

HL Essay Planning Framework

Line of Inquiry: How does Han Kang use shifting narrative perspective to expose the universality of suffering in *The Vegetarian*?

Stage 1	
Claim	Kang uses Mr Cheong's perspective to show that cultural pressures cause universal suffering.
Evidence	The restaurant scene: "I took my seat, careful not to be seen to gawp" "I need this evening to go well. You know it's the first time my boss has invited me to one of those dinners."
Analyze	"careful" shows he's self-conscious. "gawp" natural expression of surprise is restrained. "Need" – modal verb expresses pressure of boss' approval.
Explain	Mr. Cheong is constrained by the presence of his boss and his expectation to 'prove himself' through expected participation and behaviour. Success not based on merit, but conformity.
Impact	Readers can see that Mr Cheong is a person who feels anxious and constrained by cultural expectations.
Connect to Context	Mr Cheong also has bad dreams. Like Yeong-hye he suffers from repressed 'trauma' manifesting in dreams and anxiety. Psychological/emotional suffering.

Stage 2

Claim

Kang uses Yeong-hye's brother-in-law as an example of artistic suffering in a culture that only values conformity.

Evidence

"He was divided against himself."

"Was he a normal human being?"

"He'd often anticipated that his work... might put him in the firing line."

Analyze

"divided" – metaphor. Split between real and social self.

"Was he...?" Question betrays doubt and anxiety. Thinks of himself as 'abnormal'

"Firing line" – metaphor. Contrast between artist self and public self puts him in 'danger'.

Explain

The brother-in-law is presented as a divided character. His artistic desires seem strange to others, making him feel like he doesn't fit in. Conflict with self implies suffering.

Impact

Readers can see how a conformist society makes artistic or creative people doubt themselves. No room for unique expression, freedom of expression in society is limited.

Connect to Context

Kang presents the brother-in-law as suffering from a similar crisis of identity to Yeong-hye. His boundary-breaking art poses the same challenges to wider society as Yeong-hye's vegetarianism.

Stage 3

Claim

Kang uses the perspective of In-Hye to show the universality of women's suffering as daughters, wives, and mothers in a patriarchal society.

Evidence

In-Hye's internalised trauma:

"She closes her bloodshot eyes... still she cannot sleep."

"Afraid that something inside her would make her throw herself in front of a passing train."

"She could feel that gaping black wound still sucking at her."

Analyze

"Bloodshot eyes... gaping wound" – visceral and graphic images of suffering.

"Afraid... She could feel..." persistent fear, mirror of Yeong-hye.

"Still sucking at her" – remorseless, life-draining.

Explain

In-hye's always been a conformist, dedicated to doing the right thing by her family and at work. Yet she's experiencing comparable trauma to her sister, such as sleeplessness and suicidal ideation.

Impact

Readers can see how suffering extends beyond inadequate or individual people. Even those who committed themselves to conformity experience a crisis of the self.

Connect to Context

Like Yeong-hye, In-hye suffers from history of abuse. Internalised guilt as Yeong-hye always protected her from her father's violence. Now married to an emotionally distant husband. Daughters, wives, and mothers forced to bear the brunt of a patriarchal and abusive culture.

Stage 4 (optional)

Claim	Yeong-hye's perspective reveals her deeply repressed personal trauma
Evidence	Dream sequences: "My bloody hands. My bloody mouth." "Dreams overlaid with dreams. A palimpsest of horror." "Murderer or murdered"
Analyze	"My bloody..." anaphora emphasises visceral images "Dreams overlaid... palimpsest" – metaphor of writing onto her mind
Explain	Han Kang's style of fragmented and short sentences make Yeong-hye's dreams feel intense and personal. Images of blood and death suggest guilt at role in meat eating. "Murderer or murdered" suggests someone who kills is also partly killed.
Impact	Readers may come to reflect on own role in industrial production and consumption of meat.
Connect to Context	Yeong-hye's perspective is highly personal. Restricted perspective feels unique in the novel. But the symbolism of blood and meat is universal. Is her experience as unique as the perspective implies?