

Pearson Edexcel

International GCSE English Literature (4ET0)

Paper 3 coursework

The purpose of this pack is to provide centres with an example of a high achieving coursework response. The student achieved 30 out of a total of 30 marks for this response.

Exemplar response

Love is "an ever-fixed mark that looks on tempests and is never shaken". How far is this idea presented in the following poems: "Sonnet 116" (Shakespeare); "A Mother in a Refugee Camp" (Chinua Achebe); "Remember" (Christina Rossetti); "Valentine" (Carol Ann Duffy); "Havisham" (Carol Ann Duffy) and "Flowers" (Wendy Cope).

Shakespeare is perhaps one of the most eloquent people the world has ever known, and there will always be a distinct correlation between how well a point is expressed and how willingly it is accepted; subsequently many ideas that Shakespeare put to paper are still accepted today, especially those concerning human emotions. Yet, love is a subject which poets often endeavour to explain, so it is easy to find poets whose ideas differ from Shakespeare's, either partially or entirely.

Interesting + well put.

The various poets who are listed above show differing opinions on the eternity of love to that of Shakespeare. In "Sonnet 116" love is shown to be eternal as it is stated that "Love's not Time's fool". The personification of love and time allows the reader to visualise two concepts, so vast that it would usually be impossible for a reader to compare the strength of the two in order to determine which out-lives the other. This allows Shakespeare to state the seemingly absurd: love is able to last longer than time itself. Personification is also used to represent death as the Grim Reaper, thus creating a frightening image of death which takes away "rosy lips and cheeks", yet is unable to extinguish love. The juxtaposition of death and love shows love's strength, and subsequent durability, because death is the end of our conscious selves so if our love is able to survive independently of our consciousness and conquer death it must be omnipotent and therefore eternal.

good

"A Mother in a Refugee Camp" also presents love as eternal through Achebe's use of morbid imagery. The mother is described to wear a "ghost smile" as she brushes the hair left on her son's "skull". By calling the Mother's smile a "ghost smile" it could be argued that Achebe is saying that the smile is merely a shadow of what it used to be; the mother's happiness so utterly destroyed that her smile has been replaced with an imitation. Yet, I think that the "ghost smile" is a reference to the grief soon to strike the mother, when she loses child. The use of this death-related imagery interwoven with references to the "mother's pride" and the loving actions through which the mother demonstrates her affections, such as bathing him and rubbing "him down with bare palms", show the reader that the Mother's love is so strong that it is unaltered in the face of impending tragedy.

"Remember" offers an alternate view on the length of time love can last. It could be said that Rossetti presents love as eternal through mentioning the remainder of the subject of the poem's thoughts that would stay with her loved one after she had "gone away" to the "silent land". This could show that through his memory, a small part of her is sustained: the part of her he loved, and therefore their love has surpassed her death. You could also argue that Rossetti presents love as limited within life due to the sense of loss felt by the subject of the poem as she contemplates a time when he can no longer tell her of the "future that [he] plann'd". The mournful tone of this line could be seen to demonstrate what is felt by her at the notion of her death and the subsequent ending of their love. Yet, I think that "Remember" presents love to be present after death but not unaltered by it. Rossetti states

that after the subject of the poem's love has grieved and all the "darkness and corruption" has left his mind, he will be left with a "vestige of the thoughts" she once had. The use of the word "vestige" suggests that all that will be left on earth, of her, is his memory of her - an ever-fading imprint of who she was and the memory of how she made him feel that she suspects he will remember with sadness because she is gone, but remember nonetheless because of how he loved her in her life. Their love would outlast her death, but it would not be the same love that existed when she was alive. *Independent thought*

Carol Ann Duffy, in the poem "Valentine", shows she believes love to be something finite. Unlike "Sonnet 116", "A Mother in a Refugee Camp" and "Remember", "Valentine" suggests that the length of time love lasts is not dictated by death, whether love can outlive death or not, it is dictated by human emotions. This can be seen in the disjointed nature of the poem: there is no real pattern to link the four, five, six and single line stanzas, that alludes to the passionate and sometimes violent nature of love. This idea is made explicit in the final stanza where Duffy describes the trappings of love as "lethal" and like a "knife"; love is dangerous and volatile and therefore the "we" of the poem only are "for as long as we are", because love is sometimes too overwhelming for us to live with, and therefore it ends. *Correct*

