



SPRING 2026

TRANSFORMATION

Dear All,

Spring is commonly associated with rejuvenation and rebirth, marking a period of change and transition. Inspired by this, the chosen theme for this edition is Transformation. Whether a transformation be physical, mental or emotional, it has been explored in this North London Review of Books issue. This theme has been interpreted widely from an array of texts, from a profound personal transformation in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* to the transformation of a place through the actions of others, seen in *Americanah*. The scope of Transformation is analysed through our contributors' perspectives of texts across a variety of time periods.

I hope you enjoy,

Helen

Editor-in-Chief

With special thanks to all students who contributed, Tvisha for her fantastic art on the cover, and Shaista for her editing.

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TRANSFORMATION IN *MOBY DICK* BY HERMAN MELVILLE

Moby Dick was written in 1851. At its core it is a story about what happens to a person when they become obsessed with something. The amazing change in the novel is that of Captain Ahab. He used to be a sailor but after losing his leg to the white whale Moby Dick he changed. He became empty and was filled with something darker. His whole identity became about one thing: getting revenge on Moby Dick. Melville shows us clearly how a painful experience can shape someone's entire view of the world. The narrator, Ishmael, also changes as he starts out feeling restless and without direction but the voyage on the ship helps him to grow. He makes friends with the harpooner Queequeg, learns about the ocean, and thinks about big questions. While Ahab becomes fixed on one goal, Ishmael stays curious and open-minded. Moby Dick, the whale is the predominant symbol in the novel; it is huge, mysterious and hard to understand. Different people see him in ways: Ahab sees him as evil while the reader is left to wonder. The ship chases the whale, not the other way around. This is a point in the story. Its main idea being that change can be good or bad, and it often depends on whether you can stay open, to a world that doesn't always give you answers.

Sanchi M (Year 10)

TRANSFORMATION IN GEORGE ELIOT'S *ADAM BEDE*

Adam Bede by George Eliot follows a complex love triangle in rural England. The pre-industrial revolution landscape, set in 1799, reflects the inevitability of change to rural life. The detailed 19th century English setting is explored through the characters and their actions, which impact others and society. The novel follows the seemingly mundane aspects of the characters' lives in a bucolic setting, in which the narrator infrequently and unpredictably interjects. The omniscient, outer-frame narrator offers insight and interpretations to the events in Hayslope, the town. Each chapter focuses on another character's life, beginning with the protagonist, Adam Bede, an intelligent and hard-working carpenter who works with his younger brother, Seth Bede. Fundamental aspects of human behaviour and psychology are examined and dissected, looking at human interaction and the inability to control others' actions.

Eliot's portrayal of ordinary people criticises the reader's tendency to romanticise and idealise characters within fiction. By presenting the reader with romantic and beautiful scenes, we are engulfed into the world of the characters. When this is harshly contrasted with the tragedies that ensue, empathy is required, rather than judgement. With the overwhelming determinism depicted, human life and whether we truly have free will and mobility is put into question, as if the characters' lives were pre-destined for sorrow at various stages.

Each character undergoes a transformation, which Eliot depicts as a slow, often painful, process of moral growth. While an imposing novel in terms of length, the reader comes to know and appreciate the characters, creating an emotional impact when their lives are forever changed by tragedy and unrequited love. The transformation of characters, such as Hetty Sorrel who appears deeply shallow and discontented with her life shifting to a woman broken by deception and suffering, offers a profound lens into the inner workings of human life. Through the context of 19th century ideals for women and working-class people, themes such as social class and responsibility are explored, especially through Arthur Donnithorne and Hetty's relationship which leads to her ruin as a product of his immaturity. With Arthur weaponising Hetty's dreams of escaping her simple life to live in prosperity and wealth, her trust is abused and his guilt withstands time.

