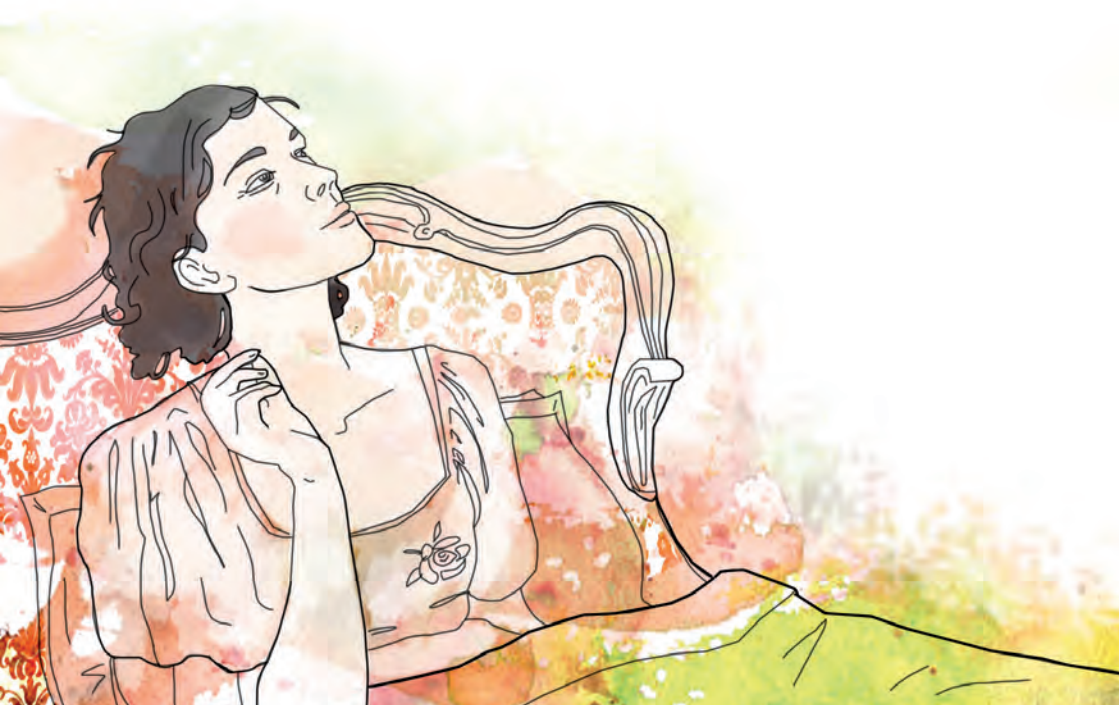




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# Modern times

Virginia Woolf  
and modernism

## MODERNIST LITERATURE

One of the defining features of **modernist literature** is its focus on the individual mind and the way it operates. This emphasis on subjective consciousness• is totally different from the objectivism or realism (Virginia Woolf called it 'materialism') of most of nineteenth-century literature. In line with the ideas that dominated• psychological and philosophical thought at the beginning of the twentieth century, innovative authors such as Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, to name but the most prominent•, attempted to portray• human consciousness as it is experienced from within.

## STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In terms of style, their novels include a range of new literary techniques capable of describing the way in which thoughts, perceptions•, memories and sensations are experienced by the mind. These innovative narrative forms and techniques are often defined as **stream of consciousness**.

The term 'stream of consciousness' however has its origins in the field of psychology. The idea that the mind works in a 'stream of thought' is primarily• a psychological theory introduced by the American philosopher and psychologist William James in his *Principle of Psychology* (1890). The term attempts to describe the uninterrupted flow of our conscious or

- **consciousness:** state of knowing how one feels, thinks etc.
- **dominated:** led; influenced greatly
- **occur:** happen
- **perceptions:** ways in which our senses notice things
- **portray:** describe
- **primarily:** mainly
- **prominent:** important

You can improve your writing skills by trying to write in the stream of consciousness style. Take two sheets of paper and start writing your thoughts as they come to you. Write down whatever comes into your mind even if it is only 'I can't think of anything to write about at the moment'. Keep writing until you fill two pages.

half-conscious thoughts, perceptions and feelings and all the associations that occur• in this process. James described this experience as continuous and unbroken, using the metaphors of the 'river' and the 'stream'. He stated that even if, while examining consciousness, it were possible to isolate single images, these would be meaningful only if considered in relation to the unconscious universe of perceptions flowing around them.