The extent of the various poets' understanding of love also varies to that of Shakespeare's in "Sonnet 116". Shakespeare's confidence in his own understanding of love in "Sonnet 116" is so great that it could be seen as arrogance. The sonnet comprises three quatrains and a concluding couplet. In the first quatrain Shakespeare relates what love is not; love is not that which changes. There is then an obvious volta, in the form of "O no", before, in the second and third quatrains, Shakespeare goes on to say what love is and how long it lasts for. The volta gives the reader the sense that the poem is meant to convince them of Shakespeare's ideas because it clearly divides the two arguments within the poem that both contribute to Shakespeare's interpretation of love: the comprehensive structure indicates the poet's intent to persuade. Also the concluding couplet serves little purpose other than for Shakespeare to vehemently declare his confidence in his own convictions. He does this by stating that if his perception of love is ever proved false, then he "never writ, nor no man ever loved". The use of emphatic language in that line reassures the reader that his understanding of love is correct, because if it is not then "no man ever loved", and having read of the wonders of love in the poem any reader would be horrified by the notion that this eternal state of devotion is both unachievable and inconceivable, and therefore they would agree with Shakespeare's ideas. The half rhyme of "proved" and "loved" also reinforces his confidence in his view of love because it emphasises the two words. This leaves the reader with the lasting impression that, through his sonnet, Shakespeare has "proved" what it means to be "loved".

The reasoning behind Shakespeare's confidence could be traced back to the poets whose sonnets preceded his own. The three centuries of Petrarchan poets that came before Shakespeare's time spoke with same passion and assurance as Francesco Petrarch, who wrote over 350 love sonnets for the object of his affections, so they wrote with in the same style as a man who was desperately in love. This means that Shakespeare may be writing with this level of conviction because at the time it was the known style. Yet, Shakespeare's sonnets

violated many of the sonnet rules that had structured those three centuries of poems therefore I think that Shakespeare's confidence is entirely his own. ✓ *Good use of research*

Unlike Shakespeare, through "A Mother in a Refugee Camp", the reader can sense that although Achebe has observed the mother's love and studied it intensely he does not fully comprehend it. This can be seen through the religious imagery used to describe the mother and her son. Achebe says that "no Madonna and Child could touch her tenderness" for her son. Jesus's mother is often referred to as Madonna in reference to art work. This creates an image for the reader of one of many sacred images of the Madonna and child which they then hold in their mind as they read the rest of the poem. The great contrast between the sacred imagery of baby Jesus and his mother and the horrendous imagery of the starving children with "blown-empty bellies" and "dried up bottoms" causes the image of Madonna and her child to become even more beautiful and in turn the image of the children is made more horrifying, and yet that Madonna's tenderness could not "touch her tenderness for her son". This baffling idea, that the mother's love for her son was elevated even above Christ's Mother when their situation was so doomed, and the lack of explanation for how this was possible for this one mother throughout the poem, suggests that Achebe doesn't really understand the Mother's love for her son, but he can recognise how special it is. ✓

Achebe's inability to understand the mother's love can also be seen through Achebe's use of an ellipsis. After he talks of the "memory of a mother's pride" Achebe places an ellipsis in the middle of a line. Yet, this interruption of the rhythm forces the reader to think, not only over what it means for this mother to have lost her mother's pride, because she can only remember it and not feel it, but also to contemplate what really is meant by a "mother's pride". And given that the poem is written from Achebe's own recollection of this woman and her child, it appears to the reader that Achebe also stopped halfway through the line to ponder this himself. This suggests, again, that the maternal love displayed by this woman was not something that Achebe could understand. ✓

