

A Level English Literature

Feedback from summer 2019 –
Paper 1 Shakespeare and
Other Drama (9ET0/01)





Key Areas of Feedback

1. Great openings
2. Keeping it all about the drama
3. Differences between Level 3 and Level 4
4. A word about AO5
5. Students doing well

Openings





Exemplar 1 (Q7 *Othello*)

William Shakespeare's play 'Othello' is about a black man, who married a white woman in a predominately white society and is then deceived and betrayed by his ensign. Emilia is married to the ensign and begins the play by being an obedient and submissive wife, however by Act 5 her outlook on her husband has changed and she becomes her own woman.

Emilia first appears in Act 2 Scene 1. Her first line ...



Exemplar 2 (Q7 *Othello*)

The presentation of women in Renaissance drama was noted by F.R. Leavis to be 'generalised', often relying on stereotypes and a devaluing of women. Therefore, certain female characters such as Emilia in Shakespeare's 'Othello' are seen as progressive due to how Shakespeare provides them a voice to offer their perspective on the female experience in a patriarchal society. Emilia is often the subject of feminist literary criticism as she expresses the dissatisfaction of women in society and draws attention to the 'palates' of women's sexual appetites. However, her role in the play's essential tragedy and the progression of the tragic sequence of events is also worthy as her actions surrounding the 'handkerchief' are of considerable weight in bringing about the play's resolution ...



Exemplar 3 (Q3 *Hamlet*)

Shakespeare presents the theme of deception in *Hamlet* through the everchanging character of Hamlet who at the start of the play seems relatively simple as he struggles to take on the role of avenging son because of his morals. However as the play continues, he seems to have no problem with taking action as he precedes to have a role on the death of other characters...



Exemplar 4

(Q18 *Doctor Faustus*)

From a 16th Century Christian perspective, temptation is what leads humans towards sin. This was often dramatized by Morality plays, where temptation leads the Everyman figure away from the straight and narrow. Although Marlowe uses some of the apparatus of Morality Plays, he also shows how what leads Faustus to damnation is more complex than orthodox Christian belief suggests, thus shedding light on the human condition...



Exemplar 5 (Q24 Streetcar)

Masculinity is a key motif in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the setting of the play being post war America. Masculinity was rife, many of the men had returned home from war. Many men were still in 'war mode' so America was much more violent and masculinity a lot more prevalent in the setting of the play...



Exemplar 6 (Q23 Streetcar)

Although Tennessee Williams in a letter to Kazan in April 1947 described his play 'A Streetcar Named Desire' as 'a tragedy with the classic aim of producing a catharsis of pity and terror', Roxana Stuart (an actress who played Blanche in two productions) would describe only the last five scenes as tragedy. Instead 'the first four scenes are comedy, then come two scenes of elegy, mood, romance'. Such contrast between these perspectives on Streetcar's genre testify both to the transgressive complexity of the play and to the controversial multiplicity of interpretations which its performance may elicit ...

It's all about the
drama





Some Overall Feedback

The best responses always brought stagecraft into their textual analysis, rather than just considering language/verbal elements.

- The best responses offered a detailed analysis of language and structure, going beyond word analysis to consider imagery, motifs, metre and staging.
- A key discriminator tends to be the awareness of and ability to illustrate the writer's craft. Weaker scripts say what happens; stronger ones show how it's done; even stronger ones show how it's done and assess how well it's done.
- There were some examples of complex literary terminology being applied, but with no meaningful engagement with the actual purpose of it – avoid this.
- With *Streetcar*, too many candidates were confused about stage directions and were analysing the plosive sounds made by the word 'slap' rather than the action itself or the 'dynamic verbs' to describe Stanley's movement - rather than how that would look on stage.
- Don't lose sight of the text as a piece of drama, written to be performed.



Exemplar 7 (Q6 *King Lear*)

... Shakespeare concludes the final scene with a conversation between Albany, Kent and Edgar in order to create a tone of hope for the audience at the very end of the play, as well as comment on the need for cooperation in the divisive Jacobean era. Albany states 'Friends of my soul, you twain/Rule in this realm and the gored state sustain' asking Kent and Edgar – which Shakespeare establishes through the stage direction of 'To Kent and Edgar' – to come together in order to maintain the wounded state of Britain. Through Kent and Edgar's responses, Shakespeare introduces rhyme for the first time in the scene and this is maintained between all three characters. He does this in order to create a sense of unity between them, reinforcing the notion of hope and cooperation that he wants to establish at the end of the play ...



