

AS and A Level English Literature



EXEMPLAR RESPONSES

A level paper 1 (Drama) Section A - Shakespeare

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About this exemplar pack

This pack has been produced to support English Literature teachers delivering the new GCE English Literature specification (first assessment summer 2017).

The pack contains exemplar student responses to GCE A level English Literature paper 1 (Section A – Shakespeare). It shows real student responses to the questions taken from the sample assessment materials. For schools delivering a co-taught AS and A level course, the Shakespeare text will be covered in the second year, after the AS exams have been completed. For schools teaching a linear 2 year A level only, the course content can be taught in any order. Please see the example [course planners](#) for more support on delivering the course content.

The Shakespeare questions address 4 Assessment Objects: AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO5

Students must:	
AO1	Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression
AO2	Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts
AO3	Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received
AO4	Explore connections across literary texts
AO5	Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations
Total	

Following each question you will find the mark scheme for the band that the student has achieved, with accompanying examiner comments on how the marks have been awarded, and any ways in which the response might have been improved.

In most cases, the students have addressed the AO5 requirement by reference to the Shakespeare Critical Anthology, in either [comedy or tragedy](#) as appropriate, although some have made reference to critical reading from other sources. There is no requirement to go beyond the anthologies, but you are, of course, welcome to do so.

Mark schemes for A level paper 1, Section A

Level	Mark	AO1 = bullet point 1	AO2 = bullet point 2	AO3 = bullet point 3
		Descriptor (AO1, AO2, AO3)		
	0	No rewardable material.		
Level 1	1-4	Descriptive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes little reference to texts with limited organisation of ideas. Limited use of appropriate concepts and terminology with frequent errors and lapses of expression. Uses a narrative or descriptive approach that shows limited knowledge of texts and how meanings are shaped in texts. Shows a lack of understanding of the writer's craft. Shows limited awareness of contextual factors. 		
Level 2	5-8	General understanding/exploration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes general points, identifying some literary techniques with general explanation of effects. Aware of some appropriate concepts and terminology. Organises and expresses ideas with clarity, although still has errors and lapses. Gives surface readings of texts relating to how meanings are shaped in texts. Shows general understanding by commenting on straightforward elements of the writer's craft. Has general awareness of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Makes general links between texts and contexts. 		
Level 3	9-12	Clear relevant application/exploration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers a clear response using relevant textual examples. Relevant use of terminology and concepts. Creates a logical, clear structure with few errors and lapses in expression. Demonstrates knowledge of how meanings are shaped in texts with consistent analysis. Shows clear understanding of the writer's craft. Demonstrates a clear exploration of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Develops relevant links between texts and contexts. 		
Level 4	13-17	Discriminating controlled application/exploration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constructs a controlled argument with fluently embedded examples. Discriminating use of concepts and terminology. Controls structures with precise cohesive transitions and carefully chosen language. Demonstrates discriminating understanding of how meanings are shaped in texts. Analyses, in a controlled way, the nuances and subtleties of the writer's craft. Provides a discriminating analysis of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Makes detailed links between texts and contexts. 		
Level 5	18-21	Critical and evaluative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presents a critical evaluative argument with sustained textual examples. Evaluates the effects of literary features with sophisticated use of concepts and terminology. Uses sophisticated structure and expression. Exhibits a critical evaluation of the ways meanings are shaped in texts. Displays a sophisticated understanding of the writer's craft. Presents a sophisticated evaluation and appreciation of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Makes sophisticated links between texts and contexts. 		

Level	Mark	Descriptor (A05)
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1-2	Descriptive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows limited awareness of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts. Limited linking of different interpretations to own response.
Level 2	3-5	General exploration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers straightforward explanations of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts. Some support of own ideas given with reference to generic different interpretations.
Level 3	6-8	Clear relevant exploration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers clear understanding of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts. Explores different interpretations in support or contrast to own argument.
Level 4	9-11	Discriminating exploration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produces a developed exploration of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts. Discussion is controlled and offers integrated exploration of different interpretations in development of own critical position.
Level 5	12-14	Critical and evaluative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies a sustained evaluation of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts. This is supported by sophisticated use of application of alternative interpretations to illuminate own critical position.

EXEMPLAR SCRIPT A

Hamlet

Question 2(a)

Explore Shakespeare's use of revenge in *Hamlet*. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors and ideas from your critical reading.