Dinah Morris, a female preacher, brings transformation to Hayslope society by challenging social norms within the church as she defies expectations and devotes herself entirely to God. While she relinquishes her preaching later in the novel, she serves a fundamental purpose in reframing women's roles and following her ambitions to preach the gospel. Like Dinah, Hetty transgresses societal norms to such a great extent, except her life does not recover. By being seduced and impregnated by Arthur, she is ostracised. In a time when women had limited options and freedom, further tragedy falls upon Hetty, harshly contradicting Adam and Dinah's happiness.

Adam Bede serves as a cautionary warning, Eliot reminds the reader of the rigidity of social structures, using her writing to depict the lives of individuals and used her personal experiences living during rapid changes to social structures. This influenced her writing under a male pseudonym in order to avoid being classed as a Romantic novelist. Eliot's use of Victorian literary realism depicts provincial life in an intellectual and philosophical manner, infused with rich descriptions and significance to the mundane. Her typical slow-paced writing style forces the reader to appreciate a life that is not their own, finding the beauty in each character's flaws and feeling deeply connected to them because of this.

Arguably, *Adam Bede* displays more than character and societal transformation, but transforms the reader's outlook of life. Personally, it made me consider my actions and feelings towards others and consider viewing others with less inward judgement. The immersive quality of this novel, especially through forced interaction with the characters because of their rural dialects and direct address from Eliot, further instils this message. Aside from being an intricately created story with realistic main and sub plots, it offers the reader a window into 18th century life that reaches beyond the preconceived simplicity of it and displays complex emotions from multi-faceted characters.

Helen K (Year 12)

TRANSFORMATION AND DUALITY: EXPLORING HUMAN NATURE IN *THE STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE*

Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is more than a gothic mystery about a scientist who transforms into a monster. Published in 1886 during the strict and morally controlled Victorian era, the novella explores the darker side of human nature and the frightening idea that every person contains both good and evil within them. Through the character of Dr Henry Jekyll and his transformation into the violent Edward Hyde, Stevenson examines the dual nature of humanity, the dangers of repressing desire, and the consequences of trying to separate morality from human identity.

At the centre of the novel is Dr Jekyll, a respected and wealthy scientist who struggles with the conflict between his public reputation and his hidden desires. Victorian society demanded strict respectability, and individuals were expected to suppress any immoral or socially unacceptable impulses. Jekyll explains that he was 'radically both,' suggesting that human beings naturally contain opposing forces of good and evil. In an attempt to escape guilt and social judgement, Jekyll creates a scientific potion that allows him to physically transform into Edward Hyde - a being who embodies his darkest instincts.

Hyde represents the uncontrolled and primitive side of human nature. Unlike Jekyll, Hyde feels no guilt, shame, or moral restraint. Stevenson describes him as having a 'troglydytic' appearance, suggesting something animalistic and primitive. This transformation symbolises the frightening possibility that beneath the surface of civilisation lies something savage and violent. Hyde's brutal actions, such as trampling a young girl and later murdering Sir Danvers Carew, demonstrate how dangerous unchecked evil can become when it is allowed to exist without responsibility or conscience.

However, Stevenson suggests that the real horror is not Hyde himself, but Jekyll's decision to create him. Jekyll believes that separating his good and evil sides will allow him to live freely without moral consequences. Instead, the experiment only strengthens the darker half of his personality. Over time, Hyde begins to appear without the potion,

showing that Jekyll's control over his transformation is weakening. This loss of control reflects the novel's warning about the dangers of trying to deny or suppress parts of human nature rather than confronting them.

The theme of transformation also reflects broader fears in Victorian society. Scientific discoveries and contemporary ideas about evolution were challenging traditional beliefs about human identity and morality. Hyde's animal-like behaviour and physical deformity may reflect anxieties about degeneration – the fear that humanity could regress into something more primitive. Stevenson uses the physical transformation between Jekyll and Hyde to symbolise the fragile boundary between civilisation and savagery.

In conclusion, Stevenson presents transformation as a powerful metaphor for the dual nature of humanity. Jekyll's tragic downfall shows that it is impossible to completely separate good from evil within oneself. By attempting to divide his identity, Jekyll instead unleashes the darker part of his personality until it consumes him entirely. This story ultimately serves as a warning that ignoring or denying our darker impulses can lead to destruction.

