Mark scheme
January 2004

GCE

English Literature B

Unit LTB6

Question 1

Compare and contrast the ways in which Mervyn Peake, in the extract from *Titus Groan*, and Edgar Allan Poe, in *The Masque of the Red Death*, present their imagined worlds.

(40 marks)

Objectives tested: AO2ii, AO3

Marks		Skills descriptors
0 – 5 Band 1	AO2ii	Often irrelevant, frequent inaccuracies/misreadings
	AO2ii	Little comparison or contrast
	AO3	Few (if any) formal/structural/language features identified
	AO3	Very limited (if any) discussion of how language shapes meaning
6 – 12 Band 2	AO2ii	Some focus on the task with general support
	AO2ii	Some attempt to compare and contrast
	AO3	Recognition of some features of form/structure/language
	AO3	Some awareness of how form/structure/language shape meaning
13 – 19 Band 3	AO2ii	Awareness of task with some knowledge and understanding of text/task in most of the response
	AO2ii	Some useful comparison and contrast
	AO3	Consideration of some features of form/structure/language
	AO3	Awareness of writers' choices of form, structure and language and their effect on meaning
20 – 26 Band 4	AO2ii	Evidence of knowledge and clear understanding of texts/task
	AO2ii	Clear comparisons and contrasts
	AO3	Clear consideration of features of form/structure/language
	AO3	Considers links between purposes and choices of form, structure,language
27 – 33 Band 5	AO2ii	Detailed knowledge and understanding in response to both texts and task
	AO2ii	Thorough and detailed comparison and contrast
	AO3	Exploration of range of aspects of form/structure/language
	AO3	Detailed understanding of how choices of form/structure/language shape meanings
34 – 40 Band 6	AO2ii	Clear conceptual grasp of texts and task
	AO2ii	Perceptive comparison and contrast
	AO3	Sophisticated analysis of how form/structure/language shape meanings
	AO3	Conceptually and analytically links meanings/purposes

Possible content:

Key differences resulting from genre: expect students to be aware of differences in language use, register, tone, character revelation and representation, point of view, relationship between reader and subject matter, importance and development of story, setting, structure. Importance of remembering that one text is complete, the other an extract. However, since the genres of short story and novel have a lot in common candidates may well comment on a number of similarities resulting from this.

Similarities and differences in the subject matter and viewpoint:
Third person omniscient narrator in both. However, Peake is more detached, while Poe uses first person from time to time as though narrating the story to someone in the room. Also moves in paragraph beginning 'He had directed…' into the present tense for immediacy. Use of dialogue in *Masque* and sense of narrator speaking to us makes the story more credible. Narrator suggests that he knew these people and describes the scene from memory. Peake, however, describes a world that he doesn't seem to be a part of except via the imagination. Poe is writing in detached way but establishes a tone of irony through a number of glancing suggestions of the revellers' thoughts: 'The external world could take care of itself'. Both writers are more concerned with place than people. We get very little impression of Steerpike as a character from this extract (candidates should remember that he may be much more fully characterised elsewhere) and Poe only gives enough detail of the Prince's character to illustrate some of the points he is making: the folly of pride; death as the great leveller etc. Both writers present a person or persons in their setting. Hard to imagine them existing outside that setting. Both settings used to present extreme situations. Peake stresses the darkness and Steerpike's sense of being under extreme pressure. The masquers are also in an extreme situation but are denying it, unlike Steerpike who attempts systematically to deal with it. Both texts give context. *Masque*, because a complete text, gives all the information we need to know about what has led to this. Peake gives some contextual reference to the events which have led to Steerpike finding himself isolated on the roof in a way that clearly marks a moment of temporary closure. Both Steerpike and the revellers are in situations that isolate them; the revellers are isolated from the rest of the population and Steerpike is isolated from the world as we know it, because the world of Gormenghast is an enclosed one.