Hamlet is seen as an archetypal tragedy, involving falls from grace and changes from high to low status. However, more than this, Hamlet is a revenge play. Revenge Tragedies had been typically violent and gory but Shakespeare makes Hamlet much more than this, with the "Mousetrap" scene, the evocation of the ghost and the constant delaying of the revenge, it seems that revenge is a theme Shakespeare wants to explore in this play in some depth.

Hamlet has several failed attempts at revenge, and these come about because of his indecision. The first comes when Claudius is praying in the chapel and Hamlet comes up behind him, but decides not to stab him as, having just repented, his Uncle would go to heaven. Hamlet wishes him instead to suffer in purgatory as his father does: "*And that his soul may be as damn'd and black*". This is an example of the role of religion within the play. Religion was a very key issue in Shakespeare's England and an important difference between Catholicism and Protestantism is that Catholics believe in Purgatory and Protestants do not. This theme echoes throughout Hamlet. The man most cynical of the ghost's existence is Horatio. The fact that Horatio studies at Wittenberg labels him as a protestant, as Wittenberg was the town in which Martin Luther effectively founded Protestantism. Once Hamlet has made up his mind once and for all to kill Claudius, he is summoned by his mother and, whilst in her room, slays Polonius whom he believes to be Claudius: "*How now! A rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!*". This killing, albeit of the wrong man, shows the audience that Hamlet is now ready to exact his revenge fully.

If the role of revenger is inevitable for this character, then we must question why Hamlet takes so long to exact his revenge and why he is so hesitant about it. Hazlitt describes him as, 'the prince of philosophical speculators.' It is Hamlet's own conscience which holds him back. He is hesitant to kill his uncle as this would be a sin. He knows that the action would not bring his father back. Indeed the ghost seems to recognise this conscience within the young Prince and asks him to put it aside in order to perform the task: "*If thou hast nature in thee bear it not.*"

Many critics, for example Catherine Belsey, condemn revenge as extremist. Yet Hamlet's indecision is widely recognised as his *Hamartia*. Therefore, the failure to take revenge becomes the tragedy within the play. Following the path of narrative imperative – as Bell has said - it will lead to Hamlet's downfall or death. Hence revenge in Hamlet can never be thought of as diabolical or similar. At worst, it should be seen as the better of two evils. Had Hamlet killed his Uncle early on, say in the Chapel, "*and so am I revenged*", then many more, including Hamlet would still have been alive. Instead, Hamlet's tragic flaw creates a chain reaction that brings the deaths of Polonius, Laertes, Ophelia, Claudius, Hamlet, Gertrude, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern instead of just the King.

To demonstrate another side of revenge, Shakespeare shows us an unsuccessful but resolute avenger to watch. Laertes seeks to exact revenge for Polonius on Hamlet. Even though he does kill Hamlet, Laertes is still an unsuccessful avenger for two reasons. First, because he ends up apologising to and forgiving Hamlet: "*Exchange forgiveness with me, Noble Hamlet*". In using this language, Shakespeare speaks of how forgiveness must be mutual if it is to exist. Second, because he dies in the process of carrying out this revenge. Although his story follows

the traditional lines of revenge, Laertes fails to bring about justice upon his nemesis at the final, and is therefore an unsuccessful revenger in the context of revenge tragedy.

When Hamlet is finally successful in his revenge, it is a somewhat limited success, with the death of his mother going contrary to his ethereal father's wishes "*Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven*". The reference to heaven suggests that Gertrude is an innocent party in the whole affair, which heightens the pathos of her death. It is muted also by the fact that he dies himself: "*Now cracks a noble heart*

In order to explore revenge fully, Shakespeare includes a successful revenger - Fortinbras of Norway. He seeks to avenge the wrongs done to his father, and take back the lands that Norway lost. In this, young Fortinbras is completely successful and he gains the throne of Denmark via Hamlet's instruction:

*But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice...*

Yet this, of all the revenges, is the least just. Because the revenge was excessive and Fortinbras came away with far more than he had lost. He not only recovered the lands that Norway had lost, but gained the whole of Denmark too.

In Hamlet, the play's avengers are seeking to do nothing except repay the wrongs done to them or to regain what they had lost. Yet instead of following law and order, they all rebel and act according to instinct. They sought an eye for an eye rather than turn the other cheek. It is clear that this worked fully for none of them, even though young Fortinbras did come out better off. The justice that the other two attempted left many dead, including themselves, and did no good but only harm. Millicent Bell is right about the play's conventionality - it followed the path of traditional revenge tragedy with an eruption of violence at the end. Revenge may be a kind of justice, but an altogether excessive one; a justice that does not heal, just shares out the pain.

