

## **Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Literature Paper 1**

### **Lesson Plan – Comparative Essay**

**Alignment with Pearson Edexcel Anthology:** ‘My Last Duchess, Robert Browning p69; ‘Sonnet 116’, William Shakespeare p63

**Resources:** Anthology, MOPLIST table (comparative), Exemplar essay, Topic sentence prompts, Modelled introduction; flipchart/ large scale paper

**Learning Objective:** to compare and contrast texts using well-developed critical and analytical skills

**Success Criteria: We can –**

Identify similarities and differences between texts

Analyse language and evaluate the ways in writers achieve their purposes

Explore the structure of an essay and employ these features in our analytical responses

Co-construct elements of an essay to support our independent essay-writing

Plan and write a comparative essay

**Assessment Objectives:**

AO1 – Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement.

AO2 - Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects.

AO3 - Explore links and connections between texts.

**Framework/ Transferable skills:** You may wish to talk your students through the skills that they will acquire in this lesson, to enable them to draw on and demonstrate these skills in the future.

- Decision Making
- Productivity
- Executive Function
- Critical Thinking
- Analysis

**Possible Misconceptions and Barriers:**

Since this lesson requires students to cross-reference between texts and move between them making comparisons for an eventual essay, it will be challenging for some. The use of two poems with a very clear connection and point of comparison should help students start to evaluate two texts. The synthesis, comparison and evaluation in this lesson moves this on from simply being a poetry analysis, which can seem daunting; in addition some misconceptions about exam essays, such as mistakenly needing to write lengthy introductions can hamper students’ ability to develop their answers.

**Starter activities:**

Provide large-scale flipchart paper and board pens to students in groups. Get students to draw a Venn Diagram with each of the two poems on either side (My Last Duchess/ Sonnet 116). They need to note down everything they can recall about the poems in terms of character/ persona/ speaker/ meaning or purpose/ language/ imagery/ structure or form/ tone or diction (give these prompts). Ask them to consider points of contrast or similarity in the middle of the diagram. Ask each group to put up their finished document on the whiteboard and discuss feedback. Decision Making

### Main teaching:

Introduce the comparative exam question to students and explain that they will be working towards a practice task on both of these poems. The question is: 'How do the writers of 'Sonnet 116' and 'My Last Duchess' present Love and Relationships in these poems?' In their groups ask students to come up with as many comparative connectives as possible (e.g. similarly, likewise, in contrast, however, yet). Map these out on the whiteboard leaving them visible for later in the lesson.

From the starter task, ask students to move on to work individually on the joint MOPLIST task, which will give them the basis for their essay. This requires a detailed analysis of each poem (Critical Thinking; Analysis):

- Both poems do focus on love and relationships but diverge hugely in their treatment of the subject; Browning appears more interested in the instability of his persona, a kind of Bluebeard who seeks to control and dominate; the first person in the sonnet explores/ defines love.
- Sonnet 116 is a meditation on love and its defining qualities; My Last Duchess is a narrative in the form of a dramatic monologue in which a highly subject, unstable speaker recounts his experience of 'love'. It is, despite its complex syntax, a narrative.
- In terms of language comparisons could be remarked upon as follows: In 116 the central line "love is not love/ Which alters when it alteration finds" whereas in 'My Last Duchess' it is such an 'alteration', largely in the mind and expectations of the Duke which impact the relationship so disastrously.
- Various allusions and images are used in 116 to establish the durability of love ("ever-fixed mark", the star to every wandering bark"). There is also the reference to time, itself personified to heighten the sense that love is constant. In contrast the Duke had one love, now desires another "my last Duchess", "his fair daughter's self...is my object".
- Contrast in the images/ motifs employed: in 116 there are frequent references to the natural world, time etc whereas in MLD the objects that the Duke enjoys are emblems of control. He owns the painting and controls who looks on his late wife – "the curtain I have drawn for you";
- Thematically, 116 elevates marriage to the metaphysical (it is more than a union of two physical bodies but of 'minds'). In MLD marriage is evidently a social structure, a contract and business affair arranged between men to their mutual satisfaction.
- Comment could extend to the familiarity of the language in 116 – despite its age this sonnet is easy to comprehend in our context – the message or meaning is universal; contrastingly MLD is rather harder to read and understand; it is syntactically complex, perhaps it is mimetic of an unbalanced mind depicting an equally unbalanced relationship.
- Diction of both poems is contrasting, for example there is anger and incredulity in MLD "Somehow – I know not how...My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name" whereas the sonnet form with its regular metre, rhythm, quatrains and couplets contains a balanced logic about love which elevates it.