Exemplar 8 (Q15 *Twelfth Night*)

The multiple marriages ‘provide comic closure’ as suggested by Lisa Hopkins, and displayed through how Sir Toby ‘in recompense ... hath married her [Maria]. This aspect of the denouement subverts the construct world as Sir Toby is a noble and Maria the servant ... Maria and Sir Toby’s subversion counters Walter Kerr’s claim that ‘comedy never leaves the ground’ as even the proleptic irony used by Shakespeare in Sir Toby stating earlier ‘I could marry the wench’ subverts the norms of Elizabethan society.

However, it can be argued that the play ends on unfinished business, primarily Malvolio’s imprisonment in the place ‘as dark as ignorance’. The exchange of similes between Malvolio and the philosophical Feste – ‘words are grown so false’ – depicts Malvolio’s suffering at the end on account of Feste and the other revellers’ ‘bearbaiting’ of him. The use of *schadenfreude* by Shakespeare in Feste’s paradoxical similes of ‘lustrous as ebony’ and ‘transparent as barricades’ highlights the contrast between Malvolio and Feste who, as stated by Bevington, represent ‘the battle joined between Carnival and Lent’ ...



Exemplar 9 (Q24 Streetcar)

The most striking method Williams uses to portray masculinity as harmful is by presenting its impact on the relationships between men and women. In Scene 1 Stanley dominates the conversation in his introduction to Blanche in order to demonstrate his powerful masculinity. His repeated interrogatives inquiring, 'Where you from?' and 'What do you teach?' demonstrate a disregard for Blanche's clearly fragile state, as demonstrated by her hesitant response of 'I – uh –'...

Stanley's need to assert his masculinity is perhaps a response to his recent return from serving in World War II. Many men upon their return felt threatened by the women in their jobs and Stanley might feel vulnerable and needing to assert himself. However, Williams can be seen to be criticising this approach by showing the obviously harmful effect of Stanley's dominance over Blanche.

(cont.)



Exemplar 9 (cont.)

The harmful effects of masculinity on women are also seen as the play progresses in Scene 3 when Stanley takes Stella from the room and ‘there is the sound of a blow’ and ‘Stella cries out’. Stanley’s physical violence could be seen as a response to Stella’s subversion of his insistence that the poker night go ahead when she pleads with the men to ‘please go home!’ ... Williams’ decision not to stage the blow but rather use the sound effect of the action is particularly effective in provoking discussion as the ambiguous nature of the action caused debate around domestic violence which arguably furthered Williams’ argument that masculinity is a harmful social construct...



Exemplar 10 (Q24 Streetcar)

Williams uses binary opposition between the hyper-masculinity of Stanley and the fragile femininity of Blanche to further emphasise the violent and destructive nature of masculinity. Blanche is described as a 'dainty', 'delicate', 'uncertain' and is likened to a frail 'moth'. In contrast, Stanley is continually referred to as animalistic: 'baying hound', 'animal moans'. This initial emphasis on this binary opposition sets the backdrop for Stanley's destruction of Blanche in Scene 10. Again, Stanley's masculinity is presented as unsophisticated and animalistic whilst he is pursuing his desire to dominate a fragile Blanche: 'He springs forward' suggest an animal and by 'grinning' he is showing his teeth to his prey. By completely dehumanising Stanley, Williams is effectively presenting masculinity as toxic and violent.

(cont.)



Exemplar 10 (cont.)

Moreover, Williams again uses magic realism to emphasise this dehumanisation: ‘the inhuman jungle voices rise up’ and ‘the hot trumpet and drums from the Four Deuces sound loudly’. The ‘inhuman’ sounds represent Stanley’s hyper-masculinity while the meta-theatre in ‘the trumpet and drums’ is for the audience’s benefit. Williams would not have been allowed to actively show the rape scene on stage, therefore he makes liberal use of loud musical instruments to represent the violence of the act ...