# To the Lighthouse

*Mrs Ramsay*



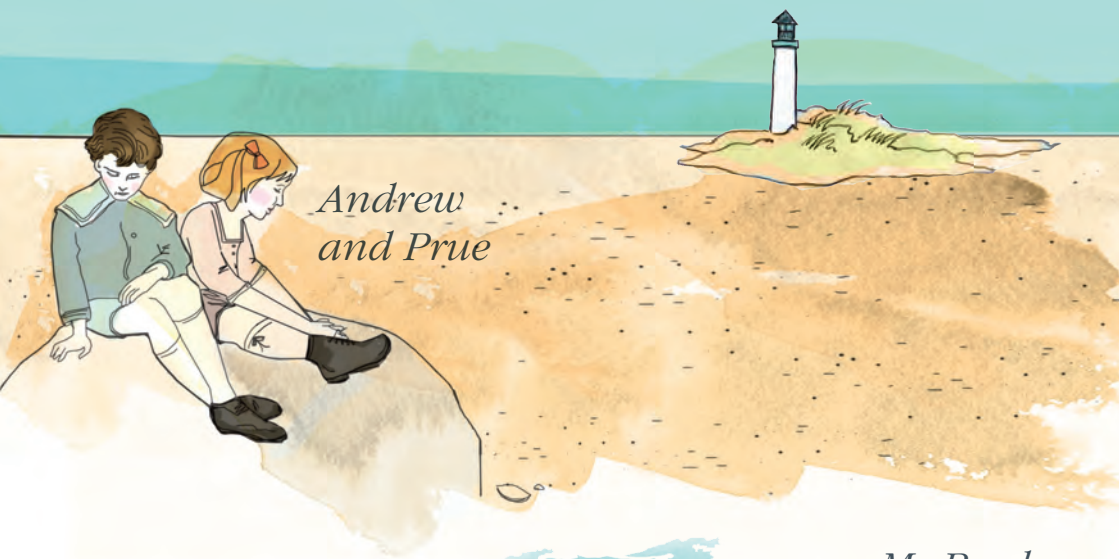
*Mr Ramsay*



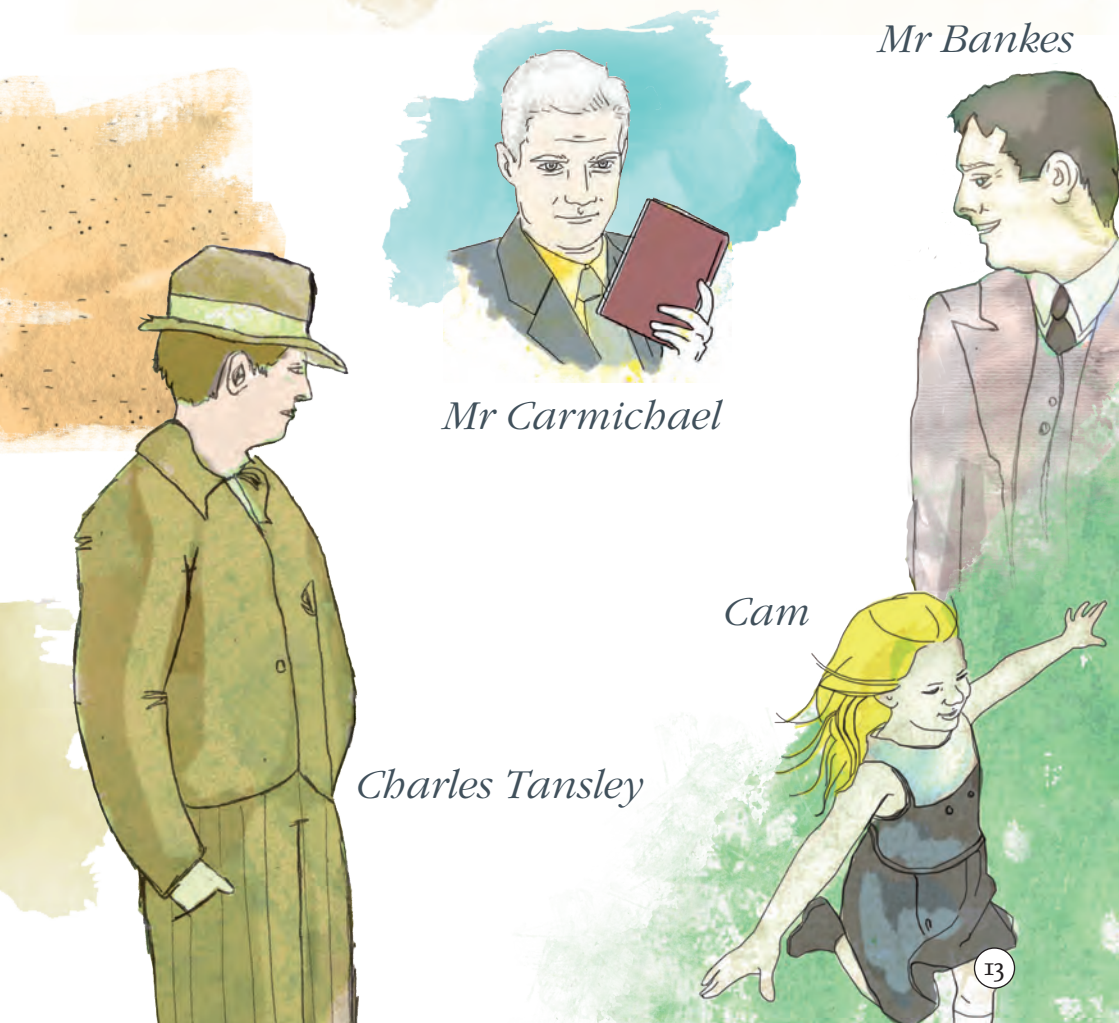
*James*

*Lily Briscoe*





*Andrew  
and Prue*



*Mr Banks*

*Mr Carmichael*

*Cam*

*Charles Tansley*

# BEFORE READING

- 1 The lighthouse is a symbol of many things in the novel. Circle three words below that best describe the lighthouse for you.

- calm
- comforting
- dangerous
- distant
- lonely
- mysterious
- peaceful
- permanent
- protective
- tall



- 2 Complete the sentence with one of the words above. Check your answer after you have read the book.

“ She looked at the long steady stroke of the Lighthouse, the last of the three, which was her stroke. She felt ..... again. ”

- 3  Have you ever been to a lighthouse or seen a lighthouse? Describe your experience. Then tell the class.

- 4 Sometimes places hold special memories. The lighthouse is special to the characters in the novel. Is there a building that is special to you? It may be a house, a castle or a museum. Write a paragraph about it.

- When did you visit it?
- Who did you go with?
- Why is it special?



- 5** Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade* is quoted a number of times in the novel. The poem describes a disastrous episode during the Crimean War when six hundred British soldiers of the Light Brigade died tragically because of an error in communication. Read the poem below then answer the questions on the online worksheet.

**I**

Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.  
"Forward, the Light Brigade!  
Charge for the guns!" he said.  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

**II**

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"  
Was there a man dismayed?  
Not though the soldier knew  
Someone had blundered.  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die.  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