Anya P (Year 9)

TRANSFORMATION IN FRANZ KAFKA'S *THE METAMORPHOSIS*

Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* tells the story of Gregor Samsa, a travelling salesman who awakes one morning to find that "he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug." Whilst the physical metamorphosis Gregor experiences is dramatic and grotesque, the true focus of the novella is not the transformation itself, but its implications on identity, family dynamics, and human value. By presenting the metamorphosis through Gregor's internal consciousness, Kafka invites readers to consider the value of external appearances in comparison to inner humanity.

Kafka uses Gregor's transformation to expose the conditional nature of familial love. At first, his family react with horror, but Grete Samsa (his sister) does attempt to care for him, bringing him food and cleaning his bedroom. However, as time passes and Gregor can no longer support the family financially, their sympathy significantly diminishes. His father becomes aggressive and violent, his mother withdraws, and Grete ultimately decides that the insect is no longer her brother. Through this gradual shift, Kafka presents transformation and change as tests of loyalty which this family fail. By highlighting the family's conditional affection for Gregor, Kafka critiques the societal tendency to value individuals based on utility or skill rather than inherent worth. The family's love for Gregor proves to be dependent on his ability to function as the household's provider; once he stops fulfilling this role, they stop recognising his humanity.

Moreover, Kafka also presents Gregor's transformation as the cause for the redistributing of power within the Samsa household. As Gregor weakens, the other members of the family take up a more profound role within the household: his father returns to work, his mother becomes a seamstress, and Grete matures and takes on a job as a salesgirl. In an unsettling way, Kafka portrays transformation as somewhat transactional - it grants personal growth to the other family members whilst simultaneously diminishing Gregor's sense of purpose and identity.

Importantly, Gregor's inner consciousness remains unchanged throughout the novella. He continues to think, feel and care for his family. His overarching desires remain and he is able to access his past memories. However, his outward appearance greatly alters the way in which he is treated. Kafka uses this contrast to pose the moral question of what

truly constitutes being human. By contrasting Gregor's unchanged internal identity with his family's changing perception of him, Kafka underscores how social judgement often overrides personal character in defining humanity.

In conclusion, Kafka presents transformation in *The Metamorphosis* as revelatory rather than fundamentally transformative. While the physical metamorphosis drives the plot, the novella's deeper purpose is to expose the conditionality of love, the precarious nature of human value and the influence of social perception on identity. In *The Metamorphosis*, transformation does not create these dynamics but uncovers the uncomfortable truths that pre-existed in the Samsa household - namely that identity is fragile, love is contingent, and that human worth is often measured by utility rather than actual humanity.

Ella S (Year 10)

SYLVIA PLATH'S *LADY LAZARUS*

One expects a poem about rebirth and transformation to feel triumphant. But interestingly, *Lady Lazarus* unsettles that expectation almost immediately. Instead of gentle renewal, we are confronted with a speaker for whom resurrection is theatrical, repetitive, and strangely exhausting. Transformation here is beyond just a single moment of glory; it is an act performed again and again for us to witness.

The title draws from the biblical figure of Lazarus, raised from the dead by Jesus (see: Book of John, Chapter 11). In scripture, Lazarus does not narrate, protest, or comment - he simply returns. Plath's 'Lady' Lazarus is very different. She announces, "I have done it again," claiming her own resurrection. By being the one to narrate her own revival, she turns the quiet miracle into a spectacle. She is no longer passive; she is deliberate, assertive, and defiant by going against her namesake. The contrast is striking - what was once miraculous and silent becoming active, performative - positioning the speaker as radically autonomous.

Such a speaker really gives the poem a magnetic quality. Even as the poem begins, we, as readers, are drawn into the act. References to the "peanut-crunching crowd" make us aware of our role - we are watching, consuming and complicit. Transformation becomes a public and orchestrated act, slightly unsettling, as if the speaker is testing not only herself, but also the typical expectations of rebirth and survival.