Differences between Level 3 and Level 4





Frequently Raised Issues

- Not rambling – ‘controlled’ is the watchword for Level 4. Sometimes, obviously able candidates took a paragraph (or more) to make a point that could have been made in a sentence or two.
- Not breathless re-telling – the approach needs to be discriminating and evaluative for top levels.
- Context was addressed, but there was often not enough of a discriminative link between these contexts and the text itself: although links were clear, they often remained at Level 3 as they were factors that were not easy to evaluate beyond their initial connections.
- Move beyond a straightforward response to the topic of the question – top level responses offer a conceptualised response



Exemplar 11 (Q25 Earnest)

... [Lady Bracknell] is not so feminine, rather she is very horrible and monstrous. She says her husband will 'have to dine upstairs' just to avoid him sitting behind another lady. It is interesting that she has that much control and the Victorian audience would find this very shocking. However, some might say that this is even typical as it highlights the insecurity of Victorian women. Men cheated and they had not the power to stop adultery. Unfortunately, Victorian society was very immoral, despite wearing the guise of piety. The relationship between men and women at the time of Wilde was one of inequality. 1980s were male dominated and women were expected to be submissive. Queen Victoria herself was a very devoted wife who gave her husband nine children – this meant that the ideal of the perfect wife diffused widely through Victorian London. Furthermore, a popular Victorian writer Coventry Patmore wrote a poem, 'An Angel in the House' which suggests the woman is to 'please' the man and even accept fault when they are correct. The woman was the symbol of both submission and purity...



Exemplar 12 (Q25 Earnest)

By Wilde's own admission, 'The Importance of Being Earnest' was intended to be a 'trivial play for serious people' ... and much of his presentation of male and female relationships is communicated through the means of comedy. This is most evident in Algernon and Jack's uninformed conversation in Act One. Algernon proclaims, 'Girls never marry the men they flirt with. They don't think it right'. The use of never reflects the certainty with which he views women. Jack also shares Algernon's belief that he knows everything there is to know about the opposite sex. Regarding Cecily, he claims, 'Cecily is not a silly romantic girl' and when talking about his fiancée, Gwendolen, he claims, 'the truth isn't the kind of thing one tells a nice, sweet, refined young girl'. Common to both these remarks is the descriptor 'girl' which reflects Jack's patronizing view of his female counterparts.

(cont.)



Exemplar 12 (cont.)

In this conversation, about how women behave in the eyes of Algy and Jack, Wilde uses features of incongruity theory to make it more comedic. He is poking fun at the same audience he entertains, that being the upper classes. In reality, Jack and Algy are misinformed in their views on women and this foreshadows how their relationships later in the play will be marred by a lack of communication. In reality, Cecily believes 'she looks quite plain after her German lessons, while Gwendolen asserts her authority over Jack, asking 'Well, may I propose to you now?' She is clearly far from a 'sweet, refined young girl'. Thus, 'Earnest' is a classic comedy of manners. Wilde's presentation of the relationships between men and women exaggerates the lack of understanding between the genders, which serves both his comedic and satirical intentions.

(cont.)



Exemplar 12 (cont.)

The relationship between men and women is also presented as subversive in the play. This is evident through Wilde's effective use of stage directions. For instance, '[Jack tries to rise]' Gwendolen '[restrains him]' instead they '[rise together]'. Their 'rising together' is perhaps symbolic of the new found equality between the genders. The 'separate spheres' debate which was predicated on the idea that females should occupy the sphere of domesticity and men the world of action and commerce was beginning to be challenged by the time of 'Earnest's publication. The concept of the 'new woman' (a phrase coined by novelist, Sarah Grand in 1894) jeopardized the Victorian moral concern of sexual restraint in women. The emergence of a 'self-made man' challenged the existing role of the Victorian gentleman.
(cont.)



Exemplar 12 (cont.)

Perhaps Gwendolen's authority over Jack is an example of her 'new woman' status. However, Jack and Algernon appear to be still stuck in the mindset of traditional Victorian morality, with their ill-informed views on women as aforementioned.

The relationship between men and women however, does evolve throughout the course of the play. For instance, Jack revokes his formerly conservative views on women in Act Three when he claims, "Why should there be one law for men and another for women?" Perhaps this positive development in Jack's view of men and women is allegorical to advancements in Victorian society. Thus, despite 'Earnest' being largely a comedic play, Wilde also offers food for thought...