Marker's Comments:

Critically evaluative in approach. Well-sustained argument with detailed textual reference. Fully focused on the terms of the question. Fully aware of the text as a literary construct. Critically evaluates the play's structural features. Makes perceptive observations about the text in context and confidently evaluates a range of critical interpretations. A highly sophisticated response.

21+14 = 35

Level 5	18-21	Critical and evaluative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents a critical evaluative argument with sustained textual examples. Evaluates the effects of literary features with sophisticated use of concepts and terminology. Uses sophisticated structure and expression. • Exhibits a critical evaluation of the ways meanings are shaped in texts. Displays a sophisticated understanding of the writer's craft. • Presents a sophisticated evaluation and appreciation of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Makes sophisticated links between texts and contexts.
Level 5	12-14	Critical and evaluative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies a sustained evaluation of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts. This is supported by sophisticated use of application of alternative interpretations to illuminate own critical position.

EXEMPLAR SCRIPT B

King Lear

Question 3(a)

Explore Shakespeare's use of power and powerlessness in *King Lear*. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors and ideas from your critical reading.

In *King Lear* the standard Jacobean status quo is questioned and challenged by a 'new order' where authority comes from a desire for power, as opposed to age or birth status. Although Elizabethan society was extremely hierarchical, it is also true that Shakespeare is famous for questioning (or at least appearing to, in order to teach a lesson) the social convention of his day. Due to the chaos that is brought about by subverting the old feudalistic power order in *King Lear*, it seems clear that Shakespeare wants to warn his audience against challenging what Jacobean would have considered the 'natural' order.

The Jacobean status quo was based on the old ideas of loyalty and bonds. Under the new order in the play, bonds are broken and loyalty is replaced by greed and lust for power. Bonds to the family, kings, and those in higher power were meant to be extremely strong and all about love and loyalty. Cordelia gives a modern audience some implication of the power and affection of a bond when the greatest expression of love she can give to her father is: "I love your majesty / According to my bond, no more nor less." Although in modern day this may seem distant and cold (especially with the contrast between her sisters exaggerated claims of love) Cordelia's honesty and openness allows the reader to see the great power of the love behind her words. The audience should be able to understand what this comment should mean to Lear and recognize its importance.

The betrayals of family bonds also result from ambition and lust for power. Goneril and Regan betray Lear once they have inherited his power. They neglect him and carelessly cast him out into the storm. Edmund is perhaps the best example of this lust for power. As a bastard, he should not have gained any power from his father. However, due to his strong feelings against the traditional Jacobean social structure, Edmund acquires a great amount of power through deceit and betrayal. This complete lack of respect for the old bonds is shown when he says: "the younger rises when the old doth fall..." These ambitious children (Goneril, Regan and Edmund) would definitely have scared an Elizabethan audience who would feel that, as Fintan O'Toole puts it, "knowing one's place and keeping it, is no longer much use."

The consequences of these disloyal actions are shown to be very serious. The betrayals and bond-breaking have a ripple effect as the new order affects the whole kingdom. One example of this is when Cornwall's servant questions his master's cruelty towards Gloucester. Regan is indignant – "A peasant stand up thus!" – and she ironically fails to recognize the similarity between his actions and hers. He has broken the bond of servant to master, just as she has broken the bond of daughter to father. She dared to challenge the power of her father's authority and the servant dared to challenge his master's authority, even though he is in the more powerless position.

Shakespeare also portrays the destruction and chaos brought about by the challenge to the power structure by exploring the theme of nature. Edmund, who represents the ideals of the new power structure ridicules nature and hates the social structure that makes him less than his brother only because he is a bastard. His scorn for nature is obvious in one of his monologues. He laughs at people who hold nature responsible for their decisions, "as if they were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves and treachers by spherical predominance," and clearly believes that

nature holds no correlation with the world of humans. He does not believe that humans are connected to the universe in any way and are independent of any universal order or chain of command.

The kingdom in *King Lear* is like a microcosm of the universe. As soon as Lear is betrayed by his daughters, going against the old order of power, nature seems to react. The storm reflects the turmoil of the kingdom under this new power structure. It appears that despite what Edmund thinks the human and natural worlds are closely related. Shakespeare seems to be showing the audience that uncertainties in the power structure don't just affect those closely involved in the situation. As David Kastan says, Shakespeare's characters are not able to create new worlds for themselves from the ruins of the old one. By giving examples in the play of what the dreadful consequences of going against the order might be, Shakespeare warns his audience against threatening the existing hierarchy they were so familiar with.

