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Examiners' Report

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GCE English Literature 9ET0 01

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Introduction

This was the first series of the new A Level specification and the Drama paper was taken by over 10,000 candidates from a wide range of centres.

Candidates are asked to respond, in two and a quarter hours, to two questions, one on a Shakespeare play and one on another drama text. With four of the assessment objectives in play across the paper (Section A - AOs 1, 2, 3 and 5; Section B- AOs 1, 2 and 3) scope was provided for a full range of responses from candidates at all levels.

Section A Shakespeare

As expected, Othello, Hamlet and King Lear were the most popular choices here. Students were generally conscious of the requirements of the assessment objectives to engage with the writer's craft, to explore context, to provide alternative and critical readings, and to integrate and justify these in light of their own response to the question.

The conventions and typical features of tragedy and comedy as dramatic genres were often referred to. However, there was considerable confusion over definitions relating to Greek tragedy, with many candidates guessing at these and/or using the terms incorrectly, interchangeably or inconsistently. This at times spoilt some potentially very sophisticated essays. Some candidates often made extremely assertive remarks about features of Aristotelian tragedy, in particular 'hamartia'. Many seemed to feel it incumbent on them to factually provide an internal flaw which the central character has and is the reason for their death, in a manner which usually had little to do with 'hamartia' as outlined in the Poetics as a plot event. Candidates should be wary of thinking that there is a set of 'correct' features by which a tragedy can and should be assessed, or that tragic heroes should be diagnosed with a single deficiency which 'solves' their actions in the play. Conventions and features of comedy were handled much better.

It was pleasing to see AO5 being accessed so well by candidates generally. Candidates at all levels engaged consistently well with the critical anthology (or other readings) and most were able to access at least Level 3 for AO5, as they had learned clear explanations of different critical views. Some candidates, however, were unable to reach beyond this, as they did not develop their engagement with the critical view by exploring evidence in connection to it. Better responses demonstrated the ability to skilfully weave these views into the candidate's own arguments and evaluate them accordingly. Candidates should be wary of thinking that a critic's comment on a character or event can replace evidence from the text itself to support an argument. In the same way, a few clearly strong candidates at times included too many critics and quotations, either at the expense of the other AOs or at the expense of sustained, in depth analysis - a paragraph full of quotations from multiple critics that doesn't actually explore them to develop the candidate's own perspective is unlikely to achieve a Level 4.

As ever, engagement with social and historical contexts produced mixed responses, with some pertinent, well-judged links being made but also some sweeping, simplistic statements about women's lack of power or the tendency for audience members to be religious, or needlessly commenting that obviously evil doings (such as murder or incest) were 'frowned upon'. Many candidates also referred very generally to the responses of a contemporary and a modern audience, comparing their likely reactions in ways that were not always helpful.

Candidates' performance on AO2 was perhaps weakest on this section. There was, in some responses, strong analysis of language, structure and form which was concise, well aligned to the question, and selective in which features to examine and in analysing the significance of the content; however, weaker analysis relied on unconvincing, word-level discussions - such as "The

use of the personal pronoun 'I' or over-enthusiastic readings into alliteration or minor changes in the iambic pentameter. A number of candidates produced highly fluent and convincing arguments but with little or no sense of Shakespeare's crafting. This is perhaps an area for centres to consider in their planning for next year.

Finally, although few candidates appeared to run out of time on this paper, there is clearly still a need for plenty of practice at writing under exam conditions. Some candidates needed to think more carefully about the question they tackled and ensure that introductions focused on the topic rather than on what they had learnt and, although candidates were generally accurate with their spelling, often words such as 'tragedy', 'soliloquy', 'playwright', 'deceit' and even 'Shakespeare' were incorrectly spelt. Paragraphing was also an issue - possibly on account of time constraints - and better control over structure would have expressed candidates' arguments more clearly.

