**4;EEB;M1**

**Some general feedback on initial comparison**

* In your full essay title you will have a **theme** (eg difficult childhood; social isolation etc) and it is important that you keep the focus on this and make sure you link back analysis of features to it. In the initial comparison you were asked to outline key themes yourself then exemplify them – this didn’t always happen.
* Make sure you understand the social and historical contexts fully. If you’re doing *The Color Purple*, for instance, you need to know the origins and impact of racial segregation in the southern United States in the mid twentieth century. Look up people, places, ideas and book titles if you don’t understand them and always find words in the dictionary if you don’t understand them. Ask me if you’re not sure and make sure you get your **facts** right!
* You need to introduce quotations smoothly and spend time exploring effects in full, linking back to the overall theme you are exploring. This takes time, care and re-drafting.
* There has to be a focus on narrative techniques and stylistic features (i.e. any linguistic or literary feature) but you only need to use a few of these; it’s much more important to develop and explore points fully and coherently.
* In terms of a comparative structure you can decide how broad or narrow you want to make each part of your comparison. It could either be focussed on how each text uses something quite specific like interrogatives or it could focus on really broad areas like ‘voice’ or ‘lexis’.
* Your introduction needs clearly, simply and confidently to outline the texts as a whole in terms of the way it relates to the theme. Try and show the moderator that you know the whole text and how it unfolds.
* With regard to the above, it’s obvious that you will only be able to apply close readings to two or three short but carefully chosen sections from each text. You should show your knowledge of the text as a whole by linking these close readings to brief, summarizing overviews.
* In your choice of sections to analyse try to show coverage of the text as a whole – not just the first chapter(s).
* Don’t forget to discuss **genres**. Your anchor text is a (compulsory) non-fiction text which is an **autobiography** so you have to understand the rules of this genre in order to say something about the ways Winterson both follows the rules of the genre but also experiments with them. You need to say something about the genres of you chosen **novels**. *The Catcher in the Rye* is shadowing the Bildungsroman tradition (a kind of fictional autobiography) of novels like *David Copperfield* which Holden immediately rejects at the outset but which he then seemingly unconsciously, if unconventionally, follows. With *The Color Purple* you should say something about novels which are **epistolary** in form (written in the form of letters) but how significant it is that Celie is addressing God. Epistolary novels are also interesting because the narrator is not aware how things will turn out in the end. Christopher, the narrator of *The Curious Incident*, is a fan of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories so you might want to think about how the novel shadows the detective genre, although obviously Christopher’s condition causes this to emerge in interesting ways.
* Don’t try to force big differences or substantial similarities between the texts – you will just end up trapping yourself. You get no marks for saying “there are vast differences” – it is not comparative analysis.
* There is a tendency to be rather lacking in subtlety when discussing the “you” that the first person voices use. There are nuanced and important differences in the way the four writers do this and only Winterson, as an (auto) biographer, is really straightforwardly addressing her audience directly.
* Don’t ever say that a narrator is using ‘bad’ grammar or language. In the case of *The Color Purple* the language reflects the non-standard, spoken dialect of African American is the southern United States as a way of conveying the narrowness of Celie’s life – her lack of options and opportunities (compare with the controlled, standardised register used by Nessie); in *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden is literate and educated (people ask him to write their English essays for him) but his use of the colloquial, informal sociolect of youth is an aspect of his desire to rebel from his privileged, upper middle-class upbringing as well as giving the sense that he is speaking rather than writing (because he’s ill?).
* When you refer to titles, use *italics*.
* In comparing a non-fiction genre with a fictional one, you need to be careful with the terms you use. I would make the following suggestions:

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| **When discussing Winterson** | **When discussing your novel** | **When discussing both** |
| autobiography | novel (or particular genre of novel) | texts |
| person, people etc | character | figures |
| direct speech | dialogue | represented speech |
| place | setting | location |