

Summer 2018 ~~4ET0~~ 4ET1 03

Assignment B – Literary Heritage Text

Exemplar 2

Romeo and Juliet

placing text in
the context of the
writer's other works

How are different types of love presented in 'Romeo and Juliet'? you must consider language form and structure and refer to the context of the play.

Literary
Context

Romeo and Juliet is a romantic tragedy. As with other Shakespeare tragedies Romeo and Juliet ends with the death of the characters, but in their case 'the fault was in their stars'. The highly dramatic play – containing violence, love, marriage and suicide – covers a timespan of just three days. Moreover, the last two acts of the play move at a very fast pace. Events follow each other in an expeditious continuation and the action of the suicide is presented in an explicit and unequivocal way.

social/
historical
Context

In rich Elizabethan England society, it was rare to marry solely for love; instead you married for wealth, to legitimize your children and for social standing. Elizabethan women were raised to believe they were inferior to men. It was legal for boys to marry at the age of fourteen and for girls to marry at the age of twelve. If you happened to be the daughter in a noble family, like Juliet was, your future husband was not for you to choose. Your father would instead choose, and you were expected to accept whatever choice he had made, even if you disliked your future husband. As a case in point: Paris is seen as the perfect match for Juliet in the eyes of her father, but a terrible choice in the eyes of Juliet. Although Juliet is only 13, her mother tells her that by the age of 12 she was already married. Many young children would be already betrothed so that their families were already joined before they were of an age to marry. In this context, it makes Romeo's and Juliet's love seem much stronger, since Juliet does not obey the pairing and instead decides to follow her heart, which would have been very rebellious in this era.

Literary
Context

In the Prologue of the play, the Chorus announce that both protagonists will commit suicide: 'a pair of star-crossed lovers take their life'. This causes a sense of perplexity and sympathy from the audience, as the announcement of the death of two young people is not usually mentioned at the beginning of a piece and it shows that, despite true love, it will tragically result in death. The Prologue is written in the form of a Shakespearean sonnet, containing 14 lines written in iambic pentameter and has a specific rhyme scheme. It is composed of three quatrains and one rhyming couplet at the very end. It was a common form of 16th century love poem which usually involved love in conflict, such as Romeo and Juliet, so is an appropriate form to open the play. The closing soliloquy is written in the same way. It represents the symmetry in a story of dramatic love, where the main characters take their lives, yet, by taking their lives end the indefatigable fight between their parents.

The theme of love is presented in different way throughout the play, through describing courtly love, sexual love and true romantic love. Courtly love, representing kindness and sincerity, but usually superficial and secret is represented by the feeling Romeo has for Rosaline, before he witnesses Juliet for the first time. Romeo knows that Rosaline does not feel the same way for him and never will. 'Well, in that hit you miss (as) she'll not be hit with

Cupid's arrow' says Mercutio. This makes Romeo's hours seem like days, 'Ay me! Sad hours seem long' but he does not give up. Romeo believed himself to be in love as a glimpse of her beauty and figure is enough to make his day. Shakespeare makes sure we know nothing else about this woman; she is never even seen, which makes his relationship with Juliet much more real and dramatic. The amount of hyperbolic language used by Romeo makes Benvolio and Mercutio describe his love as a sickness.

A sexualised view of love is also present in the play, making bawdy talk and jokes about sex an important contrast to the romantic love Romeo feels for Juliet. This is first presented by Sampson and Gregory who make constant sexual witticisms about male erections and taking women's virginity: 'When I have fought with the men, I will be civil with the maids; and cut off their maidenheads.' This sentence refers to taking the virginity of these women, possibly by rape. It is clear that for these servants relationships between men and women are a matter of sex and women are seen as sexual objects. The Nurse also makes sexual innuendos and puns: 'I must another way, to fetch a ladder by the which your love must climb a bird's nest soon when it's dark.' Here, the Nurse is telling Romeo to climb up to Juliet's room and have sexual relationships with her.

Shakespeare depicts true love through Romeo and Juliet. Even though Juliet is only thirteen she falls in love on the night of the ball with Romeo, who is believed to be seventeen. From all the way across the room Romeo sees Juliet and asks who she is. Little does Romeo know that this girl he has suddenly fallen in love with belongs to the enemy's family; the Capulets. When Romeo sees her, he declares that he has never been in love before, and recognises that Rosaline didn't fill his heart like Juliet does: 'Did my heart love till now? Forswear it sight, for I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.' The imagery he uses to describe Juliet gives important ideas of what kind of relationship he is willing to have. Romeo initially describes her as a source of light like a star in the darkness: 'she doth teach the torches to burn bright! It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night.' The language Shakespeare uses in this scene makes a simple love scene into the perfect love we all want in our lives.