SECTION B Other Drama

Responses to this question were inevitably varied due to the breadth of genres, styles and time periods of text being responded to, although *A Streetcar Named Desire* was the overwhelmingly popular choice. There was also a greater range of approaches to formulating a response, with some candidates focusing heavily on the minutiae of the text and others giving an evaluative view but with little specific evidence. The strongest responses achieved a balance of the two.

Many of the same issues regarding candidate performance apply to both Sections A and B. However, centres might like to note the following comments from examiners on Section B:

Context was handled better when biographical detail wasn't made central. Weaker answers often made sweeping generalisations about the time in which the plays were written. Williams and Wilde's plays sometimes become a straightforward reflection of their biographies. *Malfi* and *Faustus* tended to be supported by a useful understanding of the period/dramatic context, which was much more illuminating.

English Language terminology continues to be used in response to the writer's craft, often unnecessarily or wrongly e.g. the playwright is using Accommodation Theory and adjacency pairs, writing about a character's idiolect and mean length of utterance, writers using "lexical terms" instead of "words". Students would be far better to focus closely on the dramatic impact of language.

It was clear, in some cases, that candidates were determined to write about topics that had already been visited either at AS or in mock exams; this was usually at the expense of answering the question.

Question 1

Antony and Cleopatra was the least popular candidate choice of the tragedies, but there were some very well-developed responses to this question on the presentation of death. Candidates considered death in the light of genre conventions of tragedy. It was often argued that Enobarbus is killed by guilt, Antony's attempted suicide becomes a laughable farce, and only Cleopatra emerges with true tragic dignity. Weaker responses tended simply to describe who was killed and how.

Indicate which question you are answering by marking a cross . If you change your mind, put a line through the box and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen question number: **Question 1** **Question 2** **Question 3**
 Question 4 **Question 5** **Question 6**
 Question 7 **Question 8** **Question 9**
 Question 10 **Question 11** **Question 12**
 Question 13 **Question 14** **Question 15**
 Question 16

Write your answer here:

Within Antony and Cleopatra, death is a key theme throughout the play. Shakespeare however, presents death in a variety of ways, from Antony failing to commit suicide effectively, to the minor characters dying from devotion to their masters, death is explored in numerous ways throughout this Shakespearean tragedy.

Shakespeare presents what should be an honourable Roman suicide, as a thing of irony. Within Antony and Cleopatra, Antony's death as a tragic hero should have been a grand, honourable death, however ~~however~~ Antony fails to kill himself ~~fast~~ quickly and effectively, ultimately dying a slow and painful death. Within this era, Roman

suicides were seen to be noble and honourable however Shakespeare, turns Antony's death into a thing of irony, making it appear as though he has died an honourable death to other characters, when in fact, it wasn't. This is clear when Decius informs Caesar of Antony's death he refers to it as "honour in the act's it did / Hath, with the courage which the heart did lend it".



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Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a Level 3 response. The candidate is making a clear and relevant link between the question (death), the text (report of Antony's death to Caesar) and the context (Roman attitudes to suicide).



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

Try to integrate comments on context by linking them directly to the text and making sure they are relevant to your argument.

Question 2

The complexity of Shakespeare's presentation of Antony was recognised by most candidates. Many cited Aristotle in support of the scale of his downfall from indestructible warrior to 'a strumpet's fool', and the opening speech was often analysed in detail to establish his demise. While almost all candidates were able to explore Antony's descent clearly, more sophisticated responses recognised the persistent self-awareness and critical scrutiny in Antony ('I must from this enchanting queen break off'). Some saw his marriage to Octavia as a heroically self-effacing attempt to regain his status as a triumvir. A few compared Antony with Octavius or Lepidus - one of the key ways Shakespeare maintains sympathy and a degree of respect for him. Excessive drinking and sex games were explored in detail.

