brennan*

**LET'S MAKE THINKING VISIBLE!**

*Understanding Routine: Generate/Sort/Connect/Elaborate*

This routine will help you to organise and consolidate your understanding of the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’ in relation to the prescribed text of *The Story of Tom Brennan* and represent this understanding visually through a concept map.

**Instructions:**

1. **Generate** a list of your all your ideas and thoughts in relation to the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’ in relation to *The Story of Tom Brennan*.

2. Using a concept map, **sort** your ideas according to how central or tangential they are. Place central ideas near the centre and more tangential ideas toward the outside of the page.

3. **Connect** your ideas by drawing connecting lines between ideas that have something in common. Explain and write in a short sentence how the ideas are connected.

4. **Elaborate** on your ideas/thoughts about the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’ in relation to *The Story of Tom Brennan* that you believe are most significant. Try to write each as a ‘topic sentence’ for a paragraph by making a clear and decisive statement about ONE aspect of the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’ in relation to *The Story of Tom Brennan*.
**LET’S MAKE THINKING VISIBLE!**

**Understanding Routine: Layers**

This routine will help you to consolidate and organise your understanding of *The Story of Tom Brennan*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>NARRATIVE</strong></th>
<th>What is the narrative or story of the novel? Summarise the plot in relation to the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’ in only 2-3 sentences.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AESTHETIC</strong></td>
<td>What is the central appeal of the novel? What are the most powerful images that capture your attention and imagination, keeping you interested? What are the most significant symbols and motifs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MECHANICAL</strong></td>
<td>What language forms and features are significant? How is the structure of the novel used to communicate its central ideas/messages?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DYNAMIC</strong></td>
<td>What makes the novel dynamic or lively? What are the most important changes, shifts or transformations in the novel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONNECTIONS</strong></td>
<td>What are the most important connections between this novel and the concept of ‘Exploring Transitions’? How does this novel connect/compare/contrast with your related text/s?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Extended Response

“Making a transition into new phases of life and social contexts challenges the individual to better understand themselves and their connections with others.”

Discuss this view with reference to *The Story of Tom Brennan* and ONE other text of your own choosing.

Plan your response in the space below:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

© Into English 2014