Exemplar 13 (Q8 *Othello*)

... In 'Othello' Shakespeare presents reputation as an underlying factor to a character's treatment by others in the play. This is particularly evident in the opening scenes of the play where Iago is referred to as 'Honest Iago' and Othello is referred to as 'the most noble warrior'. As Iago is continually labeled as 'honest' and 'trustworthy' throughout the play, it allows him to manipulate other characters whilst they suspect nothing. His reputation of being 'honest' precedes him and Shakespeare uses dramatic irony to highlight how his reputation has allowed him to manipulate everyone. Additionally Othello is called 'valiant Othello' and is described as 'far more fair than black' in the senate, highlighting how his reputation of being a good leader/soldier enables him to be treated in such high regard by the state.

(cont.)



Exemplar 13 (cont.)

This is enhanced by Shakespeare's use of the character of Brabantio in the early scenes who has a higher status/wealth than Othello but not a better reputation. In the senate Othello is addressed first by the Duke who claims he 'did not see' Brabantio and when he learns that Othello has been accused he gives him a chance to speak and says 'there is no proof'. As Othello's reputation is higher, the characters treat him better in relation to Brabantio and this is evidence of reputation being a factor to a character's treatment by others in the play. Writing in the early 17th century, Shakespeare may have done this to highlight how important reputation was to society and possibly warn the audience/reader of the demining effects of this.
(cont.)



Exemplar 13 (cont.)

Shakespeare also presents reputation as Othello's harmathia/weakness through his use of repetition and soliloques. Until Act III, Scene III, Othello's reputation remains one of being an esteemed general and a man who is in control. However, when doubts about Desdemona's faithfulness begin to creep in, he immediately questions how this will affect him and his reputation: "reputation, reputation, what hath happened to my reputation". Shakespeare's repetition of the word "reputation" highlights its importance and value to Othello. Additionally when Othello says "dost thou mock me?" and "have you scored me?" it highlights his selfish nature of how he only truly cares about his reputation.

(cont.)



Exemplar 13 (cont.)

Once we reach the finale of the play, Shakespeare makes Othello have a soliloquy and rather than reflect on his actions and have a moment of anagnorisis, Othello speaks about his reputation and says “speak of me as I am” “I have done the state some service and they know’t”. This final soliloquy highlights how Othello’s main flaw was his reputation but even at the end of the play, it is still his main concern. This ending links to Leavis’ idea that Othello is not a classical tragedy as he has no moment of anagnorisis and this means there is no catharsis for the audience.

Shakespeare also presents “reputation” as a factor that links most of the characters in the play ...



Exemplar 14 (Q24 Streetcar)

Williams presents masculinity as being embodied by his main character, the antagonist Stanley. Masculinity is also the driving force behind the downfall of the tragic hero Blanche.

Williams uses stage direction to symbolize masculinity . In Scene 3, poker night the males were wearing [coloured shirts, solid blues, a purple...]. The use of the adjective “solid” is connoted with the societal notions (of America at the time) of men being powerful and solid. The colours of the shirts that males are wearing are symbolic of masculinity, they are primary colours too – base colours which the stage directions at the start of the scene suggest are [course and direct and powerful]. This setting of the scene foreshadows the very masculine actions that take place. The fact that it is poker night too – a game typically associated with being a masculine game, further reinforces the idea that masculinity is prevalent in this scene. **(cont.)**



Exemplar 14 (cont.)

Masculinity is shown through the stage directions used to convey Stanley's actions. [He jumps up and jerks roughly] the adverb "roughly" accurately portrays the masculinity of Stanley. He is the embodiment of New America who strongly believe in the idea of working hard for your money, so aren't afraid of doing things "roughly". Williams use of animal imagery in Scene 3 via the stage direction [Stanley charges after Stella] gives the reader the impression that Stanley is an animal. The dynamic verb "charges" connotes to the image of predators and reinforces the idea that masculinity at the time the play was written - 1940's America, defined masculinity as being strong and taking control. The stage directions [there is the sound of a blow] implies that Stanley has hit Stella. The act of hitting, again in the American culture is something that men do and in the patriarchal society at that time, domestic abuse was considered normal...



Exemplar 15 (Q24 Streetcar)

Following the first performance of 'A Streetcar Named Desire' in 1947, a critic described it as 'The Glands Menagerie' disdainful of its presentation of violent masculinity and sexual animalism. In many ways, this describes how Blanche sees Stanley, thus attempting to set herself up as the antithetical epitome of womanhood. Despite her best efforts, masculinity still comes across as, to a certain extent, protective, and by extension necessary. Williams presents masculinity both as fuelled by untamed libido and by the need to protect the family unit. Stanley is both Stella's lifeline and Blanche's destroyer. Mitch is both Blanche's best hope and the signal of her end. Overall, Williams presents masculinity as being both a destructive force and a necessary one...