Already, Shakespeare is presenting Antony as full of hubris and arrogance, and viewers begin to expect him to descend into decline fairly not too long afterwards, when the ~~same~~ melting imagery, so prevalent throughout the tragedy, makes its first appearance in Antony's statement "Let Rome in Tiber melt!". Shakespeare uses this to foreshadow Antony's inevitable ~~disintegration~~ disintegration. Some critics have suggested this creates a strange feeling of joy among sections of the audience. David Kaston referred to the "cathartic release" of viewers, who gain a feeling of "saccharine pleasure" at witnessing such a proud man as Antony fall from such a high level of power. Contrastingly, this is a valid interpretation: if, as Andrew Hadfield suggests, Antony is to be read as King James I, monarch during the first confirmed performance of the play, then Antony's death as a result of his inability to put pride before a fall would have seemed particularly resonant for a Jacobean audience.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a top Level 4 response and is an example of discriminating engagement with alternative critical readings of the play. Note the clear links between Kastan's argument about cathartic release and the candidate's own developing point about Shakespeare's use of foreshadowing to present aspects of Antony's character.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

If you are writing about a character in a play, make sure you consider the character's dramatic function and don't just describe the character as if he or she were real. What is the dramatist trying to do with this character? How does he want the audience to respond to the character? What techniques are used to present the character to the audience?

Question 3

The question about suffering in Hamlet was a very popular choice. Many candidates looked in turn at how different characters - particularly Hamlet, Ophelia and Gertrude / Claudius - displayed suffering. Stronger responses also considered Denmark itself as a suffering entity. Relevant context was referred to by all candidates - common references were: gender roles, the Great Chain of Being and a religious society; stronger responses considered Hamlet as being trapped between Protestant and Catholic attitudes. Many candidates, however, failed to link context to the text in a developed exploration of its significance. Candidates should be wary of sweeping statements along the lines of, 'Shakespeare uses Ophelia to criticise patriarchal society': contextual factors need treating with as much discrimination and subtlety as the play itself.

A wide range of interesting critical comment was made use of by almost all candidates. In the strongest responses, this was integrated and explored rather than merely reproduced. Frequent references were made to Coleridge and Bradley but weaker responses tended only to include the name and a quotation and failed to explore their ideas in detail.

A number of candidates were clearly keen to answer a question on 'madness' and veered towards this at the expense of fully engaging with this question.

Arguably the most notable of Shakespeare's depictions of suffering is through Hamlet^{the protagonist,} himself. Hamlet ostensibly mourns the bereavement of his father by being the only character wearing black, the traditional mourning colour. Shakespeare heightens his suffering by juxtaposing his ~~break~~ physically bleak state with the "flourish of trumpets". Potentially Shakespeare used Hamlet's suffering to depict the immortality and the treachery of Claudius. The fact that Hamlet is overtly suffering through his clothes, whilst contrasting to the king exhibiting the

vice of carousément, in his
exemplified him as an unethical
character foil to the pitiful
suffering of Hamlet. Hamlet's pitiful suffering



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a Level 4 response. Note how the candidate is fully aware of the writer at work, exploring Shakespeare's craft in relation to the overall topic of Hamlet's suffering.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

To access the highest Levels on AO2, you need to be analytical about the writer's craft. Bear in mind that you are writing about a play. It's sometimes easy to forget this when you are looking at context and critical comment. Think about how the dramatist goes about creating meaning for an audience.

Question 4

Far fewer candidates attempted this question than did Q3, but there were many successful responses here. A superficial reading of the question might find it narrow, but the passages around The Murder of Gonzago are rich with links to the rest of the play - Hamlet's hatred of Claudius, contempt for his mother, abuse of Ophelia - and some candidates saw the play as a microcosm of Shakespeare's text itself. Interestingly, a few candidates chose to interpret the question much more broadly than a reference to Act III Scene ii and chose to look at the play's general focus on plays and players. This was a perfectly valid response, and there were excellent explorations of Hamlet's self-conscious theatricality.