**III**

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon in front of them  
Volleyed and thundered;  
Stormed at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well,  
Into the jaws of Death,  
Into the mouth of hell  
Rode the six hundred.

**IV**

Flashed all their sabres bare,  
Flashed as they turned in air  
Sabring the gunners there,  
Charging an army, while  
All the world wondered.  
Plunged in the battery-smoke  
Right through the line they broke;  
Cossack and Russian  
Reeled from the sabre stroke  
Shattered and sundered.  
Then they rode back, but not  
Not the six hundred.

**V**

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon behind them  
Volleyed and thundered;  
Stormed at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell.  
They that had fought so well  
Came through the jaws of Death,  
Back from the mouth of hell,  
All that was left of them,  
Left of six hundred.

**VI**

When can their glory fade?  
O the wild charge they made!  
All the world wondered.  
Honour the charge they made!  
Honour the Light Brigade,  
Noble six hundred!

## I THE WINDOW



‘Yes, of course, if it’s fine tomorrow,’ said Mrs Ramsay. ‘But you’ll have to get up very early,’ she added.

These words made her six-year-old son very happy. It was settled<sup>•</sup>. The expedition<sup>•</sup> was going to take place. He had looked forward to this adventure for years and years. And after a night’s darkness and a day’s sail<sup>•</sup>, it was finally going to happen. James Ramsay, sitting on the floor, cutting out pictures from a catalogue, was very happy. His mother watched him cut neatly<sup>•</sup> round the refrigerator. ‘He looks very serious,’ she thought. ‘I can imagine him as a judge, dressed in a red robe with white fur, or helping the country through a crisis.’



