



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary
AS English Literature
(8ET0/01)

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Introduction

It is evident once again this year that both teachers and students have engaged thoroughly with the specification and its demands. The responses submitted were thoughtful, well-informed, and often a pleasure to read. The majority of students demonstrated their ability to meet all assessment objectives, producing insightful and well-structured essays that reflected a strong engagement with the texts, contexts, and the ideas of their respective writers. The quality of the responses clearly reflects the expertise and commitment of teachers in preparing their students effectively.

Section A

In Section A, candidates were presented with a named poem from the anthology and were required to select another suitable poem for comparison. This enabled them to demonstrate their ability to draw connections (AO4) and to respond to the thematic focus of the question. Two questions were offered, each linked to a different named poem.

Most candidates selected appropriate comparative poems, enabling them to explore a range of ideas in response to the question. Where responses were less successful, this was often due to a poem choice that limited exploration of the core theme – for example, ideas about the past or representations of control.

The most effective responses offered a sustained, conceptual comparison. These essays typically opened with a clear thesis and developed a thematic, ideas-driven discussion, interwoven with analysis of the writers' methods. This approach was frequently more successful than those that centred solely on poetic devices, which tended to result in more superficial commentary. Analysis of technique must always be rooted in the ideas of the texts and the task to gain higher reward.

Section B

For Section B, students selected one of two questions on their set drama text. The questions were designed to draw on all assessment objectives: knowledge of the text and relevant references (AO1), analysis of writers' craft (AO2), contextual understanding (AO3), and interpretation (AO5). The question stems and accompanying critical statements were intended to support candidates in shaping their responses across all AOs.

The vast majority of candidates made thoughtful reference to the critical statement, using it to support their line of argument. While engagement with the statement is not mandatory, it can offer a useful prompt to encourage analytical and interpretive thinking. Weaker responses often relied too heavily on the statement itself and neglected the broader focus of the question, which led to narrow and underdeveloped arguments.

AO1 was generally well addressed, with many students demonstrating confident textual knowledge supported by purposeful and frequent references. The most effective use of evidence included well-chosen quotations that illustrated analysis of methods, interpretations, and contextual connections. Where references were sparse or poorly selected, responses were less convincing. Secure use of evidence remains a key discriminator in assessing AO1 and has a significant bearing on performance across other objectives.

In terms of expression and written style (also part of AO1), many candidates wrote with clarity and an appropriately academic tone. Where expression was confused or error-prone, this affected examiners' ability to reward across the mark scheme. It was encouraging to see that many students had clearly planned their essays, leading to more coherent arguments and structured analysis.

AO2 focuses on the analysis of writer's craft, and stronger responses moved beyond word-level analysis to explore methods in a sophisticated, interpretative way. These candidates embedded discussion of technique within wider debates about meaning and effect. Responses at Level 4 and above often combined this analysis with interpretations, thus addressing both AO2 and AO5 in a cohesive manner.

AO3 assesses contextual understanding in relation to the text and task. The least successful responses included broad or superficial references to historical or biographical context that lacked relevance or specificity. By contrast, the strongest contextual points were accurate, relevant, and closely tied to the writer's ideas and textual content. Notable examples included confident discussion of dramatic conventions and literary contexts, such as Williams' use of plastic theatre or the transition of the American South towards modernity, often presented succinctly and precisely.

Finally, AO5 requires candidates to consider different interpretations. Many students demonstrated this effectively, either by referencing critics or by clearly signposting their own interpretations. While citing critics is not a requirement, such references can enhance arguments when well integrated and evaluated. Examiners were pleased to see students exploring interpretative angles in detail and with confidence, providing a strong foundation for sophisticated literary discussion.

Question 1

This task invited candidates to explore how feelings about the past are presented in *To My Nine-Year-Old Self* by Helen Dunmore alongside another poem of their choice from *Poems of the Decade*. While this was the less frequently attempted question this year, candidates who chose it often produced sensitive and reflective comparisons, with a number of responses engaging thoughtfully with the emotional and temporal dimensions of memory.

Common pairings included *Material*, *Effects*, and *Out of the Bag*, each offering fruitful opportunities to explore themes of nostalgia, personal growth, or the impact of childhood experiences on adult identity. Stronger responses typically presented nuanced readings of both poems, attending closely to the development of themes and the emotional shifts within the poems.

There was some very effective analysis of imagery—particularly around physical activity and the body in *To My Nine-Year-Old Self*, and how this contrasts with more passive or reflective tones in comparison poems. Some candidates also explored the stylistic contrasts between structured and more fragmented forms, linking these choices to the poets' treatment of memory and temporal distance.

