English Extension 2, The Literature Review

‘Read! Read! Read! When you find something that thrills you, take it apart to see what made it so wonderful. Then use those tricks the next time you write.’, W.P Kinsella (1986). Through analyzing the publications of others, my understanding of the analytical essay form and thus my approach to my own essay has evolved into one that will surely add value to the already established textual discussion that surrounds the power of literature.

H.J Weiland’s analytical essay, Franz Kafka’s “The Burrow”, an analytical essay (1972)highlights the use of imaginative language, the blending of multiple registers as well as the posing of questions to the reader within the essay form. As notable within the excerpt, ‘The burrow comes to assume the status of the self-objectified... What about the living world outside the borrow? Has it ceased to exist for him? Not at all... let us see what we can learn.’ Weiland’s controlled authorial voice, inclusive language and questions creating a fantastic sense of commandment over semantics and a sophisticated yet friendly atmosphere of the composition. Weiland also skillfully incorporates the original language of The Burrow to convey a connection to the social context and authorial context of Kafka himself, in turn giving a sense of analysis that is beyond book covers and reflective of our own realities. This can be noted within the line, ‘To the German ear this sounds like Schiller’s Don Carlos… “occasionally,”, “ofters,”.’. Through this cultural allusion the greater German society, Weiland’s piece is connected to both the social context of Kafka and our own. Through annotating Weiland’s composition, I have witnessed the sophisticated use of figurative, direct, language within analytical pieces, which has greatly assisted me in the planning of my own critical composition. I plan to develop and use my own, personal, powerful authorial voice through utilising both formal and informal registers, questions, inclusive language, Mandarin and contextual concepts, in turn changing my piece into one that analyses literature, people, contexts and social phenomenon.

Teo Tze Kwang’s What made your Essay Successful? (2015), is a research text that has assisted in informing me on the diversity of essay scaffolding and how, through effective linking, to answer my essay’s central questions explosively. Kwang notes that ‘scaffolds are not a silver bullet...over-reliance on writing frames or that application of them in too rigid a way risking hindering students’ thinking and writing’. Rather, when approaching an essay, question or topic, Kwang advises one utilise the acronym “TACKLE”; thesis/time, argument, conceptual focus/counter-argument, keywords, logic, evidence, details/data. Within my own composition, I plan to stress the “E”, which explores the importance of proper literary and contextual evidence and the “D”, which accounts for any contextual, historical details. Thus connecting my chosen texts, analysis and discussion to contemporary China, in turn opening an informative, comprehensive discussion with readers.

Kwang has also reshaped my understanding of “linking” within an essay he states, ‘every sentence in the essay should be “linked” to the question; reject the suggestion that “linking” should be merely repeating the question at the end of each paragraph.’. Rather linking should be conceptual, relevant, sophisticated and answer the central question in a new and insightful manner. I plan to echo this sentiment within my own composition and make an effort to write every word with the understanding that it is not only vital in answering my central questions but also vital to my essay’s integrity and purpose, in turn creating a coherent, concise and sophisticated composition that develops the thesis and creates a discussion with the reader.

D. Dwan’s analytical essay, Orwell’s Paradox: Equality in Animal Farm (2012), emphasises how a sense of credibility can be gained when including and citing the concepts of other authors and thinkers, and thus how I too can incorporate this into my composition. One instance of such is the opening lines “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.”, This paradox, as Raymond Williams observed, “has passed into ordinary language.”. For Williams, Orwell’s paradox was a timeless statement about the gap between principle and practice.’. Through referencing past essayists one’s piece consequently adopts a sense of authenticity and authority, as well as connecting it to the realm of already published pieces, thus allowing one’s own to build upon it. Dawn’s essay has thus prompted me to consider the value and credibility one’s work gains when the perspectives of other authors are included. I plan to include the concepts and words of other authors within my own composition particularly when analysing with my chosen scopes of Psychoanalysis and Marxism, thus
not only allowing my work a sense of credibility but also connecting it to the realm of already existing concepts, pieces and voices that have addressed my chosen topic.

J. Calderazzo’s article *How to Write the Personal Essay* (1995), aims to combat the preconceived, formulaic notions that surround the structure and content of the essay form. Firstly, Calderazzo proposes that when one is writing an essay they needn’t sound like a scholar nor adopt an outrageously sophisticated register, rather that it is our ‘duty’ as authors to, ‘sound like plain old one-in-a-zillion you.’ Calderazzo does not claim that one cannot write with humanity when adopting formal registers, rather he provides an equally credible, alternative approach to academic writing, an amalgam of both a formal and informal voices, precise semantic choice and figurative language. Through reference to M.H Kingston (1976), this notion is then demonstrated, “You must not tell anyone,” my mother said, “what I am about to tell you.”, and explains, ‘Any second-grader can understand those words, but how can you not read on?’. This gave me a deeper understanding of how powerful judicious language selection and purposeful informality can be. Lastly, Calderazzo encourages essay authors to adopt figurative literary devices stating, ‘Scenes, dialogue, soaring metaphors, lyrical language — these are your tools too.’. This has prompted me to reconsider creative writing within the analytical form, the power it can add to one’s essay and how I too can utilise it. Calderazzo has drastically shifted the way I will execute my composition, I now plan to blend both formal and informal registers, pose questions and discussions. Through abandoning the traditional academic voice and instead adopting the atmospheric, controlled approach, the validity or credibility of the former will not be lost. Rather, I hope it will add to the slew of scholarly voices discussing literary power and stand within its own right. Potentially even providing a breath of fresh air to a scene that seems so saturated with one, singular, “correct” way of writing.

To conclude, it is undeniable that there exists a multitude of already polished works that discuss the controversies that surround literature in China. However, through using the knowledge on the analytical form, I hope to compose a unique, distinctive piece of literature that may offer a new perspective or interpretation of literature’s power and necessity. Although unorthodox, my piece will blend formality and informality and harness lyrical language, pose questions and open a direct discussion with the reader. My piece, through citing established publications, will also engage my own composition in a textual conversation, in the hopes of not only promoting a new branch of the literary discussion but through its distinctive adaptation of the analytical essay form, exist within itself.

**Bibliography of works cited: Harvard & Alphbetised**