The poem's language and imagery are intense and precise. Shocking references, such as echoes of World War II, are used metaphorically to convey exposure, vulnerability, and the extremity of experience. "Herr Doktor// Herr Enemy" demonstrates Plath's control of pacing and sound: the partial repetition lands deliberately, giving the speaker a voice that is both assertive and unforgettable. The poem itself isn't too long, yet one feels strangely beaten by the end of it. No stanza is particularly lengthy, never exceeding three (relatively short!) lines. However, abrupt shifts and sudden enjambments make the poem feel performative, keeping one alert and fully engaged with the speaker's transformation - a great deal concentrated within not very many words at all.

By the final stanzas, the speaker rises “out of the ash” like a phoenix. She is no longer simply observed; she is fully playing into the performative aspect and progressing from the uncomfortable and exposed to emphasising the grand and beautiful.

Transformation, in *Lady Lazarus*, is not a gradual unfolding or renewal. It is ultimately labour, performance, and a claim to power—the nature of survival both inherently exhausting and spectacular.

Reading the poem leaves one unsettled, but in a fascinating way. It challenges what we expect from rebirth and transformation, reminding one that survival— and reinventing oneself— can be complicated, audacious, and very public. It is a poem that performs for its readers whilst redefining what it means to rise again, making one complicit in the act of witnessing, and in some ways, in the transformation itself.

Claire J (Year 10)

TRANSFORMATIONS AND WHAT THEY REVEAL IN *IF ON A WINTER'S NIGHT A TRAVELLER*

You are about to begin reading this article in the new edition of the North London Review of Books. You have probably skimmed past the other articles in this edition, as you do with any school magazine, however something about this particular article catches your eye. Perhaps it is the name of the book which appeals to you. You find yourself intrigued by the Traveller and who they may be and what happened to them on A Winter's Night. You tell your friends to leave you alone, you zoom in on your phone, and you find yourself a comfortable position (although you won't be here for long).

In a similar vein begins *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*. You, the reader, appear to be the main character in Italo Calvino's extremely meta novel, which is an experiment in itself, providing commentary on the act of reading, writing, and the transformative power of books.

The novel is perhaps the most literal interpretation of the theme 'Transformation' as it follows an unnamed character (the narrator who describes events by constantly switching between the personal pronouns "I" and "You" pulling you into the world of the novel) and the Other Reader, Ludmilla, who are on the hunt of a book that seems to change with every copy they find. Throughout the novel, the reader (both you, and the narrator in the novel) is introduced to the beginnings of ten different novels. Also included are twelve different musings by the narrator which dictates the thrilling quest of finding the book though along the course of the novel, we begin to lose sight of what the true copy of the book we are searching for is. We jump from continent to continent, exploring a multitude of worlds, constantly being introduced to new characters both in the world of the novel and the books that are being described to us.

Calvino appears to be fond of these sorts of transformations. For example, in his novella *Invisible Cities*, he describes the single city of Venice in the form of several cities. They each have unique buildings and people and landscapes yet amount to one setting. Similarly, in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, each chapter appears to be telling a different story, yet in the end, it is discovered that there is a singular message.

Calvino pushes the boundaries of what writing can be, changing style and genre in each rendition of the book we are searching for (although the voice is undeniably his in all versions). He asks questions about the nature of the reader, the writer, and the narrator, and how the lines between these characters can become blurred. The constant transformations of the stories inside the novel and the narrator reveal the power books can hold over us, as the main character is enveloped by the obsession of the hunt for the book. We are taken on a journey that starts in a small bookshop and goes around the world. At one point we find ourselves in a prison and at another, becoming an undercover agent. Through this journey, the obsession over the search for the book never subsides. The confusion of whether we are the narrator or if the events the narrator describes are occurring to us draws us into this obsession. In doing so, we are transformed in the real world.