The play also stands to draw attention to Hamlet's desire to 'sauce' his mother. Adelman comments on Hamlet's motivations during the play, while it centres around avenging his father, or driving back his mother from sin to save her. It expresses it clear that Hamlet despises Claudius, comparing him to a 'scurvy', and his own father 'Hyperion' but rarely does the play feel driven to revenge, the sense of Claudius's potential murder while he pretends to pray, should be the 'apex of revenge' (again, according to Adelman) but instead the scene feels almost ambiguous

preventing Hamlet from reaching his mother. When asked what ~~of the~~ ^{went} Gertrude thinks about the play she responds with 'The lady protests too much, methinks' indicating Gertrude's belief that the player Queen's protestation perhaps excuses her guilt. The play of the Murder of Gonzago then offers a parallel between the Player Queen and Gertrude. Having established Othello's denial proclaims guilt, the play arguably clears Gertrude of fault, she, who while not proud of her 'o'er lasty marriage' endures it, ^{and} is ~~not~~ decorous in her lamentation

and union to Claudius. It should be of note, also, that as a queen to contemporary audiences, remarriage to secure her position and the legitimacy of her son is to be ~~see~~ expected, though Hamlet does not treat it as such. The play sees the conclusion Claudius, but release Gertrude from suspicion.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This response achieved Level 3 for AO5. The candidate has used Adelman's points about Hamlet's 'rationalising' to support the general argument, but there needs to be a more developed exploration for a higher level mark. For example, the candidate might have gone on to explore in more detail the notion of Hamlet 'saving' Gertrude.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Be careful not simply to 'name-drop' critics without showing the examiner that you have fully engaged with their ideas and, just as importantly, have linked their points to your own ideas about the play.

Question 5

The majority of candidates who had studied King Lear chose to explore the theme of madness and its various presentations in the play. It proved to be a theme which candidates of all abilities could tackle. Most discussed the political lunacy of Lear's actions in Act 1 Scene 1, with weaker responses focussing heavily on this, leaving little time to explore the king's descent into madness. Most were also able to engage with the madness in the bloodlust of Goneril / Regan / Cornwall, and with the wisdom revealed through the 'madness' of the Fool and Edgar as Poor Tom. Strong responses discussed the symbolism of the storm scene and a few engaged with the significance of the mock trial and with Lear's torment at the death of Cordelia. In terms of context, most candidates linked the theme of madness to the machinations of James I's court and many looked at the significance of references to Bedlam Hospital. There were also a few interesting comments on the pagan setting of the play.

A.J.C Maxwell claims

that the 'King Lear' is a christian play within a pagan setting. Lear's madness ~~is~~ paradoxically provides him with redeeming qualities. He is reunited with Cordelia who 'Shook the holy water from her heavenly eyes'. This metaphor resembles Christ. This conveys ~~hope~~ optimism which is soon extinguished.

As Middleton's 'Revenge Tragedy' says claims that 'when the bad bleeds then the tragedy is good'. Goneril and Regan are punished for their sins, however Cordelia is hanged.

Her unvarnished death erodes that sense of hope provided. ~~As~~ This bleak and tragic ending as Elton says ~~resembles~~ is an 'upside-down providence', creating an almost 'amnesiac' portrayal of life. Lear questions 'why should a ~~dog~~^{rat} have life and thou not breath at all?'

~~This bleak end meant that~~
This question resembles Nahum Tate, who

readapted the play where Cordelia survives
, emphasises the bleakness of the play.

Elton claims that Shakespeare's ironic structure destroys
the poetic justice of the play'.

Madness, while it could be seen as redeeming Lear, provides
Kastan ^{to justice} argues that the refusal of answers to Lear's
suffering is central to the play. ~~As A.D. Nuttall's~~