In "Remember" it appears that Rossetti is unsure what the definition of love is. Through the line "nor I half turn to go yet turning stay" the reader can feel Rossetti's sense of entrapment and feelings of indecision. After the word "turn" the line turns, contradicting itself through the use of the antithetical words "go" and "stay". The way in which the line mirrors itself shows that Rossetti feels trapped in the middle between two places, which reflects the way in which she seems to be caught between two ideas. On one hand she explicitly tells her love that it is "better by far" that he should "forget and smile" than that he should "remember and be sad". Yet, saying that it would be better "by far" is not necessary to express what she wanted to say, so the "by far" gives the reader the sense that Rossetti is saying this because she thinks it is the correct thing to do, as opposed to what she actually feels. The use of iambic pentameter, consistent rhyme and the Petrarchan structure to the poem, which gives the poem a flowing and at points melodic tone, also convey the same thing because they conform so perfectly to the convention for a love poem that at points it feels almost forced. This opposition of what is written and the underlying emotion shows that Rossetti is unsure as to what the definition of love is; is love him remembering her, or her willingness for him to forget? ✓ *Excellent*

Through the poem "Havisham" the reader can perceive that Carol Anne Duffy understands love to be something that is closely linked with hate. The first line of the poem is a vicious eruption in which Havisham calls her love, in a dramatic monologue, "sweetheart bastard"; the oxymoron reveals to the reader that Havisham both adores and detests the object of her heart. Given the way in which Duffy links love and hate it is unsurprising that the poem also presents love in a very destructive light. The last word of the poem, "Don't think it's only the heart that b-b-b-breaks" shows that Duffy understands something that can break, not only the heart, but also the body. The use of hyphens in "b-b-b-breaks" draws out the word, and the onomatopoeic effect gives the impression that these detrimental effects of love last for eternity. This is an interesting idea when contrasted to Shakespeare's ideas on the durability of love in "Sonnet 116" because both poems show love to be something infinite, but unlike Shakespeare, Duffy suggest that this is possibly one of the worst things about love: just how long it lasts. *Good contrast.*

In "Sonnet 116" Shakespeare states that love is something that cannot be measured; it is a "star" whose "worth's unknown" although its "height be taken". By comparing love to a star Shakespeare tells the reader that love is not something that can be measured in any physical sense because it is so elevated from anything else we experience that it cannot be compared. Comparing love to a "star" also tells the reader that love is not a tangible thing, like the stars in the sky are to us on earth; so far removed from us that they more conceptual than they are physical. Stars were also a very important navigational tool on voyages in Elizabethan times - voyages that were extremely dangerous. Yet, the stars are always a point of reference because however far you travel the stars will always be there in the same way that love is unfaltering in the face of anything. This imagery would suggest to an Elizabethan reader that even though there is no possible way for love to be measured it is still a reliable constant in our lives. The word "worth" also tells the reader that love has no monetary value which in turn suggests that love is not a tangible thing.

"A Mother in a Refugee Camp" suggests that Achebe's measure of love is in the actions it inspires. Despite the sense of foreboding that underlies the poem the mother "combed/ The rust-coloured hair" left on her son's head. The Mother may have done this to provide what sense of normalcy she could for her son in the Refugee Camp, or she may have been trying to dignify her son's death in any way she could. I think she did so for both reasons because Achebe describes the act as something they may have done in a "former life" that was now reminiscent of "putting flowers on a tiny grave". The "former life" refers to the time before the mother and her child were in the refugee camps, but it also reinforces the imminency of the son's death, and comparing the act to "putting flowers" on a grave reminds the reader that when this child dies there will be no grave for him, no rituals will surround his death, so his mother tries to dress him for death in the only way she is able to. "Other mothers there/ Had long ceased to care" but this mother's love for her son lead her to care for him even when she knew she could not save his life; her love was measured by her acts of tenderness.

Rossetti in "Remember" measures love through selflessness. Rossetti was writing during the 19th century when the ideal for a wife was to be selfless towards her husband, so in the face of death Rossetti claims that her husband should "forget" her and "smile". Yet, the title of the

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