A less successful feature of some responses was a tendency to remain at the surface level, describing events or feelings without fully analysing how language and structure convey these meanings. Where candidates adopted a more conceptual approach—considering, for example, the role of regret, loss, or reconnection—their comparisons were more effective and sustained.

Question 2

This question, focused on the presentation of control in *Eat Me* and one other anthology poem, proved to be significantly more popular among candidates and often produced confident and engaging responses.

Many students paired *Eat Me* with *The Gun*, *Chainsaw Versus the Pampas Grass*, or *Giuseppe*, enabling them to explore a range of perspectives on power, control, dominance, and resistance. The question prompted strong engagement with themes of bodily autonomy, coercion, gendered power structures, and psychological manipulation.

In *Eat Me*, candidates frequently examined the shifting power dynamics between the speaker and the feeder figure, often exploring the volta at the end of the poem as a moment of liberation or reversal. This was often perceptively linked to similar shifts in the power dynamic in the comparison poem. Particularly impressive were those responses that used this moment of change as a conceptual anchor for their whole essay.

Students generally demonstrated good awareness of poetic methods, with a number of responses commenting in detail on Agbabi's use of voice, rhythm, and the visceral imagery of consumption and entrapment. When comparison poems were explored with similar care, the result was a developed and purposeful discussion. Some candidates took a slightly reductive approach, focusing on control only as physical dominance or abuse, but stronger responses extended their discussion into psychological, social, or institutional forms of control.

While context is not directly assessed in this section, some candidates made brief, purposeful reference to gender roles, postcolonial themes, or cultural expectations, which helped to frame the poems' presentations of control without detracting from the focus on analysis.

Overall, this task prompted rich and varied responses, and the most successful essays demonstrated a conceptualised, thematic comparison, integrating detailed analysis of poetic technique to illuminate how the poets convey complex ideas about power and control.

Both Vicki Feaver in "The Gun" and Patience Agbabi in "Eat Me" present ideas of control ^{metaphorically and subtly.} ^{Patience Agbabi} ~~Vicki Feaver~~ ^{Vicki Feaver} does this through the change in relationship hierarchy, whilst ~~Patience Agbabi~~ ^{Vicki Feaver} does it through male dominance in domestic relationships. Both use relationships to present ideas of control.

In "The Gun" Vicki Feaver shows that relationships between ^{objects} ~~humans~~ are just as important as those between humans. Feaver presents a controlled relationship meaning rather than being in or under control by someone else, the relationship is controlled via a gun. "Bringing a gun into a house changes it." this opening statement sets a brooding atmosphere with the reader. "house" - describing it as a "house" rather than home, at the start of a poem suggests that it isn't a very 'home-like' place to be. Furthermore, the use of direct address - "you" "your" - implies that the speaker feels distant in her relationship and unwelcome in her own home. However,

Patience Agbabi in "Eat Me" shows how being under someone's control in a relationship is taunting and derogative. Agbabi presents a domestic relationship with a clear power imbalance, the man/partner of the speaker could be called a feeder. This means they force their partner to eat excessive amounts either for their own personal liking or to as a power move to secure their control and relationship. For example the speaker in Stanza 7 repeats the phrase "too fat" suggesting that she knows that without her partner ~~she~~ she would struggle to be accepted due to her size.

Commentary:

This essay clearly demonstrates the core features of a Level 2 response, including a basic understanding of the poems and an attempt to engage with the task. There are, however, occasional moments of more developed insight and clarity—particularly in the candidate’s recognition of key shifts in power dynamics and emotional tone—which serve to elevate the response into Level 3. These glimpses of stronger analytical thinking suggest that the candidate has begun to move beyond a purely descriptive approach. Nonetheless, some of the response relies heavily on narrative summary, with the candidate recounting rather than exploring how meaning is constructed through poetic techniques. Where AO2 is addressed, there is limited focus on the distinctively poetic features of the texts—such as form, structure, rhythm, or imagery—and the poems are often treated more like prose passages. This results in a response that lacks the precision and depth required for the higher levels, particularly in terms of analysing the craft of the poets. Overall, while the essay shows some emerging strengths, the tendency to summarise and the limited engagement with the poems as poetry are constraining factors in the final mark awarded.