Language use:
Titus Groan: the language is chosen for the main purpose of describing a physical setting. The lexis is that associated with generations of story tellers, not that of the time when Peake was writing. The cadences are those we associate with folklore, 'The darkness came down over the castle and the Twisted woods and over Gormenghast Mountain'. Much use of the list of three in the extract, which gives a measured pace and (in conjunction with the archetypal natural references) a universality. However, by occasional use of a word we don't expect, e.g. 'twisted' here, a sense is evoked of a world beyond the one we know. The syntax is often archaic and the scene described could belong to almost any era. It contains no references to anything that would place it in the 20th century. Peake establishes a strong sense of contrast between natural features and man-made castle, although even that may seem part of the natural setting through its natural material. However, the setting seems hostile: the darkness is 'stifling' and presses its 'impalpable body' as though a ghostly presence. The contrast emerges as not so much between building and natural surroundings as between environment and human being. The small human comfort of tobacco and the little warmth of a cap help Steerpike to keep despair at bay. The ghostly effect reinforced by Steerpike's feeling that 'he felt his hand stopped': the passive construction takes away any feeling of volition or control, 'there were forces that travelled across the darkness'. Activity of these 'forces' again reinforced by passive verbs and effective metaphor: 'as though his eyes had been partially relieved of a bandage'; 'as though another layer of stifling cloth had been dragged from before his eyes'. Overwhelming sense of claustrophobia. Sense of time well established in the passage and contributes to sense of frustration. The exactness of time is set against the unknowable forces which create a kind of day by the removal of the bandages and substitution of 'the beauty of the floating suns' (they create an alien feel).

Masque: will seem to candidates much more of its time than the Peake. Plunges us straight into the story. Emphatic through short sentences, placing of 'No pestilence' and emotive adjectives – 'fatal', 'hideous'. Third sentence structured to emphasise 'blood' at beginning and end. Like Peake establishes a strong sense of time and uses list of three effectively. In this case the importance of time is to create tension and sense of inevitability: the reader must be aware from the first of the outcome. The suspense is in the unfolding of its exact nature. The lexis is chosen to create a contrast between the fatal disease and the light-hearted crowd. Voluptuous description of the suite of rooms. They are described in such a way as to suggest the limitations of knowledge and understanding of their inmates: Unlike other palaces where a suite would 'form a long and straight vista', here 'the vision embraced but little more than one at a time'.

A sense of order established by the seven suites with their respective colours, leading to the climatic 'a deep blood colour', picking up on the lexis of the opening. The absence of light in the chambers not only gives a claustrophobic feel as in *Titus Groan*: it also suggests the lack of mental illumination within. Description of clock strikes ominous note. Personification. Significance of the sound and contrast with 'whispering' and 'light laughter'. The clock's sound is 'deep', 'dull', 'heavy'. The imminence of the coming of the Red Death signalled by the words 'in them beat feverishly the heart of life'. Much reference to 'whirling' and 'evolutions', as of the symptom of 'dizziness' that comes with the onset of the disease. Lexis evokes insubstantiality of the world within the castle; 'glare and glitter and piquancy and phantasm'. Contrast between laughter and silence; oppressive nature of the draperies. The Prince's reaction to the masked figure prefigures the symptoms that will lead to his own death: convulsion, red brow. Preponderance of Latinate lexis throughout. Use of capitals. Effective contrast between 'his dominions' (Prince's) at the beginning and use of 'dominion' in final sentence.

Structure: Poe effectively uses sentence structure and length to highlight his meaning at the end of the second paragraph. Long list in sentence 'There were buffoons…' followed by the antithetical sentences 'All these and security were within. Without was the 'Red Death'. This achieves its effect fully only when the end of the story sees the comforts flee outside and the 'Red Death' enter within. Effective contrast between short opening sentences and long, measured sentences in final paragraph, particularly 'But from a certain nameless awe…' Opening of paragraphs interesting. Five begin with 'It was' and three with 'But', the one establishing a situation and the other suggesting its imminent unsettling change. Details re such things as the suite of rooms, the clock, the dancers are taken up and reiterated throughout the story with new nuances. Many contrasts established. Structure of story brilliantly contrived to build from lightheartedness of the opening to the heavy, emphatic, alliterative rhythm of the final sentence.

Titus Groan: Extract so different sense of structure from short story. However, it has its own structure established through the movement of time from dark to dawn. Highlighted by Speerpike's attempt to walk round the parapet in the darkness: The slowness of this process drawn out by the diction and sentence structure and helps to create the sense of claustrophobia already mentioned. Wording of opening 'The darkness came down' a deliberate antithesis to concluding sentence 'the sun shining strongly in the morning sky'. Paragraph structure: many paragraphs open with a reference to Steerpike's actions: 'He seemed to have been walking'; 'As he neared'; 'Then he felt' etc. The whole episode structured by the chronological actions of Steerpike. In parallel there is the description of the gradual change from darkness, through the unveiling of layers of clouds to the sun rising.

