

AO1 + AO2 - 15/15  
AO3 + AO4 - 25/25

40/40

+ Norci Count

**'Women in Literature are almost always presented as passive in one way or another' Compare and contrast ways in which your three chosen texts either support or challenge this statement.**

Passivity is the extent to which one submits to the societal, emotional or temporal restraints placed upon them. It could be considered that the dystopian form through which Atwood illustrates Offred's struggle to rebel against her inherent, biologically enforced restraints acts as a warning against passivity or perhaps simply, it raises awareness of how avidly women were forced into a position of submission through no free will of their own so commonly within the Victorian age. Wilde exploits this premise through the use of comic inversion within *The Importance of being Earnest*, reversing the patriarchal dominance present within Victorian literature to create headstrong and comedic characters in Cecily and Gwendolyn, who are granted defiance as a characteristic due to the comedy of manners genre Wilde employs, in order to satirise the regulations and presuppositions of the upper classes. Tennyson, through his collection of 'painterly' poems creates an emotive representation of women, some passive overtly and some covertly, placed within physical and mental restraints as to illustrate the inescapable sphere inside which they had to remain; it is evident that Tennyson held an extensive sympathy for women and in granting them a first person mode of address, this was somewhat able, he hoped, to be realised by his readers.

Potentially in concordance with the statement however, is the character of Mariana within Tennyson's anthology, who experiences a psychological regression which acts harmoniously in turn with the physical decaying of her surroundings, this occurs due to her reluctance to leave, and ultimately her passivity in gaining control over her own life. It is written that 'the broken sheds look'd sad and strange / unlifted was the clinking latch', and while the use of sibilance emphasizes the futile and helpless nature of Mariana within the grange, the use of metaphorical language to express her fragility and desolation is a technique Tennyson employs to highlight the supposed docility of women; commonplace within Victorian literature.