Their first conversation is an extended religious metaphor and also written as a shared sonnet, meaning that as Romeo speaks a line, Juliet speaks an echoing line. The vocabulary used in this first conversation is religious, showing that they have a pure, elevated relationship: 'If I profane my unworshièst hand this holy shrine, the gentle fine is this: my lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready to stand to smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.'

The very famous 'balcony scene' takes place the same night on the balcony of Juliet, where she is narrating what she feels for Romeo, completely unaware that he is standing in the shadows watching her. Juliet grumbles about the fight between the two families and the problems this feud will bring. Romeo, who is listening when Juliet calls upon him to 'doff' his name, steps from the darkness saying: 'call me but love and I'll be new baptised, henceforth I will never be Romeo' meaning that Love has given him a new identity. He has been baptised with a new name: love. Romeo his old self has desisted from existing. Shakespeare uses a lot of imagery around light and dark to describe the romance of Romeo and Juliet. When Romeo stands in the dark shadows, he looks at Juliet and compares her to the sun, who in turn is asked to kill the moon (which he used many times to compare Rosaline with).

Here is the balcony scene, Romeo and Juliet reveal their love to each other and they plan a secret marriage for the next day, not planning on losing any time. They marry quickly, in part because they are completely in love, or believe to be, and because once they are married they believed their families would have no choice but to accept it. Moreover, once Juliet had married Romeo, she could not marry Paris her intended husband.

The next day the wedding takes place, which is organised and blessed by Father Lawrence. This scene is most known for its brevity, as all of them want to do it quick so no one can discover them, and because Romeo and Juliet cannot wait any longer to be officially together for the rest of their lives. Shakespeare wrote every scene taking into account the length of each, as it represents whether the action was done in a rush, or if it took a long time to make it happen.

Finally they meet one last time, when Juliet is so desperately in love, that she prefers to make everyone think she is no longer alive, than marry Paris. Friar Lawrence sends a letter to Romeo, but it never arrives, instead the news of Juliet's death come to him, making him think that his wife, his love has taken her life. Romeo devastated buys the strongest poison he can get, giving all the money he had, with only Juliet in mind, but he cannot simply take his life, he has to see her one last time. Romeo lies next to his wife, kisses her and drinks the poison. The, Juliet wakes up from her temporary faint, and sees Romeo, she does not yet know he is dead, so she kisses him; but he does not respond. Juliet, thinking Romeo has taken his life for herself, she get Romeo's knife and stabs herself through the heart, which once belonged to Romeo. The scene happens fast, representing that they don't really think about their actions, since their hearts are much stronger than their minds.

In conclusion, love is the driving force of the play. Though the play contains three types of love, the most remarkable one is the love displayed by Romeo and Juliet, and it is the one that triumphs over all. The language used in the last scene makes you realise the power of this love: 'O my love! My wife, Death that hath sucked the honey of thy breath.' The other two types of love are needed to contrast with this real love.

Commentary

This response is strong on AO2. There is some comment on context at the start of the essay to introduce the main topic and the links with the text are clearly understood. There is sound personal engagement with comments being supported by relevant textual references. The candidate, however, slips into narrative towards the middle of the response, where more analysis and textual references would have been needed. There is a potentially interesting comment on the wedding scene, but it is neither developed nor supported making it appear a bit muddled. Slight loss of focus and a tendency to narrate, together with a lack of development have kept this response in level three. Level 3 mark 16

Assignment B – Literary Heritage Text

Exemplar 3

Macbeth

'The Macbeths' madness is a just consequence from their crimes'. How far do you agree?

historical
context

Macbeth is a play by William Shakespeare telling the story of a Scottish Lord called Macbeth and his infamous rise to fame and power and then his tragic demise. The play was written early in the seventeenth century and was shown just as a Scottish king claimed the throne of England this was probably a coincidence but could have been seen as a play claiming that the king was bad, but this is unlikely as King James I of England was Shakespeare's patron and his theatre company was called The King's Men. In this play Macbeths turn mad and I think this is due to their crimes of regicide and murder and also that this is influenced by the witches in all ways possible. However, they could have been already fated to turn mad even before their actions, in the witches plan.