A word about AO5



Students doing well





Exemplar Script A: Q8 *Othello*

Shakespeare presents reputation to be easily corruptible and the idea that a character's reputation is being determined by their place in society and what they have to offer. Othello, despite the connotations of his race, has a fearsome reputation as a General until he succumbs to what is expected of him. Iago spurns the reputation of an honest man and yet uses it to destroy others. His destruction of Desdemona's reputation is made easy by her place in a patriarchal society.

A.C. Bradley argues that Othello isn't regarded through the prism of race, shown through the respect he has acquired through his reputation. However, it is clear that Shakespeare purposefully emphasises Othello as a black man to show the significance of his reputation despite being an outsider. In Act I scene 3, the Duke instantly greets Othello as 'Valiant Othello' demonstrating the reputation he has acquired through his position as a soldier. It is evident that the view the Duke has of Othello is dependent upon his skills as a soldier as the Duke goes on to say, 'We must straight away employ you / Against the general enemy Ottoman'. Despite Othello being an outsider in Venice, he is viewed as a part of society because he can fight back the foreign enemy.

(cont.)



Exemplar Script A (cont.)

This reputation that Othello has with the Duke and the army is in direct opposition to what Iago attempts to portray Othello as to the audience. The continual use of zoomorphism: 'barbary horse', 'neigh' and 'old black ram' effectively plays on the audience's views of a black man. Venice itself prospered due to the African slave trade. Therefore the audience would expect an animalistic man that is inferior to the other white characters. Thus, Shakespeare purposefully presenting Othello as well spoken, through iambic pentameter, and respected by a high ranking Duke, would successfully emphasise the importance of the reputation Othello has cultivated. It also represents the importance the Jacobean era placed on the reputation of soldiers being honest, brave and 'valiant', so much that it allowed Othello to overcome the reputation of black men at the time.

Just as Othello uses his reputation as a soldier to garner respect, Iago also takes advantage of his reputation as an 'honest' soldier to manipulate those around him. The critic Rhymer would suggest that this makes the character of Iago 'inconsistent' as he doesn't adhere to the reputation of an ensign, who would carry the flag onto the battlefield and thus be usually the bravest man in the army. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script A (cont.)

However, Rhymer's criticism does not take into account that Shakespeare presented this inconsistency between the reputation of Iago and his true nature to purposefully create dramatic irony and emphasise the corruptible nature of reputation. Cassio states that he has never met 'a Florentine as honest as Iago' which creates dramatic irony particularly as he mourns to Iago that he has 'lost [his] reputation'. The audience is aware that this is due to Iago's machinations and the irony is only emphasised further when Iago states that 'reputation is an idle and most false imposition'. Iago is essentially warning Cassio that his own reputation as an honest man is false, yet Cassio's inability to understand this allows the audience to view reputation as corrupt and fleeting. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script A (cont.)

Moreover, Iago stated early in the play: 'I am not what I am' to foreshadow his rejection of his honest reputation and his eventual misdeeds. It is evident that Iago has two opposing reputations: the one characters are aware of and the truth the audience gets to view. However, a psychoanalytical critic might argue that Iago's true reputation was evident due to an emphasis on the 'ego ideal'. Iago stated that he is 'worth no worse a place' which represents the importance he places on his pride and accomplishments. This was said to Roderigo in the opening scene so perhaps Iago's reputation as an honest man had already been broken and his corrupt nature should not come as a surprise. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script A (cont.)

Similarly, Ania Loomba would argue that Desdemona's reputation as a chaste woman, so easily destroyed by Iago's corrupt actions, was fragile from the start due to Othello's 'predisposition to believe in the inherent duplicity of women'. However, it is clear that Othello did once truly love and trust Desdemona. Othello denies Iago's accusations of an affair between Cassio and Desdemona and says he will not have the 'smallest fear or doubt of her revolt; For she had eyes and chose me'. He wholeheartedly believes in Desdemona's reputation of a 'fair' chaste reputation and trusts that she would stay faithful and 'obedient' as wives were expected to.