Advice:

Successful responses to the comparative poetry task treat the texts as crafted works of poetry, rather than as narrative accounts. Candidates are encouraged to move beyond summary and instead focus on how poets use language, structure, and form to shape meaning. Addressing poems as poetry—by analysing features such as imagery, rhythm, and voice—enables a more precise and sophisticated engagement with AO2. Where candidates ground their analysis in specific methods and link these directly to the ideas and effects created, responses are more convincing and better rewarded.

As a contrast, here is another response with much tighter and fluent focus on the conceptualised ideas in the text:

plan

eat me	chainsaw
masculine control → voice of man	masculine control → man represented through man made mechanics
femininity overcomes control	
→ repression of male voice	→ at zoomorphism → nature
→ caesura last stanza	
→ metaphors represent fem	

Both "Eat Me" by Patience Agbabi and "chainsaw versus the Pampas Grass" by Simon Armitage present control as a dominant feature of masculinity which is use to their advantage over the more submissive femininity they are associated with. However, while 'Eat Me' is a dramatic monologue depicting the femininity breaking free from their hostile environment, ~~chainsaw~~ 'chainsaw' uses the metaphors of man made materials / machines that are trying to

overcome the unstoppable force of nature which it can't control.

Both poems clearly present control to come from a masculine figure. In 'Eat me', the dramatic monologue is from the female speaker who is under control, however, there are harshly intrusive moments where we are introduced to another voice, being the males. This can be seen as he lists "I like big girls, soft girls, girls I can bury inside". This intrusive voice shows the control he has over which girls he empowers, but it could also show how he not only has control over the women's bodies but also their voices. He interrupts the flow of the monologue and this also can be represented as it is written in italics. This visually interrupts the regularity to the poem as a whole. Chainsaw also pictures the control coming from a male perspective as ~~metaph~~ the chainsaw is personified in a stereotypical masculine way. This is done through the personification or drinking "it knocked back a quarter pint of engine oil". This portrays the chainsaw as a powerful weapon as the dynamic verb "knocked" conveys a sense of ease; however the the adjective to describe it's size "quarter-pint" makes it appear to be a larger amount but it still isn't phased. This could portray a more masculine figure with hostile intentions.

We can also see the ~~the~~ Simon Armitage present the chainsaw as a masculine figure as it is implied that it wants sexual dominance and control over the pampas grass. This can be seen as "its mood to tangle with cloth, jewellery or hair" comes across with sexual connotations. The dynamic verb "tangle" ~~also~~ gives implications of close sexual acts and this is further supported by the semantic field which follows of feminine characteristics; "cloth, jewellery or hair". This solidifies the fact that the chainsaw is a masculine representation that wants control over ~~a~~ ~~for~~ femininity in the same way that Patience Agbabi presents the masculine figure in "eat me".

Commentary:

This is a confident and clearly structured response that demonstrates many of the qualities associated with the upper end of Level 4. The candidate presents a well-argued and sustained comparison of *Eat Me* and *Chainsaw Versus the Pampas Grass*, maintaining a consistent line of argument throughout. Their engagement with the thematic focus of control is thoughtful and purposeful, and there is clear understanding of how both poets convey ideas about dominance and control.

The analysis is supported by apt references to both poems, and there is effective integration of textual evidence into the candidate's discussion. However, while the essay is sound and assured, it lacks the level of nuance, critical originality, and exploratory quality required for a secure placement in Level 5. Similarly, while poetic techniques are discussed effectively, they are not always explored in depth or fully linked to the text's broader meanings. Overall, this is a strong, coherent response with clear insight and control—securely within Level 4—but it does not quite reach the level of sophistication and critical engagement expected for the top band.

Advice:

To progress from Level 4 to Level 5, candidates should aim to develop a more exploratory and critically nuanced approach to comparison. This involves going beyond explanation to interrogate how and why poets make particular choices, and how these choices shape meaning in subtle or unexpected ways. Strong Level 5 responses often present a conceptual thread that guides the essay, allowing interpretations to evolve with increasing sophistication. Candidates should also aim to analyse poetic techniques with greater precision and insight, linking methods closely to thematic concerns and effects, rather than treating them as standalone features. A willingness to engage with ambiguity, alternative readings, or tensions within the texts can also enhance critical depth and support progression into the highest band.

Question 3

Question 4

There were no responses on Lorraine Hansberry's *Les Blancs*.

Question 5

Many candidates engaged confidently with the language and contexts of *Doctor Faustus*. In this question, candidates were asked to consider the dramatic presentation of the physical world. At the lower end of the range, responses looked at literal or surface-level references to the physical world—such as Faustus' desire for wealth, power, and travel—without exploring how these relate to broader thematic or symbolic concerns. These responses often summarised Faustus' actions or listed examples from the play without fully analysing their dramatic significance.