The warning is made even more obvious by Shakespeare's presentation of the cruelty and brutality that is the result of overturning the rightful power. The representatives of the new power structure are ruthless in their new positions. Lear is humiliated cruelly by his daughters; Edmund betrays his father to the brutality of Regan and Cornwall and later orders the deaths of Cordelia and Lear: "for my writ / Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia." These characters are cruel to those who they would have been loyal to under the old order. However, Shakespeare does not let them get away with it as the characters who went against the power structure all die at the end of the play.

Although Shakespeare can appear to challenge the old order of power, what he creates in *King Lear* makes it clear that he is in fact disapproving of the new order.

Marker's Comments:

Controlled and discriminating in approach. Makes appropriate reference to the text in constructing an argument but there could have been more evaluation of its literary features. There is a sense of audience and some detailed analysis of the text in context – but this would have to be further explored for a top level mark. The candidate makes discriminating use of different critical interpretations although, again, these could have been more fully evaluated.

16+10 = 26

Level 4	13-17	Discriminating controlled application/exploration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constructs a controlled argument with fluently embedded examples. Discriminating use of concepts and terminology. Controls structures with precise cohesive transitions and carefully chosen language. Demonstrates discriminating understanding of how meanings are shaped in texts. Analyses, in a controlled way, the nuances and subtleties of the writer's craft. Provides a discriminating analysis of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Makes detailed links between texts and contexts.
Level 4	9-11	Discriminating exploration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produces a developed exploration of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts. Discussion is controlled and offers integrated exploration of different interpretations in development of own critical position.

EXEMPLAR SCRIPT C

Measure for Measure

Question 5(b)

Explore Shakespeare's presentation of troubled characters in *Measure for Measure*. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors and ideas from your critical reading.

Shakespeare often confronted his audience with rather shocking and taboo topics that challenged stereotypical views of the 17th Century. This is evident in *Measure for Measure* where the typical ideas of how people should behave are subverted by his presentation of troubled characters.

Throughout the play we see a gradual change in Isabella. Shakespeare at first portrays her as an innocent, naïve and unknowingly attractive nun aspiring to lead a pure, virtuous life: all these characteristics are those which a 17th Century audience would see as desirable in a woman. Although Isabella seems to possess these characteristics at the start, as the play goes on we soon realize that she is far from the innocent nun we initially thought she was.

At the start of the play it is clear that Angelo has an official, authoritative position in the conversation with Isabella in Act 2 Scene 2, due to the way Isabella addresses him, 'I am a woeful suitor to your honour.' The audience would expect Angelo to have control of the conversation, not only because of the powerful position he held in Vienna but also because he is male. However, Isabella starts to question his power: 'O it is excellent to have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant.' We start to see a more fiery, aggressive side to Isabella. She begins to threaten Angelo: 'I'll tell the world aloud what man thou art.' This creates a power struggle between both characters. This would have made a 17th century audience uncomfortable as Isabella is not conforming to the ways a woman was expected to behave, adding to the understanding of her as a troubled character. Today, this behavior attracts audiences and actors to the role due to our modern views of Isabella's characteristics. *Measure for Measure* is a good example of a comedy which remains appealing today, because, as Maslen argues, comedy is adaptable and flexible, and so it can be relevant across different times.

Shakespeare explores how men can become troubled by women using their sexuality to try having power over them. For example, in Act 1 Scene 2 Claudio describes Isabella as having a 'prone and speechless dialect, such as move men' and she later uses words which have sexual connotations such as 'th'impression of keen whips'; 'strip myself to death as to a bed.' This all appears to encourage Angelo's sadism, resulting in Angelo lusting after her and doing what he can to get her to sleep with him. The view that women drive men to evil would have been commonly accepted in the 17th Century. Portraying Isabella in this way also had an effect on the audience. It is still one of the most powerful, difficult scenes to watch.

Isabella influences Angelo into giving her brother a second chance by pleading and arguing. She says, 'Hark how will I bribe you...Ay, with such gifts that heaven shall share with you,' suggesting that Angelo will go to heaven if he saves her brother. Isabella's saintly ways and her committed faith and 'connection' with God seem to influence Angelo even more because she is the person who could help him reach heaven. Shakespeare leaves it unclear whether Isabella knows what she is doing, which adds to the sense that she is a troubled character. Does she know that as a nun, promising him heaven is being manipulative or is she saying he'll be rewarded for saving a life because that is the religious and saintly thing to do?