‘But, it won’t be fine,’ said James’s father, as he stopped in front of the drawing room<sup>•</sup> window.

At that moment, James wanted to kill his father. Mr Ramsay always provoked<sup>•</sup> strong emotions in his children. He stood there, thin as a knife. And he was smiling with the pleasure of disappointing<sup>•</sup> his son and ridiculing<sup>•</sup> his wife, who was ten thousand times better than him (James thought). Mr Ramsay was always right, and he knew it. What he said was true. It was always true. He never changed a disagreeable<sup>•</sup> word to make somebody happy, least of all his own children.

‘They should be aware<sup>•</sup> from childhood that life is difficult,’ he thought.

- **a day’s sail:** one day in a boat
- **be aware:** know
- **disagreeable:** unpleasant; not nice
- **disappointing:** taking away the hope of something good
- **drawing room:** formal living room

- **expedition:** adventurous trip or journey
- **neatly:** in a tidy, ordered way
- **provoked:** caused
- **ridiculing:** making her seem stupid
- **settled:** decided

‘But it may be fine,’ said Mrs Ramsay, as she was knitting• the brown sock. If she managed to finish the sock and if they did go to the Lighthouse, she wanted to give it to the Lighthouse keeper for his little boy. She also wanted to give him some old magazines and some tobacco. She would take all the things lying about the house that were not really wanted. She wanted to give those poor people something to amuse them. They must be bored to death• sitting all day with nothing to do except polish• the lamp.

‘How would you like to be shut up for a month in stormy weather, on a rock the size of a tennis court? How would you like to see nobody? How would you like to see the same boring waves week after week? How would you like that?’ she asked her daughters. ‘We must take them whatever comforts we can.’

### Alone

*Do you like being on your own or do you prefer being with other people?*

*Imagine what it is like to be a lighthouse keeper.*



*Share with a friend.*

‘The wind is due west•,’ said the atheist• Tansley. A due west wind was the worst wind for landing at the Lighthouse.

Yes, he did say disagreeable things, Mrs Ramsay thought. Now James was even more disappointed. But she did not let the children laugh at Tansley. ‘The little atheist,’ the children called him. Rose made fun of him. Prue made fun of him. Andrew, Jasper and Roger made fun of him.

- **atheist:** person who doesn't believe in God
- **bored to death:** very bored
- **due west:** blowing directly from the west

- **knitting:** making clothes with wool and needles (see page 18)
- **polish:** clean

Mrs Ramsay hated incivility• to her guests, especially to young men. She had invited lots of poor but very talented• young men to stay with them on holiday on the Isle of Skye. Indeed, she had the whole of the male sex under her protection; for their chivalry• and bravery, for the fact that they made treaties•, ruled India and controlled finance.

When she looked in the mirror and saw her grey hair, at fifty, she thought: 'I could have managed things better — my husband, money, his books. But I never regret• my decision to get married.' She was a formidable• woman, and it was only in silence that her daughters, Prue, Nancy and Rose, could think of a different life from their mother's — a life in Paris, perhaps. A wilder life where they didn't always have to take care of a man. They all silently questioned their mother's values of duty and marriage, a silent questioning of dutifulness• and of ringed fingers and beauty.

'You can't go to the Lighthouse tomorrow,' said Charles Tansley, clapping his hands together as he stood at the window with her husband. Surely, he had said enough. 'I wish they would both leave James and me alone,' she thought as she looked at him. 'He's such a miserable man, the children say. He can't play cricket. He shuffles•. He's sarcastic. What he likes best is walking up and down with Mr Ramsay, and saying who's won this, who's won that, who's the best at Latin verses, who's the cleverest man in Balliol•. That's what they talk about.'

- **Balliol**: a college in Oxford
- **chivalry**: good manners towards females
- **dutifulness**: doing one's duty
- **formidable**: with strong, clear ideas
- **incivility**: not polite behaviour

- **regret**: be sorry about something
- **shuffles**: walks without lifting his feet
- **talented**: with skills; who were very good at doing some things
- **treaties**: agreements between countries

Mrs Ramsay was standing by the drawing room window now. She was thinking of the problem of rich and poor, and the things she saw with her own eyes both here and in London, when she visited this widow, or that struggling wife. With a notebook and pencil, she wrote down wages and spendings, employment and unemployment. It was an unsolvable problem.