More accomplished responses often considered how the physical world is presented as both alluring and limiting, reflecting Faustus' dissatisfaction with human boundaries and his desire for transcendence. These responses explored the tension between the physical and metaphysical realms, often linking this to Renaissance attitudes towards knowledge, religion, and the human condition.

Question 6

This was the more popular task. A range of approaches was seen on this question on the dramatic presentation of tension in *Doctor Faustus*. In responses seen, many candidates identified key moments of conflict or suspense, such as Faustus' wavering between repentance and defiance, the appearances of the Good and Evil Angels, and the final scenes of the play. However, some of these responses tended to describe these episodes without fully analysing how Marlowe creates tension through dramatic structure, language, and staging.

Better responses looked not only at where tension occurs, but also at how it is constructed and sustained throughout the play, even in the face of Faustus' apparent inevitability of damnation. These responses explored the dramatic irony inherent in Faustus' choices, the psychological tension within his character, and the impact of performance on audience response. More sophisticated interpretations considered how Marlowe manipulates the audience's expectations and sympathies, often linking this to contextual concerns such as Calvinist ideas of predestination, Renaissance debates around free will, and the moral function of tragedy.

Throughout "Doctor Faustus", Marlowe presents tension as having a gripping effect on Faustus, via the dramatic methods of characters who reflect Faustus' internal struggles. Initially, Faustus experiences tension between the temptations of evil and the purity of good, when faced with Mephistophilis' pact. After signing this pact, Faustus' biggest tension comes in the form of his attempted salvation, whereby his constant fear of Lucifer prevents him from ever sincerely repenting. This begs the question, prevalent among a 16th century audience: Is repentance always available to all, a more ~~Arminian~~ Lutheran outlook, or is Faustus doomed from the start - a more Calvinist view? Marlowe's ambiguous blending of genre, religious ideals and social

usual morality play resulting in a tragic downfall of a defying character, Marlowe is not writing a usual morality play - as such, the audience will feel tension, as Faustus' fate is inevitable.

Initially, Marlowe presents tension in the form of ~~the~~ Faustus' desire for power and knowledge resulting in an internal struggle between good and evil. The good and evil angels are the embodiment of Faustus' internal psychomachia: when faced with a neoplatonic book, the good angel begs Faustus, saying, "O Faustus, lay that damned book aside, and gaze not on it, lest it tempt thy soul," The evil angel, however, beckons Faustus, saying he should "Go forward, Faustus, in that famous art." This dramatic presentation of tension would be extremely powerful for an audience: Faustus' internal psychomachia is displayed on stage via his option to pick good or evil. Before signing the pact, they give a final word to Faustus, "Sweet Faustus, think of heaven, and heavenly things," says the good angel, with the evil angel saying, "Go, think of honor and of wealth." Here, the evil angel plays into Faustus' Renaissance desires^{by mentioning "honor and wealth"}. The Renaissance era was a more secular society, one which prioritized the growth of knowledge and power over spiritual gain - this, however, caused societal tensions. Even God attempts to intervene in Faustus' desire

he necromantic poem: upon attempting to sign the pact, Faustus reads, "But what is this inscription on mine arm? Homo lupus". "Homo lupus" means 'Fly, O man', showing a stark and explicit warning from God. The fact it was inscribed on his arm suggests that to chase power comes in tension with his natural way of life. Perhaps this also gives Marlowe an opportunity to characterise God as merciless: ~~this is~~ God's characterisation was debated at the time, with a Calvinist v a Lutheran viewpoint on this debated.

After signing the pact, Marlowe presents the tension in Faustus as between his desire for salvation and his yearning for Lucifer. Faustus' desire for ~~repent~~ repentance becomes clear in Scene 7: it opens with Faustus saying, "When I beheld the heaven, then I repent. And curse thee, wicked Mephistophilis." The character of the good and evil angels personify Faustus' tension between desire for repentance and yearning for Lucifer: "If thou repent, devils shall tear thee in pieces" - the evil angel, with the good angel answering, "Repent, and they shall never raise thy skin". As these 2 characters are an external personification of Faustus' inner ^{tension} ~~Angelmischung~~, his response is fitting: "Ah Christ, my ~~my~~ Saviour, seek to save Distressed Faustus' soul". The imperative of "seek" to Christ, reflects Faustus' yearning: he now believes he must be passive in his repentance, or "saved", for otherwise Lucifer will harm him. However, his halfhearted repentance shall

Commentary:

This is a fluently written and assured response that demonstrates a secure understanding of Marlowe's dramatic craft and a consistently thoughtful engagement with the question of tension in *Doctor Faustus*. There is a clear awareness of how an audience might respond to Faustus' choices and his apparent descent into inevitable damnation, and this is explored with sensitivity and discrimination. The candidate ranges effectively across the text, selecting well-chosen references that are integrated seamlessly into the argument and used to support analytical claims rather than simply illustrate points.