~~concept~~ could support ~~her~~ this idea as
One could say, this is
one could say ~~this is~~ Shakespeare's attempt to

depict the reality of life, this truthful

by creating catharsis as one reflects on

life in this way. A.D. Nuttall's ~~ex~~ idea of

'tragic joy' ~~could~~ claims that this bleak
ending allows the audience to find pleasure in

this tragedy as one could ~~edmore~~ appreciate

their own lives after watching this play,

or ~~feel~~ relate to the real Madness, although

seen as Lear's fall, could be seen as

a punishment, however ~~once~~ ~~a few~~ while it brings

hope, this is immediately ~~destroyed~~ ~~As a whole~~



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a Level 5 response. The candidate is exploring whether or not Lear's madness is indeed redeeming and, using a range of critical ideas, considers the play's ending. This is a sophisticated response, with the candidate tackling complex critical topics whilst remaining fully focussed on the terms of the question. All assessment objectives are in play - the candidate explores Shakespeare's dramatic purpose and the play's context, examines a range of critical ideas and shapes overall a sophisticated personal argument.

Question 6

The question on the presentation of Edmund in King Lear was less popular than Q5, but responses to it were generally convincing. Candidates were able to look at the character from a range of perspectives, seeing him as more than the stock 'malcontent'. There were discussions of the methods Shakespeare uses to manipulate audience responses to the character, eliciting sympathy in the light of contemporary attitudes to legitimacy and using Edmund's soliloquies both to engage the audience and to encourage satisfaction at his demise. There were some thoughtful comments about his Machiavellian qualities and how these link to his position as an outsider. Stronger responses engaged in detail with the themes of nature and paganism and with Edmund's desire to succeed in society's terms, despite his rejection of them. A few candidates explored the significance of Edmund's last line.

To a contemporary audience still riddled with religious fear after the mass persecution because of the Gunpowder plot this would have brought hostility towards Edmund & his pagan viewpoint, associated with witchcraft & evil. He further this contentious point of view by referring to 'the plague of custom' as a direct challenge to tradition. Indeed, 'nothing, it seemed, was beyond questioning, nothing impossible' (R. Warren). Warren epitomises the tumultuous times of 1606 & how Shakespeare was using Edmund as a way to challenge even the most accepted truths. Furthermore, his repetition of 'base' is juxtaposed with Edmund's eloquence, as he speaks in verse, to reinforce this stereotype of 'bastardy' or 'base' that bastards are 'branded' with. He further questions legitimacy & inheritance by stating 'Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land'. The repetition of both 'base' & 'legitimacy' signifies Edmund's challenge to convention & normality & Shakespeare uses this to represent the tumultuous times.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a Level 5 response. Note how the candidate has fully integrated comments on context and interpretations by another readers with a close analysis of Shakespeare's use of language.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

It is important not to stray too far away from the text itself. Make sure that you always refer back to the language and structure of the play when writing your answers. However comments on language must always be relevant to the question. For instance, this candidate has a clear focus on the way Shakespeare arouses sympathy in the audience for Edmund by having him speak in verse and use repetition for effect.

Question 7

Othello was the most popular text choice on Section A, with around half the candidates responding to this question on the relationship between Othello and Iago. Most responses followed the relationship between Othello and Iago chronologically through the play, which sometimes led to weaker response becoming quite narrative. In quite a few cases, this became an essay on Iago (often, seemingly, pre-prepared) with little being said about Othello's role. Candidates also showed a tendency to discuss Iago's choices and actions rather than consider his character as a literary construct and looking at Shakespeare's intentions. More successful candidates created a balance between the two characters. Many were influenced by the critical idea of Iago being a 'motiveless malignant' and used their response to explore reasons why Iago conspired against Othello - race, jealousy, repressed sexual appetite. Too much was made, however, of the potential homosexual undertones of Othello and Iago's relationship without enough textual exploration to make this useful.

A significant number of candidates commented extensively on the animal imagery of 'black ram' and 'white ewe' and again it sometimes appeared that this was learned material; it frequently added little to develop the response as much as the quantity of commentary dedicated to it warranted. Race is clearly a relevant factor in the Othello / Iago relationship, but some candidates seemed to have done so much preparatory writing on this topic that it took over the actual question and their response became an extended exploration of racial discrimination and identity.

Stronger responses explored Iago as a Machiavellian villain, his role as both entertainer and controller of the narrative and considered debates around the extent to which Othello was destined for downfall. They understood that this relationship is presented as more than the classic one between protagonist and antagonist, and that many other factors are at play, including political power, nepotism, class, gender and race.