In contrast to Loomba, Edward Black would argue that it is Othello's hubris that allows Desdemona's reputation to fall. Only when Othello's own reputation as a man is threatened – thus threatening his pride – does he consider that Desdemona may not be honest. Othello says that a 'horned man's a monster and a beast' which is suggestive of how the Jacobean audience believed cuckolded men grew horns. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script A (cont.)

This is further demonstrated when Othello feels a pain in his forehead. Cuckolds were viewed as less than men as they have been spurned by their wives, so this could be a threat to Othello's reputation. It could also be argued that this foreshadows Othello's downfall into the stereotypical reputation of a black man. His use of the words 'monster' and 'beast' echoes the zoomorphism used by Iago in Act I, therefore presenting Othello's descent. He no longer opposes racial stereotypes through his reputation as a soldier as the war is over and he is no longer needed. Beating back the Turks allows Othello to lose his place in society and become an outsider again. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script A (cont.)

However, a geopolitical critic would argue against Edward Black and suggest that it is the reputation of the setting, Cyprus, that allows Desdemona to be destroyed. Cyprus is sexually liberal as it places less emphasis on religion and is also crawling with brothels. Shakespeare purposefully uses Cyprus as a backdrop for this domestic tragedy as it allows the audience to see characters outside the strict, organised society of Venice. The sexual promiscuity is represented through Cassio's courting of the prostitute Bianca: 'sweet love' and again 'sweet Bianca' all suggest an intimate relationship. By emphasizing the reputation of Cyprus, Shakespeare can effectively present Desdemona's ruin while still allowing it to be realistic. Moreover the juxtaposition between Cyprus and Desdemona's faithfulness only exacerbates the tragedy of the story. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script A (cont.)

In conclusion, it is evident that Shakespeare is criticising the importance Jacobean society places on reputation. The perception of Iago as an honest soldier is believed throughout the whole play and his duplicity is only revealed after the tragedy is over. In contrast, Othello's reputation as a 'valiant' soldier is only fleeting as other factors threaten that reputation. His place as a black man in a white society emphasised his potential to become a cuckold and enables Othello to completely disregard his reputation as a soldier to destroy Desdemona. Evidently, reputation is flimsy and fragile.

Overall Shakespeare uses the format of a domestic tragedy to emphasise the destructive nature of reputation.



Exemplar Script B: Q6 *King Lear*

Hazlitt argues that ‘King Lear is about the disintegration of the world’; indeed Lear’s kingdom has become a ‘gored state’ having suffered a conflict of power and reversal of the natural order, reflecting the political turmoil of Shakespeare’s time. The ‘Virgin Queen’ had only recently died when this play was published, and perhaps ‘King Lear’ is a reflection of the power struggle for the throne due to the absence of a direct male heir. The ending of the play warns of the consequences of valuing power over all else and disregarding the value of others. The principal conflict lies in the Jacobean discord between Medieval ideas about natural order and the divine right of kings and those of Renaissance individualism. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script B (cont.)

After his growth from an ‘imperious and selfish’ man (Kermode) to a ‘foolish, fond old man’, Lear is forced back to madness after suffering the death of Cordelia. His cries ‘howl, howl’ howl’ howl’ O, you are men of stone’, demonstrate his human and overwhelming grief. Shakespeare also creates an irony as Lear was once cold-hearted like the men he now condemns and the audience remember him cruelly casting Cordelia out with the disdainful comment, ‘better thou hadst not been born’ which draws a stark contrast to his tenderness towards her at the play’s ending, giving fatherly reassurances – ‘wipe thine eyes’. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script B (cont.)

Johnson states that ‘the position of this tragic hero is ...peculiar ... [by the end of the play we see Lear] almost wholly as a sufferer, but hardly as an agent’. Although he has grown to be kind and considerate, is Lear truly ‘a man more sinned against than sinning’? Conventionally, the tragic hero’s downfall is simply due to his own *hamartia*, Lear’s being hubris of arrogance, which Shakespeare introduces in the love contest of the opening scene – ‘now who shall we say doth love us most?’. Here Lear’s purposeful and controlled verse conveys his power over the social dynamic; this is incongruous to his simple, humble speech at the end, signifying perhaps a ‘descent from monarch to unaccommodated man’ (Hare), although one could argue it is rather a development from selfishness to humility. In fact Lear speaks the language of power throughout the play, but with great variation, suggesting that he has learned that there is more to being a king than simply commanding. At the end of the play, for example, he still uses the imperative in ‘pray you, undo this button. Thank you sir,’ after Cordelia’s death, but also demonstrates a newfound politeness and respect. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script B (cont.)