Mr Tansley had followed her into the drawing room. He was standing by the table. They had all gone – the children, Minta Doyle and Paul Rayley, Augustus Carmichael and her husband. So she turned with a sigh and said, ‘Would you like to come with me, Mr Tansley? I have to do a dull errand in the town. I’ve got a letter or two to write. I’ll be ten minutes. I’ll put on my hat.’ And, with her basket and her parasol, there she was again, ten minutes later, ready.

She stopped for a moment to ask Mr Carmichael if he wanted anything. The man was dozing with his yellow cat’s eyes half open. And like a cat’s eyes they reflected the branches moving or the clouds passing but they didn’t show any of his thoughts or emotions. ‘We’re making the great expedition,’ she said, laughing. ‘We’re going to the town. Stamps, writing paper, tobacco?’ she suggested. But no, he didn’t want anything.

‘He could have been a great philosopher,’ said Mrs Ramsay, as they went down the road to the fishing village. ‘But he made the wrong marriage.’ Holding up her black parasol, she told the story; an affair at Oxford with a girl; an early marriage; poverty; going to India; translating a little poetry ‘very beautifully, I believe,’ and then lying, as they saw him, on the lawn.

- **dozing:** sleeping lightly for a short time
- **dull:** not interesting
- **errand:** short trip you make to do a job

- **struggling:** having difficulty (to survive)
- **unsolvable:** without a solution
- **wages:** money paid regularly for work
- **widow:** woman whose husband has died



**1 Here are some quotations from the book. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first by turning it into indirect speech.**

- a** 'If Shakespeare had never existed, would the world be a different place today?'

He asked himself .....

- b** 'With her little Chinese eyes and pale face, Lily'll never marry'.

Mrs Ramsay thought .....

- c** 'How do you know?' she asked her husband.

She asked .....

- d** 'I'll paint that picture now. Where are my paints?'

Lily decided ..... and wondered .....

- e** - 'What do you want to show by the purple shape?'

- 'It's Mrs Ramsay reading to James.'

Mr Bankes asked .....

Lily replied that .....

- f** 'Am I wrong to say this?'

She asked herself .....

- g** 'How did they produce this tomboy Minta?'

Mrs Ramsay wondered .....

- h** 'How can any god have made this world?'

She asked herself .....

- i** 'I'll disinherit her if she marries Tansley'

Mr Ramsay warned .....

- j** - 'I'll be very proud of Andrew if he gets a scholarship.'

- 'I'll be just as proud of him if he doesn't.'

Mr Ramsay said that .....

Mrs Ramsay replied that .....

**P Preparation for Preliminary English Test (PET) Reading Part 5****1 Read the sentences from the book and choose the best word (A, B, C, or D) for each space.**

- a** But now someone else was walking towards her. She could ..... from the footsteps that it was Mr Bankes.  
**A** know                      **B** tell                      **C** listen                      **D** recognize
- b** Interfering, making people do what she wished – that was the ..... against her, and she thought it very unjust.  
**A** crime                      **B** doubt                      **C** charge                      **D** fault
- c** ‘Oh, Mr Tansley,’ she said, ‘..... take me to the Lighthouse with you. I’d love to go.’  
**A** will                      **B** shall                      **C** do                      **D** help
- d** ‘They must marry. I must arrange ..... them to take a long walk together.’  
**A** on                      **B** from                      **C** at                      **D** for
- e** The mat was fading. The wallpaper was fading. You couldn’t ..... any more that those were roses on it.  
**A** tell                      **B** get                      **C** think                      **D** achieve
- f** Mrs Ramsay didn’t like people seeing her husband coming to her like that. .... then people said he depended on her.  
**A** But                      **B** For                      **C** Yet                      **D** Just
- g** The trees plunge and bend, and their leaves play helter skelter ..... the lawn is covered with them.  
**A** until                      **B** because                      **C** but                      **D** unless
- h** Then, instead of saying ....., she turned and looked at him.  
**A** again                      **B** something                      **C** aloud                      **D** anything
- i** ‘And ..... if it isn’t fine tomorrow, it will be another day.’  
**A** also                      **B** even                      **C** then                      **D** what