Setting: largely covered by comments in the above sections. Two enclosed, claustrophobic worlds. Difference is that Poe's world is set in a wider world which enters and destroys the artificial world of the revellers. Steerpike's world remains intact but of course only an extract. Steerpike's world is suggested to be a different world from our own, a fantasy world, whereas Poe's, although also a fantasy world, illustrates the actions of people who are in fact of our world, but trying to pretend that they are not heir to human frailties. Although Steerpike's world is claustrophobic, he is seen to be on the edges of it rather than at the heart of it in that he is on rather than in the castle. However, nature itself is seen to press chokingly down on this world. In contrast the revellers are shut into the castle yet are unable to shut themselves off from the realities of the outside world.

Question 2

Items Two, Three and Four are concerned with aspects of The Gothic. In the light of your reading of this material, write about:

- the critical viewpoints on Edgar Allan Poe (Item Two) and how far you find them applicable to *The Masque of the Red Death*;
- the characteristics of The Gothic described in Item Three and how far they can be usefully applied to the extract from *Titus Groan* and to *The Masque of the Red Death*;
- any connections you can find between the way of life described in 'Look black in anger' (Item Four) and the worlds depicted in the extract from *Titus Groan* and in *The Masque of the Red Death*.

(40 marks)

Objectives tested: AO1, AO4, AO5ii

Marks		Skills descriptors
0 – 5 Band 1	AO1	Technical weakness which impedes the communication of meaning
	AO4	Often irrelevant; little understanding of critical views
	AO4	Limited personal response based upon slender evidence/ misreading
	AO5ii	Very limited (if any) grasp of what constitutes context
6 – 12 Band 2	AO1	Some use of a limited critical vocabulary despite technical weakness
	AO4	Reference to critical views
	AO4	Some evidence of individual response with some support
	AO5ii	Some consideration of relevant contextual factors
13 – 19 Band 3	AO1	Accurate use of a limited critical vocabulary
	AO4	Some consideration of critical views with evidence
	AO4	Evidence of an individual response with support
	AO5ii	Consideration of some relevant contextual factors
20 – 26 Band 4	AO1	Appropriate critical vocabulary used
	AO4	Consideration of critical views with evidence
	AO4	Developing individual response
	AO5ii	Examines relevant contexts
27 – 33 Band 5	AO1	Critical terminology used accurately in detailed commentary
	AO4	Clear evidence of critical views
	AO4	Detailed and well evidenced personal response
	AO5ii	Analysis of a range of contextual factors
34 – 40 Band 6	AO1	Accurate use of appropriate critical vocabulary/concepts
	AO4	Conceptual grasp of critical views
	AO4	Perceptive and well evidenced personal response
	AO5ii	Detailed exploration of contexts

Possible content:

First bullet:

Fred Botting:

1. Macabre, hallucinatory stories; concern with delusion and death;
2. Diseased imaginings;
3. Chilling and terrifying evocations;
4. Exotic setting objective correlative for disturbed mental states;
5. Human feelings entwined with supernatural;
6. Reality, illusion and madness overlap;
7. Use of doubles and mirrors;
8. Discovery of natural/scientific rather than supernatural causes of mystery.

Most applicable to *Masque*: all these points can be explored in relation to this story. Some are more obviously applicable than others, e.g. 1, 2 and 3. Exotic setting (no 4) certainly relevant though not related to any particular person's diseased mental state, rather perhaps to the unwillingness of all the revellers to accept reality. 5 is shown, as is the relationship between reality and illusion (no 6). The idea of doubles (no 7) is used here in the suites which echo one another except for their differing colours. In relation to no 8 it may be said that the figure of the Red Death is portrayed as a phantom in that it has no bodily reality but the whole story may be taken as a metaphor for the reality and inexorability of death.

David Punter:

1. Creation of symbolist terror;
2. Story that moves by spiralling intensification rather than simple narrative.

There is plenty of scope to find symbolic values in the story: use of colour; figure of 'Red Death'; the secluded castle itself and many of its trappings may be interpreted as symbols. The story develops in linear fashion but also becomes gradually more climactic from start to finish. Intensification created by many means, such as choice of lexis, contrast, parallel and repetition; anticipation of end through hints of the 'ghastly' and 'wild'. Particular effect of the clock.