The analysis is tentative in the best sense—open to ambiguity and layered interpretation—showing an appreciation for the complexity of Faustus as a tragic figure and the tension created by his inner conflict. Rather than bolting on historical information, the candidate convincingly shows how such ideas shape the text and enhance the audience's understanding of the play's moral and emotional tension. Overall, this is a perceptive and carefully argued response that demonstrates many of the hallmarks of Level 5.

Advice:

Candidates sometimes shy away from writing about structural elements of drama texts, however, where engagement with structure is thoughtful, for example in relation to the shifts between comic and serious scenes in *Faustus*, and how these tonal changes influence audience perception and build narrative tension, they can add depth and perception to students' responses.

Question 7

Very few responses were seen on *The Duchess of Malfi* this series. Question 7 asked students to consider dramatic presentation of the ending, and candidates demonstrated successful engagement with the play's denouement.

Question 8

For Question 8, there were some very successful responses addressing Webster's dramatic presentation of isolation.

Question 9

In this question, the more popular choice on this text, candidates were asked to explore the dramatic presentation of morality in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Most candidates presented a clear and relevant analysis of the ways in which characters' behaviours, dialogue, and social interactions reflect and critique prevailing moral codes. Many responses explored how Wilde uses irony, satire, and exaggeration to highlight the superficiality and contradictions within Victorian moral values. There was also frequent discussion of how the characters manipulate moral discourse for personal gain, particularly through deception and the invention of alter egos.

Question 10

This question asked students to consider the dramatic presentation of the significance of wealth in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Most candidates explored the theme with appropriate reference to dramatic methods, often identifying how Wilde uses dialogue, characterisation, and comic structure to expose the materialism and social ambition of the play's characters. There was frequent reference to Lady Bracknell's values and her association of wealth with suitability for marriage, which served as a useful entry point for analysis of class and social mobility in the play.

Question 11**Question 12**

No responses were seen to *The Rover*.

Question 13

A Streetcar Named Desire remains the most popular text on this paper, and this was the more popular of the two tasks. For this question, candidates were asked to explore the dramatic presentation of sexuality. Most candidates offered an appropriate analysis of how sexuality operates as a powerful and destabilising force within the play, often focusing on the physicality of Stanley and the contrasting vulnerability of Blanche. Candidates frequently identified the ways in which Williams uses stage directions, costume, and music to heighten sexual tension and illustrate the complex interplay between desire, dominance, and control.

At the lower end of the range, some candidates tended to describe relationships in general terms, or limited their discussion to Stanley's aggression and Blanche's victimhood, without sufficiently addressing the broader dramatic and thematic significance of sexuality. Stronger responses explored a wider range of relationships, including the dynamics between Stella and Stanley, as well as Mitch's shifting attitudes towards Blanche, demonstrating how sexuality intersects with issues of power, gender, and social expectation.

At the upper end of the mark scheme, responses examined how Williams presents sexuality as both a source of connection and destruction, and how this tension is central to the play's dramatic power. These responses often considered how Blanche's sexual past and her retreat into illusion reflect the cultural and moral conflict between the decaying Old South and the emerging, more brutal modern America. Some candidates also explored the significance of same-sex desire and repression, particularly in relation to Blanche's young husband and her resulting guilt, showing a nuanced understanding of Williams' own context and preoccupations.

Across the performance range, many candidates incorporated contextual knowledge and critical perspectives effectively, showing increasing confidence in linking Williams' dramatic methods to interpretations of character and theme.

A streetcar named Desire by Tennessee Williams explores many sexual encounters and, for the most part, the play is "primarily driven by sexual tensions between the characters" due to the presentation of male dominance from the New South who are sexually lead and the wanted sexual desires from Blanche who represents the Old South and wants to fill her ~~desires~~ need to insecurities to satisfy and justify her lifestyle choices. However, ~~the~~ this is what creates the "sexual tension" and the main creation of this comes from hidden desires and innate sexual drives.