After Isabella has left, Shakespeare gives Angelo a soliloquy to question if he is wrong to be tempted by her although he is clear that to follow temptation is worse than simply being tempted: 'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus; Another thing to fall.' This sets Angelo's character up as a strong person who doesn't give in to temptation easily. However, during his soliloquy, Angelo contradicts his previous grand statement: 'is it her fault or mine? The tempter or the tempted, who sins the most, ha?' This suggests he has been tempted. The question is, how has he been tempted by a nun? The debate is just as interesting now as it was in 1604. Angelo goes on to say: 'Never could the strumpet...Once stir my temper; but this virtuous maid Subdues me quite.'

In Act 3 Scene 1, we see another struggle between characters who are troubled, however this time it's between Isabella and Claudio. Claudio is prepared to die, however he still hopes he might live. Isabella will not accept this desire so she begins to question his honour and manhood. Some critics say she is self-righteous and hypocritical – perhaps Isabella has been blinded in her search for safety and fails to realize that perhaps succumbing to Angelo's demands might be the lesser of two evils, although this is a matter of opinion. It is another example of what makes Measure for Measure a problem play: Shakespeare has included an impossible decision which engages the audience, forcing them to put themselves in Isabella's troubled position.

Measure for Measure has what is seen as a 'happy ending', all the problems have been resolved through marriages which is what was typical of a comedy. However, can the problems raised and created in this play be resolved through marriages? This is especially when most of the marriages have been forced to happen by the Duke, and are not happy at all. Angelo is forced to marry Mariana, who it has seemed throughout the play he does not actually love. Lisa Hopkins has said that marriage closes comedy dramas because they are about group experience whereas tragedy is about the isolated individual. However, this is certainly not the case with Angelo who remains isolated and troubled at the end of the play. When the Duke saves his life and his 'punishment' is to marry he says, 'That I crave death more willingly than mercy.' Usually most people would rather marry than be killed, but Angelo 'craves' death instead. Because of this, can the ending actually be a happy ending, because the characters themselves are not happy. As Hopkins argues, "marriage is so central in Shakespearean comedy" which makes it difficult to classify Measure for Measure as it is "dark" and its characters remain troubled in spite of marriage being supposed to offer a 'happy ending'.

Marker's Comments:

Offers a clear, well-sustained interpretation of the play although the response is not always relevant to the terms of the question. There is some analysis of the effects of structure but there could have been more exploration of the writer's craft in general – at times the candidate offers too much narrative recount. There is clear understanding of contexts although comments are at times general rather than analytical. The interesting argument about Angelo, using Hopkins's interpretation, in the last paragraph is the best part of the response and could have been further developed.

12+8 = 20

Level 3	9-12	Clear relevant application/exporation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers a clear response using relevant textual examples. Relevant use of terminology and concepts. Creates a logical, clear structure with few errors and lapses in expression. Demonstrates knowledge of how meanings are shaped in texts with consistent analysis. Shows clear understanding of the writer's craft. Demonstrates a clear exploration of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Develops relevant links between texts and contexts.
Level 3	6-8	Clear relevant exploration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers clear understanding of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts. Explores different interpretations in support or contrast to own argument.

EXEMPLAR SCRIPT D

Othello

Question 4(a)

Explore how Shakespeare presents the disturbing aspects of human nature in *Othello*. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors and ideas from your critical reading.

In this play Shakespeare presents Othello as a man who tragically moves from civilization to barbarism, showing how easily human nature can change. During the Elizabethan era, Moors were typically characterized as uncivilized, lustful, violently jealous and barbaric. Act I opens with descriptions of Othello as 'an old black ram', a 'Barbary horse' and a 'lascivious Moor.' Such racist and animalistic language conveys an understanding of the sentiments attached to a black man at the time – the stereotypes attached to a man's skin colour are more important than his true qualities. Othello is therefore considered a dark-skinned savage. All this is further emphasized by the fact that Othello is never referred to by his name in this scene.

Although Othello is in every way a gentleman, he is he is considered by others in the play to be lower than a man in all respects. The amazement of Brabantio over Desdemona choosing Othello is shown when he exclaims:

And she, in spite of nature,
Of years, of country, credit, everything,
To fall in love with what she feared to look on!

The use of the word 'nature' here seems to imply that it is disgusting for a white woman, especially one of noble birth, to fall in love with a Moor. Brabantio thinks it is so wrong that Othello must have dabbled in black magic to have won Desdemona over.