Introduction to *Selected Writings*:

1. Also stresses the importance of symbolism;
2. Exploration of the soul. Reference to Poe's own views re quest for Beauty and 'the terror of the soul';
3. Capacity to create those moments when the mind loses consciousness of the real world and focuses on supreme awareness of loss and loneliness; the resulting revelation is both visionary and destructive;
4. Creates artificial, cut off world where the senses are heightened.

Exploration of the soul: perhaps might be said that these people have no soul; they are empty, egocentric and vain, but none of the characters explored in detail. Horror of the discovery of the phantom well evoked but no detailed analysis of any individual's reaction. The revelation is so quickly followed by death that the rest of the point made in 2 is irrelevant. Certainly creates an artificial cut off world where the senses are heightened.

Second bullet:

Possible content:

Titus Groan: candidates may pick up a number of points from M. H. Abrams: castle setting; also suggests the past though not a particular period; evocation of fear through Steerpike's experience of the pressing, stifling darkness and the almost supernatural feeling of 'forces' around him. May find atmosphere of gloom.
Fred Botting: gloomy and mysterious atmosphere; threat associated with natural or supernatural forces. Landscape desolate, alienating, full of menace.
David Stevens: importance of mood and atmosphere in evocation of the past.

Masque: M. H. Abrams: also set in the past and in castle. Gloomy atmosphere epitomised by the black chamber but other parts, though also exotic and claustrophobic, less gloomy. Mystery, sense of the supernatural; evocation of horror – terror beneath civilised surface.
Fred Botting: excess, including imaginative excess. Threat to enlightenment and humanist values comes here from the aristocracy rather than from supernatural forces. Sense of corruption. Darkness, desire and power. Mysterious incident, horrible image.
David Stevens: importance of mood and atmosphere, presented through the narrative content of texts.

Abundance of material here. Candidates do not need to range widely. Better if they choose a limited number of aspects and relate them precisely to the texts. Weaker candidates will tend to be assertive but expect the better candidates to show precisely where gothic features are evident in the two texts. They may comment also on how effective they are but this is not the main focus as AO3 not targeted here.

Third bullet:

Possible content:

- Some of the features mentioned in the article may superficially be seen as suggesting connections between the worlds described in the literary texts and the life of Goths: significance of darkness and the colour black; importance of music; obsession with death. Have to bear in mind the very obvious bias of the writer. Worlds of Peake and Poe both very sombre and dark. Death the focus of *Masque*.
- The article suggests that Goths have a rather oversimplified view of life and that might to some extent be said of gothic literature, especially in the way it lacks humour. The Goths as depicted in the article are similarly earnest and introverted. This aspect perhaps matches up with the claustrophobia of the worlds depicted by Poe and Peake.
- The world of Goths is described as being very ritualised and marked off from the life of normal human beings. Their attitudes to art, music and literature are cited to back this up. In the same way the worlds depicted by Poe and Peake are worlds set apart from the normal world and indeed in the case of *Masque*, contrasted with the world of reality.
- The writer characterises Goths as 'weird'. This is certainly an adjective that could be used to describe either of the worlds of the literary texts. Just as the writer of the article calls Goths weird, Poe writes that 'there was much of the bizarre' about the revellers.
- Goths are known by their external appearance, as also Prince Prospero and his revellers are marked out from ordinary mortals by their dress: 'There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions'.
- Poe's comment that there was 'not a little of that which might have excited disgust' echoes the article's attitude exactly.

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- Prince Prospero would have been thought 'mad' by many. That seems to be echoed by the view of the Goths in the article.
- Goths are seen as being 'deadly serious' in their view of themselves. True also of Prince Prospero and his followers and Steerpike. Both worlds are very egocentric as it's suggested Goths are also.
- The Goths' world is described as an 'infantile' one, one that has never changed or matured. This might be seen as an aspect of Prince Prospero's world since the reactions of these people to the Red Death is to pretend it doesn't exist, an infantile as well as a selfish reaction. The closed world of Gormenghast is exactly such a stagnant society, although candidates might not be able to pick that up from the given extract.

Candidates would need to pick up some of the above points (or other relevant ones) and relate them precisely to the literary texts. Quality rather than quantity is what is looked for here. For band three examiners should expect reasonably clear identification of points from the given commentaries with some evidence, although there may be little developing comment.