The males throughout the play present ~~sexuality as a relationship~~ and ~~com-~~ their sexuality through being dominant ~~and~~ towards females. ~~The setting~~ This play being released in 1947 would have the audience or the time thinking the ~~gender~~ gender roles were ~~more~~ normalised as the men would be seen as the protective and strong figures while women are to be submissive to them. While this is ~~more~~ normalised to an audience in 1947, to a modern audience we can see the way males present their sexuality is oppressive. Stanley presents his sexuality immediately from the start as he "[throws]" a package.

of meat to Stella. The verb "[heaves]" implies a strong force which Stanley isn't afraid to use against Stella. The meat could be symbolic of a sexual innuendo ^{that} ~~which~~ he wants to give ~~to Stella,~~ ^{and use.} ~~this st~~ This immediately presents Stanley who uses his sexuality in a strong and violent way to impress Stella. ~~Stanley also asserts his sexuality over Blanche as he immediately asserts that he has the right to go through Blanche's personal items. He does this in~~ Williams' presents the male sexuality in a way which favours them. This can be seen as Stanley is able to ~~be~~ stay unseen by women when he doesn't want to be. In scene 4 prior to Blanche's monologue about Stanley's animalistic behaviour, Stanley is disguised by a "[train's noise]" so he is able to overhear their conversation. ~~Corigan argues that~~ Williams ^{clearly} favours Stanley at the beginning of the play'. This is supported as the environment clearly favours Stanley which leads him to gain information over the sisters and ultimately, in this event, come back to Stella who ("has embraced him with both arms, fiercely"). This lets Stanley use his sexuality in a way which gets him closer to Stella who makes him feel secure and more dominant by her submissive behaviour. ~~However, sometimes it doesn't~~

Williams' also presents the male sexuality to be animalistic and hedonistic. He also does this through the presentation of Stanley and his friends. ~~He~~ He shows them to be find excitement in things like poker and gambling. Scene 3, 'The poker Night' has importance as before Williams named streetcar its current name, "the poker night" was going to be its name. This ~~showed how~~ is the moment of the play where intense tension is built and we see the first extremely violent and chaotic outbreak ~~that~~ when Stanley "blew his top" we can see that his sexuality surrounding anger and violence came out abruptly. Bubb argues that Stanley has an "insensitive, bullish masculinity" which is presented through his violent outbursts. The violent and dynamic verb "blew" shows just how extreme he can be, supporting Bubb as it is clearly insensitive and bullish. However, Stanley's violent presentation of his sexuality could be justified in this play being written in 1947, two years after WWII could show him as a war veteran who struggles with

Commentary:

This is a largely character-driven response, with a clear and consistent focus on the key figures in the play and their roles in the dramatic presentation of sexuality. There are moments of discrimination, particularly in the candidate's treatment of Stanley's physicality and Blanche's vulnerability, where analysis moves beyond the obvious to consider implications and subtext. The argument is clearly structured and mainly fluent throughout, demonstrating a secure grasp of the central issues raised by the task, and as such is a solid Level 4 response.

However, while the essay shows a sound overall understanding, it lacks the sustained detail and textual exploration required to progress further.

Advice:

Maintaining fluency and precision across the whole essay is important. A well-structured argument that integrates technical and thematic analysis, supported by well-selected textual references, will help ensure a cohesive and compelling response. Planning responses to include a balance of character analysis and method-focused commentary can improve clarity and enable progression into the top band.

Question 14

This question asked candidates to consider the dramatic presentation of change. Many candidates responded by exploring how characters struggle to adapt to shifting social and personal circumstances, with less secure responses tending to present a narrative summary of Blanche's decline and her inability to cope with a changing world. These responses often focused on her displacement from the Old South and interpreted her resistance to change as a symbol of fragility. Better responses examined a broader range of characters, including Stanley's assertion of dominance as a force of change and Stella's efforts to reconcile past and present. Stronger answers also incorporated analysis of dramatic methods—such as staging, symbolism, and dialogue—to explore how Williams presents change as both inevitable and destabilising. More sophisticated responses considered how contemporary audiences might view the characters' responses to change, linking this to the play's social and historical context.

In Tennessee Williams' play "A Streetcar Named Desire"

Williams' dramatic presentation of change is represented by ^{significant} the ~~A Southern~~ change during the civil war - creating the ^{new} conflict ~~between~~ the Old South and new South*. Furthermore, Williams utilizes the ~~unhappy~~ character of Blanche to represent the loss of change and the desire for continuity. Williams presents this through the theme of Time, ~~most~~ and music.