**Further development:** Provide students with an exemplar essay from a previous year (if one is not available see exemplar materials or source an essay online; it should have clear topic sentences, an opening and conclusion with development within the paragraphs. Cut up the essay and in groups ask students to organise the essay in the correct order, justifying their response/ arrangement. Show the original and discuss the structure of the essay focussing on: the clarity of the opening, the development through topic sentences and use of quotation (or PEEL/ SEED – analysis of the texts). Identify how at the end of each paragraph the focus is linked to the question. Consider how comparison is made clear through the use of connectives and finally examine the conclusion of the essay. Decision Making; Executive Function

NB specify for an examination response a long introduction is not necessary; time does not permit it and the marks come from the exploration of the texts and cross references between them as well as the focus on the question.

Topic sentences (build out activity)

Provide students with topic sentences in pairs and ask them to write a paragraph which contains the above elements (the given topic sentence, explanation/ development, a reference/ quotation, analysis and evaluation, perhaps some cross reference if relevant and a link to or focus on the question). Students can do this on A3 paper and then put their paragraphs on the board to present. The combined work should resemble a full essay! **Analysis**

**Topic sentences** could include:

- Browning's poem 'My Last Duchess' introduces a speaker with a very demanding, controlling view of love.
- In Sonnet 116 the speaker meditates on what love means.
- The language choices in Sonnet 116 show love to be a physical and emotional union.
- Meanwhile in My Last Duchess the speaker reveals his own psychological state.
- The form of Sonnet 116 allows the writer to examine love and loving relationships in a clear way.
- In contrast the syntax of My Last Duchess is uneven and disordered.
- The tone of Sonnet 116 is thoughtful and reverent.
- However, the diction of the persona (the Duke) shows bitterness and anger.
- In conclusion/ Ultimately....

**Differentiation:**

Group work and the Venn diagram activity help capture past learning and allow students to visualise the poems in a comparative light. The MOPLIST task (or any other strategy/ grid/ process for exploring the poem) provides a structure to students for comparing the texts and developing a piece of writing. Use of a model essay and the structuring activity again provides support in how to form and compose a comparative response. The topic sentence and paragraphing activity provides a scaffold for students to craft analytical paragraphs in pairs and combined with other tasks and the use of key words and/ or a suggested opening guides students in attempting their comparative essay. **Executive Function**

**Plenary: Leads into homework/ independent writing**

Students have co-constructed an essay through their paired work and examined a well-crafted essay by another candidate. Provide some key words for them to write a first paragraph to the essay question on lined paper or in books.

Question: 'How do the writers of 'Sonnet 116' and 'My Last Duchess' present Love and Relationships in these poems?'

Key words/ phrases for introduction or first paragraph: love; relationships; enduring nature of love; inequality in a relationship; harmonious; violent; jealous; sonnet; dramatic monologue

*e.g. Both poems are concerned with love and relationships however the focus and representation of love differs hugely in each context. Shakespeare's sonnet takes full advantage of the romantic form to explore and define ideal love meditating on its enduring nature, while Robert Browning's dramatic monologue is narrative poem which examines the murderous consequences of inequality in a relationship soured by jealousy and the need to control.*

**Homework/ Development:**

Write the essay in full using some time constraints depending on how 'exam-ready' students are; if this is a first attempt allow longer for the task. **Decision Making; Productivity**

**Self-audit**

Which of the framework skills did students use in these lessons?  
Ask them to plot out on the chart which skills they used and when.