If On A Winter's Night A Traveller is an exceptionally daring novel filled with so many leaps and turns that at no given point can you be completely sure of what is happening. The mystery of the book is what makes it such an invigorating read, and once the pieces of the puzzle all fit together and it starts to make sense, You, the reader, will leave feeling very satisfied indeed.

Shaista K (Year 12)

THE TRANSFORMATIVE NATURE OF GRIEF IN *P.S I LOVE YOU*

P.S. I Love You by Cecilia Ahern explores themes of grief and emotional distress as the protagonist Holly Kennedy embarks on a journey of self-discovery and transformation. When Holly's husband Gerry suddenly passes away, she is thrown into a life of loneliness and unfamiliarity and her life falls apart, until she receives a call from her mother that a package is awaiting her at her childhood home. The package contains 10 envelopes from Gerry for each month after his death and each message is signed off with P.S. I love you. One after the other, the messages slowly send Holly on her own journey of discovery of life after death of a loved one. Holly undergoes a vivid transformation as she learns to adapt to life, enjoy every moment and even learn to love again: the task she believed was impossible. Gerry's letters carried her through the most difficult part of her life and led her through the aftermath of his death. At the end of the book, Holly goes from being consumed by his loss, to being guided by Gerry's love and reconnecting with the great parts of life once again, all whilst keeping the eternal memory of a great man to heart.

Laila K (Year 8)

TRANSFORMATION IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S *A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS*

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini tells a deeply emotional story about suffering, resilience, and personal transformation. Set largely in Kabul, the novel follows the lives of Mariam and Laila, two women brought together by hardship. Through their journeys, Hosseini explores how pain and loss can reshape identity and lead to courage, strength, and sacrifice.

Mariam's transformation is one of the most powerful in the novel. As a child, she grows up isolated and ashamed, constantly reminded that she is illegitimate. This damages her confidence and sense of worth. When she is forced into marriage with Rasheed, she becomes submissive and fearful, enduring years of emotional and physical abuse. At first, Mariam accepts her suffering as fate. However, her character gradually changes after Laila enters her life. What begins as jealousy slowly develops into deep love and loyalty. Through caring for Laila and her children, Mariam discovers inner strength and purpose. Her final decision to sacrifice herself in order to save Laila marks the completion of her transformation. She changes from a powerless victim into a brave and selfless woman who chooses dignity over fear.

Laila's transformation follows a different path. Unlike Mariam, Laila begins life with hope and opportunity. Encouraged by her father to value education, she dreams of a bright future. The war destroys this stability when her parents are killed, forcing her into survival mode. Her marriage to Rasheed is not born from obedience but from necessity. Although she suffers deeply, Laila refuses to let hardship define her completely. Motherhood strengthens her resolve, and her love for her children fuels her determination to endure. By the end of the novel, when she returns to Kabul to help rebuild the country and work with orphaned children, Laila represents renewal and progress. Her transformation reflects not only personal growth but also hope for a better future.

Transformation is also shown through the relationship between Mariam and Laila. Their bond evolves from tension and mistrust into a powerful mother daughter connection.

This emotional shift is central to the novel's message. Together, they resist oppression in quiet but meaningful ways. Their shared strength shows that love can grow even in the harshest circumstances.

Hosseini also presents transformation on a national level. Afghanistan changes dramatically throughout the novel due to war and political instability. These changes shape the characters' lives and restrict their freedoms, especially as women. Yet the ending suggests that just as individuals can rebuild themselves, nations can also recover and heal.

Overall, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a heartbreaking yet hopeful exploration of transformation. Through Mariam and Laila, Hosseini shows that suffering can lead to growth rather than defeat. The novel leaves readers reflecting on the quiet strength of ordinary people and the extraordinary courage that can emerge from love and sacrifice.