As the play goes on, the audience is encouraged to see Othello's noble qualities by his eloquent speech:

Yet, by your gracious patience,
I will a round, unvarnished tale deliver
Of my whole course of love - ...

He speaks with clear civility and his formal tone and vocabulary and his politeness towards the Duke and Brabantio (who has just been horrible to him) convince the Duke who says, "this tale would win my daughter, too." This is a great contrast to the first impression of a rough and brutish Moor that the start of the play might have led the audience to expect. We also see how loving he is towards Desdemona – "but I do love thee! And when I love thee not, / Chaos is come again" - and how he speaks to her far more gently than he does to his men. So Othello is established as a character who has the world at his feet and who has shown himself to be a respected, civil man very different from the negative qualities of a savage.

The third act is a turning point for Othello, as the seeds of doubt Iago plants begin to grow. His impressive speech disappears and he savagely exclaims he will "tear her (Desdemona) all to pieces." He then orders the murder of Cassio. Instead of checking his facts, he takes Iago's insinuations at face value and acts on impulse. We see the biggest change in Act IV where he speaks in prose for the first time in the play:

Pish! Noses, ears and lips – is't possible? Confess – handkerchief – O, devil!

His gentlemanly behaviour and speech have vanished, his speech now just short, unconnected words which highlights the madness of his thoughts. He then openly mocks Desdemona in public and even cruelly hits her for no apparent reason. He is

crude and cruel, calling his wife a “strumpet” and a whore, but his ultimate act of barbarism is the murder of his wife for her supposed adultery.

Some critics have argued that with Desdemona’s killing, Othello has returned to his true barbarian nature. To challenge this, it must be asked if his decision was clear and conscious. Shakespeare presents Othello’s decision as being clouded by his anger, rejection and humiliation of being cuckolded. He loved Desdemona, ‘not wisely, but too well.’ His transformation from civilized man to barbarian is seen by the audience to be the result partly of Iago’s aggravation but also of Othello’s own jealousy – his tragic flaw. Othello was never a barbarian from the beginning – his descent into madness and savagery was due to Iago’s villainy. The true barbarian is Iago whose actions caused a good man to stoop to the levels of a savage and caused his downfall. This all led to his fulfilling society’s expectations of a black man, making him the person he tried so hard to avoid – ‘a malignant and a turbanned Turk.’ The play is a tragedy and we cannot help but feel huge sadness at the fall of a great man who went against the stereotypes but who was defeated by himself in the end.

The most memorable lines of the play are those of Othello’s final soliloquy. Here we get a bit of the old Othello with his powerful and emotional speech. Overcome by grief and remorse, he asks to be remembered simply as he is – for all his greatness and flaws, he identifies himself with a ‘circumcised dog.’

I conclude by asserting once more, that no man is naturally barbaric and that a civilized man only becomes barbaric when influenced by external factors. Othello is a noble general who turns barbaric Turk due to Iago’s subtle attacks. A man may not be born with savage instincts, but the worst circumstances will turn human nature to its lowest form – a barbarian.

Marker’s Comments:

Shapes a fluent and controlled argument, making discriminating use of textual examples. The themes in the question would need to be explored more fully for a top level, however. Also, the response is let down by a failure to engage with the play’s contexts. Neither is there much evidence of the candidate’s critical reading.

14+ 7= 21

Level 4	13-17	<p>Discriminating controlled application/exploration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructs a controlled argument with fluently embedded examples. Discriminating use of concepts and terminology. Controls structures with precise cohesive transitions and carefully chosen language. • Demonstrates discriminating understanding of how meanings are shaped in texts. Analyses, in a controlled way, the nuances and subtleties of the writer’s craft. • Provides a discriminating analysis of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Makes detailed links between texts and contexts.
Level 3	6-8	<p>Clear relevant exploration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers clear understanding of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts. Explores different interpretations in support or contrast to own argument.

EXEMPLAR SCRIPT E

The Taming of the Shrew

Question 7(a)

Explore the ways in which Shakespeare uses gender roles in *The Taming of the Shrew*. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors and ideas from your critical reading.

The relationships between men and women is a common theme in Shakespeare's plays, *The Taming of the Shrew* was first performed in 1592 and it combines comedy with the harsh patriarchal system of marriage at the time.