In "A streetcar named desire" the audience can acknowledge the prejudices presented through the conflict between the new working class South and the old upper-class South. This directly links to ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~complex~~ ^{again} ~~between~~ Stanley and Blanche's dramatic representation of modern American / American ~~ideas~~ and ~~the~~ old aristocratic ideas.

Williams presents this through ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~complex~~ ^{distance} ~~between~~ ⁱⁿ Stanley ~~goes~~ ^{through} ~~Blanche~~ ⁱⁿ ~~her~~ ^{clothing} representing class divide. For Blanche ~~commonly~~ ^{is} ~~is~~ ^{is} "commonly" ~~dramatically~~ dressed" with "gloves" and "wore a hat" "looking as if she were arriving at a Summer tea or cocktail party", while ~~the~~ Stanley is typically in denim work clothes ~~and~~ or brightly

coloured shirts. This is significant because it is ~~an~~ a ~~sign~~ allows for the audience to see a clear class divide within the play. Furthermore it links to Blanches ^{significant and obvious} lack of change/adaption to the new South ideas of working middle class femininity in New Orleans. Furthermore, ~~to~~ Blanches lack of change links to Stanley's resentment towards her. For she represents a oppressive and arguably more powerful force in his household. This may be why the first audience that watched this play believed that Stanley was justified in raping Blanche - for she did not respect the new South social order.

~~In addition, the social aspect that Blanches desire to change the way she ^{aging} looks links to her lack of ^{biological} change.~~
In addition, Blanche and Mitch ^{need} ~~have~~ to change appearance and ideas to fit each others desires is significant in the play. For example when Mitch changes out of dress worn clothes ^{into a "deeper" coat} ~~to~~ to be perceived as more upper class than he actually is. Furthermore, Blanches constant fix about his age and sexual history to be more desirable for Mitch is significant towards the theme of deception for both characters believe that they are not valuable enough to feel comfort in each other so they alter their ~~personas~~ ^{personas} and appearance to fit each others needs. This could also link to Blanches ^{attempts} ~~lack of~~ ^{change} ~~wanting~~ to change the past leading to her ^{creating} ~~attempting to~~ ~~create~~ a altered present, for example Blanches addition of her relationship with Shep Huntleigh. Blanche chooses to try and create this

reality where she has a developed relationship with a extremely
wealthy man, allows to her unwilling to accept the past and
change and develop from there. Blanche needs to create this
beautiful dream reality and live it forever. Williams presents
Blanche attempts for change as unsuccessful ~~for~~ as proven by
her fate in the final scene. Furthermore, "Belle Reve" in
French means "Beautiful dream" which reflects that Blanche
did in fact once possess this idealised world however lost it
eventually. Directly linking to her trajectory within the
play / her unwilling to change her pre-determined ~~character~~ end.

In conclusion, Tennessee Williams presents ^{change} ~~as evident~~ through
the old South vs new South and the dramatic representation
of Blanche.

Commentary:

This is a solid Level 3 response that demonstrates a secure knowledge of the play and a clear understanding of its wider context. The candidate shows familiarity with the key events and characters and makes some relevant points about Blanche's decline and the tensions between the Old South and the emerging modern world. However, the response lacks a sustained and focused engagement with the question's central theme of change, which limits the overall effectiveness of the argument.

Advice:

Candidates often benefit from developing a clear line of argument in response to the question, and from selecting and analysing textual evidence with precision and purpose. Greater attention to Williams' craft and a tighter thematic focus on the focus of the task help elevate responses.

The presentation of change in 'A Streetcar Named Desire' is depicted through a conflict of clashing classes and an on going tension between Stanley and Blanche. Williams' elucidates throughout the play, that inevitably, every character's downfall is their inability to change. Blanche desperately attempts to maintain her crucial image of a pure southern belle, despite it being outdated. This directly clashes with Stanley who represents post-war, industrial and pragmatic America. This inability to change, or to accept or embrace change ultimately propels the plot to develop conflict as no character truly embraces change. Although, Stella represents change, she remains caught between two people she cares very much about, suggesting that until everyone accepts change, no one is free from it's inevitable controversies.

Change is a prevalent theme through Williams' play 'A Streetcar Named Desire' as it brings together all the various conflicts and tensions, linking the responsibility to be the characters' closed minded thinking and their inability to change. Williams' purposefully demonstrates Blanche to be an insecure and uncertain woman who conceals herself behind

her outdated aristocratic identity. Despite her best efforts to uphold her fading social class, Stanley is able to see right through her, unveiling her lies and her past. Blanche is immediately made to feel out of place when she arrives in 'Elysian Fields'.