Shakespeare also uses parallelism in the final scene, uniting the Fool with Cordelia and reinforcing Lear's misfortune with that of Gloucester. Firstly, during Lear's lamentation of Cordelia's death, Lear states 'and my poor fool is hanged'. Shakespeare binds the two in death, emphasising their importance and similarities. The role of both the Fool and Cordelia is to speak truth to power, although each encounter conflicting receptions from Lear. The Fool is essential to Lear's character development, even 'a trickle of sanity running through the play' (Orwell) providing through his jests and rhymes an honest analysis of Lear's situation; interestingly the Fool echoes Cordelia in 'can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?' teasing Lear for his misjudgement to cast her out for saying 'nothing'. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script B (cont.)

Where the Fool is a source of turbulence, Cordelia remains calm but Lear listens to the Fool and not Cordelia, possibly because he is male (Jacobean females were perceived to be of the lowest status) or simply because, in his madness, his perception of the hierarchy disintegrates with everything else, making himself receptive to those he otherwise would not have listened to. In fact the Fool and Cordelia are never seen on stage together which creates opportunities for the same actor to play both, further uniting their characters. In the same way, Gloucester's death after his reconciliation with Edgar, whom he wronged by failing to see his worth, parallels that of Lear: 'Twixt ...joy and grief [Gloucester] burst smilingly'. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script B (cont.)

O'Toole believes that 'there is no convincing reassertion of moral and social order at the end of the play' and that 'the overwhelming sense of injustice breaks through the even balancing of good and evil ...[and that is] the very point of the play's structure'. To begin with, as a tragedy, this is expected; Aristotle stated that tragedies should evoke 'pity and fear' and serve as a catharsis of these emotions, which is indeed the case at the end of this play with its haunting deaths. However, justice and good do remain in the world of 'King Lear' as good overcomes evil in the battle between Edgar and Edmund in which the latter is killed and evil even overcomes itself as Goneril poisons herself and her own sister, supposedly out of jealousy in their competition for Edmund's hand. The deaths of these characters may have been Shakespeare's warning against the Machiavellian ways that they displayed in their ascents to power, demonstrating that a cynical disregard for morality and driving self-interest are not successful ways of life. On the other hand evil also overcomes good at the end of the play as Cordelia is hanged. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script B (cont.)

However in essence good overpowers because Edmund confesses to this with hope to save her 'in spite of [his] own nature'. we can deduce that since he has no belief in celestial beings ['Thou Nature art my goddess'] this sudden change in behaviour demonstrates a new morality awakened in him through suffering the pain of dying, giving hope since the play's most evil character has become good in the end. Moreover, Shakespeare even gives the audience hope in Cordelia's tragic death with Albany's declaration that 'the gods defend her' suggesting she will have a deservedly good afterlife despite her suffering on earth. Therefore, one could argue that rather than 'an overwhelming sense of injustice' the ending of the play evokes bittersweet hope. This is reinforced by Johnson's statement that 'Shakespeare suffers the virtue of Cordelia to perish at a just cause ...contrary to natural ideas of justice' as she can be seen as a Christ-like figure in her death for the sins of others, which is suggested by her apparent echoes of Jesus in her biblical language – 'remediate'; 'love'; 'goodness' and 'father, it is thy business that I go about'. **(cont.)**



Exemplar Script B (cont.)

Similarly, natural order is in fact restored as the Divine Right is recognised once more by Albany who states 'we will resign/ During the life of this old Majesty / To him out absolute power and also we see Kent's loyalty in death 'my master calls me'. In the end we are given hope with Edgar as the new monarch, stating. 'the oldest hath borne most; we that are young/ Shall never see so much, not live so long'. While this may not necessarily be true given that they have lived through their elders' ordeals alongside them, there is an assurance that the next generation will live under a sage reign, erasing the footsteps of the evil and deranged.



Thank you and farewell

The Paper 1 Principal Examiner report can be accessed [here](#).

Here is [link](#) to the Paper 2, Paper 3 and coursework reports.