In the play, money is central to the marriage arrangements. For example, Petruchio sees marriage as an option to become wealthy: "I come to wive it wealthily in Padua / If wealthily then happily in Padua" indicating that for him money comes before love. Money is also used to assert patriarchal authority when Baptista effectively sells Bianca off in Act 2 Scene 1. Whoever offers the most money will "win the prize" suggesting the real value of marriage is money. This also highlights the hopelessness of a woman's situation as money enables men to assert their patriarchal hegemony by giving them power and choice.

Having set his eye on Kate and knowing her reputation, Petruchio plans to "woo her with some spirit." His method involved flattering and confusing her, turning all her "Shrewish" qualities into their opposite. The verbal battle between them is comical, but it is also an exploration of the gender roles played by the characters in this play. Karen Newman points out that Shakespeare's use of the dialogue between Kate and Petruchio shows Kate's view of marriage as exploiting women and their value. The language in the scene is full of puns, most of which are animal images, with comparisons to "asses", "jade", "buzzard", "wasp", "cock" and so on. Many of the metaphors have sexual connotations – "I will not burden thee" – which would have been acknowledged and enjoyed by the Elizabethan audience, who would also view marriage being a financial arrangement as the norm. The quick-fire dialogue using Shakespeare's device of splitting a metrical line between the two speakers draws the audience into the verbal battle. Kate and Petruchio at this point are seen as two equals in language and spirit. However, Kate's strength of character does not avoid her marriage to Petruchio in the end.

Another way gender roles are explored is through women's voices. In *The Taming of the Shrew* Kate, at the start appears, as a free-willed but rebellious woman who defies society's hierarchical system quite openly. Bianca is the opposite – valued for her "silence." Kate's meeting with Petruchio is the first time someone has matched her intellectual and linguistic abilities and by the end he has dominated the conversation entirely. Once married, Petruchio again leaves her no room to speak until she is in anguish, crying out: "My tongue will tell the anger of my heart / Or else my heart, concealing it, will break." At the end he has total control over her, as she speaks in blank verse stating that, "thy husband is thy lord," clearly contradicting her attitude at the start. Bianca on the other hand, has played within the system, getting the man and the money she wants. Once married, she speaks freely and defies her husband by answering back to him with, "the more fool you for laying on my duty" when he complains that she has lost him money.

When *The Taming of the Shrew* was produced, it was a period during which witchcraft accusations reached their peak. This suggests that the play might be expressing some anxiety about men acting to put 'forward' women back into their position in society and retain control. However, some modern critics disagree with this view and Sinead Cusack sees Kate's last speech as a "declaration of independence." On the other hand, some argue that she is only allowed the longest speech in the play because it's her husband speaking through her.

One further way gender roles are explored is through the violence shown by men towards women. Petruchio is shown to use violence to tame Kate. For example, he deprives her of food – "she ate no meat today nor none shall eat." Further on in the play Petruchio conveys violence again by ripping apart the dress that Kate was meant to wear. Although in his soliloquy he does state that he is doing all of this "in reverend care of her..." it seems that he is crushing Kate's spirit and voice as he destroys the dress. However, although this patriarchal hegemony is disturbing, his brutality is inside of marriage, so therefore legal and acceptable to contemporary society.

While modern spectators might see Petruchio's taming of Kate as distressing and cruel, to a Shakespearian audience, beating a woman was a common occurrence. Some modern critics suggest that Petruchio's behaviour can be identified with cycles of domestic violence. The film version – *Ten Things I Hate About You* simply omits the 'taming' from the comedy. Some other productions have tried to undercut the 'taming' effect. For example, when Mary Pickford played the part in the 1929 film version of the play, she winked during her speech on being good wives, according to Ann Thompson, to suggest it might be humorous or ironic.

It is clear that our views on gender have altered over time and contemporary audiences and critics have interpreted the play in different ways. For me, however, there is a clear sinister meaning behind the comic façade that stresses a lack of justice for females.

Marker's Comments:

A confident, evaluative approach. The argument is well-sustained and there is a highly sophisticated appreciation of the writer's craft. Perceptive links are made between the text and its contexts and a variety of critical interpretations are evaluated.

19+13 = 32

Level 5	18-21	Critical and evaluative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents a critical evaluative argument with sustained textual examples. Evaluates the effects of literary features with sophisticated use of concepts and terminology. Uses sophisticated structure and expression. • Exhibits a critical evaluation of the ways meanings are shaped in texts. Displays a sophisticated understanding of the writer's craft. • Presents a sophisticated evaluation and appreciation of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Makes sophisticated links between texts and contexts.
Level 5	12-14	Critical and evaluative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies a sustained evaluation of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts. This is supported by sophisticated use of application of alternative interpretations to illuminate own critical position.