The stage directions depict her appearance as 'Incongruous to this setting'. 'She is daintily dressed in a white sort [...] there is something uncertain about her manner, as well as her white clothes, that suggest a moth'. This initial introduction to Blanche already contrasts the genteel and lush city of New Orleans. Adjectives such as 'dainty' and 'white' elucidate that Blanche's intentions upon arriving in this New city were to shield her true identity and maintain the pretence and ~~demons~~ of an aristocratic, Southern Belle woman. Not only does this juxtapose the setting of the picturesque city she finds herself in, but this almost immediately contradicts the presentation of Stanley: a working-class, post-war American citizen who is heavily judged by the likes of Blanche. This contrast of the characters' nature foreshadow further conflicts that will mentally arise as a result of prejudice beliefs on Blanche's behalf and Stanley's close minded thoughts regarding women and their role in society. Throughout the play Blanche refers to Stanley using words such as 'ape-like', 'creaky', 'polack', outdated insults to reveal her strong dislike towards her sister's husband. Blanche believes that Stella is too good to be with a man like and she also believes her place in society is far above Stanley's. In scene 1 Blanche 'speaks fiercely' 'Give those back to me! The touch of your hands insults them!' This has a polysemic

most certainly does not want her things to be touched by Stanley. The exclamation 'your hands insult them' is a direct insult towards Stanley, suggesting that he of all people is least allowed to be touching Blanche's possessions. This correlates to the attitudes of aristocratic old South belles, as they were not accepting of post-war, diverse, industrial America. Blanche believes herself higher than Stanley as she was raised a higher class than he was. However, Stanley represents the working-class man, the provider, home owner, the man and owner of the family. Therefore he believes he is above Blanche due to her being a woman. This is evident in when Stanley says 'All men are kings!' he uses an exclamation to accentuate his passion and belief. This inability to change and be accepting of the progressing world inevitably leads to the exposure of Blanche's fragmented identity, but also reveals the insecurity of Stanley - which leads him to rape her. The Marxist critic Raymond Williams explains that the conflict in the play 'arises from the conflict of class between Stanley, Stanley and Blanche: Aristocratic South Bell, and pragmatic America. This supports that change is important for survival in 'A Streetcar named Desire' as without it, characters find themselves in distress.

Furthermore, the critic Oyler explains 'Blanche is a social outcast as she refuses to conform to contemporary social norms' Although, I believe Oyler is right in saying Blanche's actions result in her own social outcast, I think they underreach with the importance of Stanley in Blanche's downfall, as ultimately Stanley rapes Blanche, signifying the final destruction of her psychological, sexual, and cultural identity. Overall, Williams presents change as a fundamental

Commentary:

This response demonstrates many of the qualities associated with the top of Level 4 and shows clear potential to move into Level 5. The candidate adopts a detailed and exploratory approach to the task, engaging thoughtfully with the question of how Williams presents *change* in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. There is a clear conceptual understanding of the theme, and the response is underpinned by a confident awareness of how different characters respond to or resist change, particularly Blanche and Stanley.

Contextual knowledge is secure and relevant, and is integrated effectively into the analysis. The candidate makes pertinent connections between the play and its broader social and historical contexts without allowing context to dominate the discussion.

However, what prevents the response from reaching Level 5 is a slight lack of discrimination in places—while ideas are well-explored, there is occasional room for more incisive interpretation or more original insight into the play’s dramatic construction. With a greater sense of critical independence and slightly more nuanced analysis of Williams’ dramatic techniques, this response could easily achieve a top-level mark.

Advice:

To move from Level 4 to Level 5, candidates should aim to develop more discriminating and original interpretations. This means going beyond sound and well-explored ideas to offer insights that show a deeper, more critical engagement with the text. Demonstrating critical independence—such as offering a fresh perspective on a character or theme, or challenging a conventional reading—can help elevate an essay. In addition, more nuanced and precise analysis of dramatic methods, including how staging, structure, and language shape meaning, will strengthen responses and make them more sophisticated and convincing.

Question 15

This task asked students to explore Nottage’s dramatic presentation of race.

Question 16

This task asked students to explore Nottage’s dramatic presentation of Tracey.

Question 17**Question 18**

There were no responses to the questions set on *Waiting for Godot* this year.