Shakespeare originally shows a small indication of madness in Macbeth before he commits any of the grave crimes. Before Duncan's murder, Macbeth sees a vision of a dagger in front of him and it starts an internal conflict causing what appears to be madness: "toward my hand?...feeling as to sight?...proceeding from this heat oppressed brain?" This vision of a dagger shows that some of Macbeth's madness is evident even before he commits the murder. As he hallucinates Shakespeare uses these questions from Macbeth to himself to show a serious internal conflict about good and evil which is causing madness inside the character of Macbeth, This shows the audience the extent of what these ideas of greed and regicide have done to Macbeth's mind. Also the seeds of darkness that Lady Macbeth has planted in his mind make the audience think that Lady Macbeth, who may be associated with the supernatural, is playing with Macbeth's sanity and causing his madness even before Macbeth commits any of his crimes. Evidence for this plantation of madness into Macbeth is after Lady Macbeth receives his letter explaining the prophecies and she then says "That I may pour my spirits in thine ear." This shows that Lady Macbeth is intent on corrupting the mind of Macbeth. This could be viewed by the audience as Lady Macbeth being a witch and using the supernatural. In those times witches were viewed badly; King James even wrote a book on the subject 'Demonologie' in which he called witches 'detestable slaves of the Devil' and also stated that 'such assaults of Satan are most certainly practised'. With such remarks made by the King, of course there was going to be a common hatred and fear among people towards witches and therefore this would create a sense of hatred towards Lady Macbeth as it is inferred that she is a witch as she is acting in a supernatural way.

historical
context

The madness is solidified with a guilty conscience after the murder of Duncan as with guilt Macbeth comes to Lady Macbeth saying "As they had seen me with these hangmen's hands" and "I could not say 'Amen' when they did say..." In these statements, Macbeth is sowing pure guilt and grief as he is saying he is no longer worthy to talk or even pray to God after this sacrilegious offence, A Jacobean audience would have seen this as a very serious thing as at that time religion played an important part in communities and the way of life. Macbeth stating that he is no longer worthy to talk to God shows not only the gravity of his

social/
historical
context

crime but also shows the self-hatred he has towards himself to exile himself from God and all religion. Conflict is shown as grief turns to madness which is seen in both Lady Macbeth and Macbeth throughout the play, eventually causing the death of Lady Macbeth.

Another point in the play where it is evident that Macbeth's madness is a consequence of his actions is when he sees the ghost of Banquo after ordering to kill him and his son Fleance. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, now king and queen are hosting a banquet when two murderers enter and tell Macbeth how they killed Banquo but not Fleance. When returning to his seat Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo sitting in his place and shouts "never shake they gory locks at me!" These remarks show his shock and interactions with the vision of Banquo's ghost. When shouting at Banquo's "gory" locks it is clear he sees Banquo not in his normal state, but in his brutally murdered state. Macbeth is haunted by his prior decision to kill Banquo and this causes his madness of hysteria of visions. His shouting at the vision weakens his relationship with everyone present as they all see his true side and result of his madness.

There is another point towards the fact that shows that the Macbeths suffer madness for their actions. At the start of Act 5 Lady Macbeth is seen to be in complete and utter madness as she walks about in her sleep shouting remarks "Out damned spot! Out, I say!" These refer back to the point in the play when Lady Macbeth had to go and frame the guards for Duncan's death and in doing so got blood on her hands. This repeated line shows her inner turmoil for her previous actions as they are coming back to haunt her. The blood on her hands was that of King Duncan and this quote can be seen as a metaphor showing she cannot forget the cruel deed that she had planned and committed, no matter what she does. Another quote to support this is when she says "The Thane of Fife had a wife." In this statement she not only admits to the cruel deeds that she has committed, but also she referring to the killing of Lady Macduff and her children, and by using the word "had" she shows her regret for the killing and she is saying this almost as a confession of guilt, because if she hadn't planted the seeds of cruelty and madness in Macbeth's mind, then this would never have happened. This final madness leads Lady Macbeth to her death showing that all her past has come back to haunt her and then drove her to her own self-inflicted death.

In conclusion the Macbeths are seen to resort to madness after their actions have been committed. The seeds of madness were planted straight after the murder of the King and that incident haunts the Macbeths throughout the whole play ending in the misery and death. These events changed their lives and personalities and the whole thing was their own doing.

Commentary

The candidate has displayed a thorough knowledge of the play and there is an awareness of the relationship between text and context. However, some of the arguments presented are not always clear. There is a tendency towards narrative and language form and structure are not fully analysed. It is possible that the question itself has something to do with this as the concept of madness appears to be a bit problematic at times. The candidate works their

way through various incidents in the play that depict madness. On the whole the response is thorough but at times lacks coherence and focus. Level 4 mark 21