EXEMPLAR SCRIPT F

Twelfth Night

Question 8(b)

Explore Shakespeare's use of the Malvolio sub-plot in *Twelfth Night*. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors and ideas from your critical reading.

Even though it is part of the subplot, Malvolio's situation is an important example of how Shakespeare explored the social order in many of his plays. The subplot in *Twelfth Night* focuses on the tricks played on Olivia's steward, Malvolio by Sir Toby Belch, Maria, Fabian and Andrew Aguecheek. The situation is symbolic of the issue of class mobility that Elizabethan audiences would have recognized. Malvolio's fantasy of Olivia falling in love with him focuses not on the romantic love the two would share if they were together, but on how Olivia's love would benefit his social standing. Malvolio imagines himself, "Calling my officers about me, in my /branded velvet gown; having come from a daybed, / where I have left Olivia sleeping-" and he continues to daydream that he might actually rise in status above everyone else and manage to have Olivia for himself. The fake letter written by Maria leads him to even more outrageous dreams about moving up the social ladder because he actually believes it is possible when he reads:

"In my stars I Am above thee, but be not afraid of greatness. Some are Born great, some achieve greatness, and some have Greatness thrust upon 'em."

Malvolio gives in to his desires for a higher social status, and his dreams that he could "be proud," "read politic authors," "baffle Sir Toby," "wash off gross acquaintance" and "be point-devise, the very man," and his words and actions provide plenty of comedy for the plotters and for the audience.

Shakespeare makes Malvolio a character that clashes with the social expectations on many levels, from his grand ideas about dress to his wish to marry into a much higher social class. However, his desire to challenge the system of class order is turned upside down by the humiliation that he receives in the yellow stockings and cross-garter trick. Shakespeare is making an example of Malvolio by showing what happens when one attempts to undermine the established social order. The point is very effective because the desire to move up in the world is something that Shakespeare's Renaissance audience would have tuned into as, do modern audiences because they probably have had those desires themselves but also because of how much we enjoy seeing someone pompous being brought down to earth. As Walter Kerr says, comedy is a way of mocking people who are trying to make themselves appear as though they are better than everyone else. Shakespeare wants his audience to learn something from the Malvolio subplot – know your place and don't try too hard to upset the natural order of things.

The lesson is brought home very clearly in the final scene. After Malvolio swears to "be revenged on the whole pack of you," he goes off stage. Shakespeare's decision to not bring him back for the remainder of the play is significant because it symbolizes the point that wanting to change one's social status or to subvert the authority of social order is unacceptable. The way the other characters return to their own romances and ignore Malvolio's threats of vengeance suggests that Shakespeare wanted to show how much easier life is for those who respect the traditional social order. It could be argued that the social order is turned upside down when Duke Orsino chooses to marry the servant Cesario (who really isn't a servant but Viola in disguise), but Viola is not trying to challenge the social system. Also, Viola is not a real servant and, because of this fact, the play allows her the chance to be one of the characters who happens to improve her social status through her luck in love.

In the final scene of the play, Malvolio is removed and not allowed the chance to sort things out and have a happy ending like the other characters. His absence demonstrates to the audience that if you go against the rules that govern society, you face extreme humiliation and banishment. Social structures were very important in Elizabethan times and everyone had a clear sense of where they fitted into the system.

In this play Shakespeare explores what Stephen Greenblatt has called the “paradox of social order.” This is where he challenges social structures in his plays but in the end reinforces them. What happens to Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* is an example of what Lisa Hopkins has called the essential ‘conservatism’ of comedy because although in tragedy the world can be broken and challenged, the world in comedy ends up staying exactly the same.

Marker’s Comments:

A perceptively critical and fluently-expressed argument. Wastes few words. There is a confident evaluation of the text as a literary construct and a sustained awareness of audience reception over time. There is also a sophisticated engagement with interpretations by other readers.

20+14 = 34

Level 5	18–21	Critical and evaluative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents a critical evaluative argument with sustained textual examples. Evaluates the effects of literary features with sophisticated use of concepts and terminology. Uses sophisticated structure and expression. • Exhibits a critical evaluation of the ways meanings are shaped in texts. Displays a sophisticated understanding of the writer’s craft. • Presents a sophisticated evaluation and appreciation of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Makes sophisticated links between texts and contexts.
Level 5	12–14	Critical and evaluative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies a sustained evaluation of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts. This is supported by sophisticated use of application of alternative interpretations to illuminate own critical position.