Ada A (Year 10)

IDENTITY WITHIN *AMERICANAH*

Identity defines oneself, yet some are forced to adapt and transform themselves simply to belong. Belonging holds importance, it encompasses the emotional connection and sense of acceptance individuals experience. It brings relief, characterised by feeling valued and respected, being understood for one's own unique identity and contribution. The intense craving for the fundamental human need of acceptance and affiliation leads to a transformation of character for migrants, leaving one alienated from their own people. The transitional journey of a migrant is emulated in the protagonist, Ifemelu, of *Americanah*. The novel follows Ifemelu's journey as she struggles to find social affiliation in America, and then difficulties in finding herself within her own Nigerian community.

Ifemelu's difficulties are caused by perceived social differences, stereotypes: viewed from an American lens, Ifemelu is grouped as an 'African'. The depth and expanse of the continent is reduced and restricted to a linear, one-dimensional view - uneducated, lacking manners, and inferior to American citizens. However, Adichie ironically portrays the ignorance of American citizens as "They asked about Africa as though it were one country." Ifemelu is made to 'shrink' under the Americans, the contrasting accents act as a physical barrier restricting Ifemelu from engaging with American society - "Why is it that when she spoke, people said 'What?'"

Although Adichie does not necessarily blame the Americans for their unawareness, she acknowledges and addresses the hurt, shame and pain caused from their seemingly ignorant attitudes. Adichie's main criticism is the unwillingness of the American society to learn and remain open-minded to Nigerian culture.

Adichie describes Ifemelu's adoption of an American accent as a costume, a mask hiding her true self. Taking on the new identity is energy-consuming, it requires effort on behalf of Ifemelu, yet she feels forced into changing to be accepted into the American community.

The first-person narrative further accentuates the difficulties for migrants, as the reader is able to understand and empathise with the protagonist. Ifemelu's desire to conform with society is not presented as a choice, but as a necessity. By gaining insight into Ifemelu's

consciousness the reader can further understand the societal expectations and pressures which the protagonist faces - 'I did not think of myself as black, and I only became black when I came to America.' Adichie describes the restricted, hidden views of American society through Ifemelu's blog, 'Understanding American for the Non-American Black'. Through the blog, the reader is educated on pressures developed from the American society which cause migrants to feel forced to transform themselves in order to conform with expectations.

Ifemelu explores her own culture through her hair. When first arriving to America, Ifemelu must journey far to get her braids done. However, as she begins climbing the social ladder and ends up with an important interview Ifemelu learns, "If you have braids, they will think you are unprofessional". This expectation forces Ifemelu into the painful process of 'relaxing' her hair (chemically straightening her hair) - "It felt as if her scalp were being eaten by tiny, invisible ants." The transition from her natural hair to the straight hair is described as violent and painful, reflecting Ifemelu's transformation from her own identity into her expected identity.

Ifemelu's own character is further reflected in her friends, and who she surrounds herself with. In *Americanah* Ifemelu's social circles serve as a mirror for her own shifting identity. Upon arriving in America, Ifemelu craves for comfort and belonging - therefore surrounding herself with 'The African Students Association (ASA)'. Her participation in this organization represents her initial intention of connecting with her heritage, yet she comes to realize the ASA lacks authenticity, they "clutched their African-ness like a shield." The protagonist becomes frustrated with the performative attitude of the members, and their constant mocking and looking down on other Black-Americans, who do not relate with their culture, as a way to elevate their own status. Her engagement with the ASA educated Ifemelu on the realities of race in America, eventually leading her to write her blog.

After living 8 years in America, Ifemelu enters a circle of high-minded, liberal academics whilst dating Blaine. Blaine represents the lifestyle of an elite Black-American - highly educated, and his principles resting on strong morals. At first Ifemelu acknowledges the positive impacts of Blaine, he encourages a pragmatic transformation in her as "he was a

man who lived a life of mind, and he wanted her to live one too.” Under Blaine’s influence, Ifemelu’s own identity transforms and she begins to view the world differently, from a more intellectual perspective. However, Blaine’s critical outlook on the world causes tension between Ifemelu and Blaine. Adichie’s narrative critiques Blaine’s view of class: Adichie explores their inherent struggle as Blaine and his social circle are a group of academic elites who choose to be angry at the race system. Their social position does not put them in a place where they must experience the harsh, painful realities of racism, but Ifemelu is. Ifemelu’s transformation of character is presented as a result of the people who surround her, implying that Ifemelu, migrants, must adapt in order to be accepted onto the new societies.

Adichie’s novel manages to portray the necessity a migrant feels to transform and change themselves in order to be accepted. Moreover, Adichie critiques the nature of societies which cause migrants to lose their own identity and are forced to conform to societal expectations. I think this novel explores transformation in such an interesting way as Adichie presents continuous transformation. Ifemelu’s character in America is never fully defined – she steers away from her own identity, but her ‘American’ identity continually changes depending on who surrounds her. Her ever-changing identity further represents the difficulties of migrants, as Ifemelu is never fully settled and never truly experiences belonging in America. Adichie addresses the importance of recognising one’s self and highlights the significance of not complying with rigid societal views.

Maya R (Year 10)

TRANSFORMATIONS IN ELIZABETH LIM'S *SIX CRIMSON CRANES*

For fans of fantasy and Oriental culture, this is for you! A heartwarming story of a girl who risks everything to save her brothers, and how her life changes forever. *Six Crimson Cranes* is a duology, written by Elizabeth Lim, an American author. She has also written other books in the world of Lor'yan, a fantasy land that mixes Asian mythology and folklore with Western concepts. I have been pestering everyone I know to read this book, as it is my absolute favourite.

Princess Shiori is the youngest daughter of the Emperor of Kiata, where magic is forbidden and demons have been banished, and has always had everything go her way. That is until she is told that she is to be betrothed to a boy she has never met, and her life becomes more and more strained between her and her stepmother Raikama. Especially now that Shiori has a secret that could kill her: she can do magic. When her stepmother turns out to be a sorceress, she curses her six brothers to become cranes, and curses Shiori to hide her face, never speak and to never let anyone know who she is, on the pain of death to her brothers. She then separates her brothers from her and banishes her to a small fishing village.

Shiori must find a way to undo her stepmother's magic, and to save Kiata from enemy attack, with the help of Kiki, her magic paper crane; Seryu, Prince of the sea dragons; and Takkan, a sentinel, and something else, but that would be a spoiler...

My favourite character is definitely Takkan, as he is kind and has a subtle but church sense of humour, and Megari, as she is confident but utterly chaotic! What I love about this book is the cultural representation, as it is very rare for me to find a book that accurately relates to the stories told when I was younger, and the food I have loved and still love to this day! In *Her Radiant Curse* (the prequel to *Six Crimson Cranes*) especially, it makes me so happy that there are references to Malaysia in the Tambun Isles, where the climate is humid and there are durian trees!

I think this book fits into the category of transformation nicely, as the main plot is how to turn her brothers back into humans, and her transformation from princess to sorceress, though that is all I can say without spoiling it.

If I had to rate this book, I would rate it 4.5 out of 5 as the story is spectacular and the characters are well developed, but if there was one thing I would change, it would be the amount of the book dedicated to Seryu, but that is my personal opinion. I would highly recommend this to anyone who is a fan of folklore, romance, and a touch of action/adventure, as this book has all of this and more! If I had to recommend this to a group, I would say that it would be aimed at

the Middle School, as I they would enjoy it more, but I think anyone can read this and enjoy it, even teachers!

Ella C (Year 9)

BOOKS MENTIONED

Moby Dick, Herman Melville (1851)

Adam Bede, George Eliot (1859)

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson (1886)

The Metamorphosis, Franz Kafka (1912)

Lady Lazarus, Sylvia Plath (1965)

Invisible Cities, Italo Calvino (1972)

If on a Winter's Night a Traveller, Italo Calvino (1979)

PS: I Love You, Cecelia Ahern (2004)

A Thousand Splendid Suns, Khaled Hosseini (2007)

Americanah, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2013)

Six Crimson Cranes, Elizabeth Lim (2021)

Her Radiant Curse, Elizabeth Lim (2023)