Othello's character is questioned several times throughout this tragedy. Iago describes Othello to the audience as an "old black ram" and constantly refers to him as "The Moor"; right from the beginning the audience can see that this ~~relationship~~ relationship is not based on hatred of one man to another but in fact the relationship of a white man hating a black man. During the Shakesperian era racism was still very common, & Black or coloured men were not seen as worthy of respect and they did not have very good jobs,

Shakespeare further challenged these stereotypes given to black men in ~~his~~ Othello. Othello was given the position of a general serving in the Venetian state, ~~trago~~ Othello ~~was~~ (a black man) was ranked higher than Iago (a white man) which would often be very rare in Shakespeare's society, this alone fuelled a fire of jealousy within Iago.



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Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a Level 2 response. The candidate is beginning to explain - in a straightforward way - the relationship between Othello and Iago. Comments on context show understanding, but they are very generalised.



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Examiner Tip

Try to avoid making sweeping statements about context in your responses. Make sure you link contextual points to the words of the text and that they are always relevant to the topic being discussed.

Question 8

Again, this was a very popular choice of question, with candidates discussing various presentations of love in Othello. In general, the focus tended to be on three key pairings: Othello and Desdemona; Othello and Iago; Desdemona and Emilia. Most considered the platonic love between Desdemona and Emilia to be the strongest example of genuine love and linked it to contextual ideas around patriarchy and female oppression. In some cases, such discussions became a little too generalised and were not always linked to specific textual references. Many candidates were influenced by the work of Anita Loomba and many were able to support or criticise her critical interpretation of Othello's character by offering textual evidence.

It can be argued that Othello's lack of love for himself leads to his downfall. At the time, a Moor would have been unworthy of Othello's position as general, which could have sparked some insecurities in Othello's mind. As A.C. Bradley says, 'a Shakespearean tragedy centres on a character of high rank and status who goes through a reversal of fortune that leads to his own death'. By this definition, Othello was already destined to fall. Othello gives in to Iago's misogynistic views in the temptation scene (Act 3 Scene 3) and, as a result, exclaims 'arise black vengeance'. The reference to his skin colour may show his insecurities as he gives in to the racial stereotype of a violent black man. It does not take much persuasion from Iago for Othello to believe that Desdemona is sleeping with Cassio. Cassio is a young, white Venetian, whilst Othello is an old Moor. He may believe that Cassio, despite being of lower rank, is superior to him and more fitted to young,

write Desdemona. Shakespeare wanted to show that ~~there~~ a lack of self-love and the presence of insecurities could have disastrous results.



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Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a top Level 4 response. It is an interesting take on the question, looking at the idea of Othello's self-love, or lack of it. The response is a good example of a candidate presenting a controlled argument with fluently embedded references to the text and to critical ideas. It also makes discriminating comments on context, such as the prevalence of racial stereotyping.

Question 9

Perhaps surprisingly, few candidates had chosen to study *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but this question on the presentation of power was the more popular. Stronger responses compared the respective status and power of the three main character groups, based on their unequal knowledge of each other. Weaker candidates tended to focus only on the supernatural power of the fairies, notably Oberon and Puck, with their ability to observe and control all other groups. There was some evidence of pre-prepared essays on 'the mechanicals' and a few candidates tried - mostly unsuccessfully - to locate power in this group alone.

Power in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' corresponds to the failure of patriarchy in Elizabethan England. At the time that this play was performed, Queen Elizabeth I was in power, ^{with patriarchy being} ~~the dominant~~ ^{the prevailing belief} of this time, a female monarch was a shift ~~to~~ male power. This female power present at the time corresponds with the behavior of Titania, the Fairy Queen. Where power would usually be regarded as a male attribute, Titania certainly enforced hers. Oberon, her husband questions Titania's ~~to~~ right to the 'changeling boy': "Why should Titania cross her Oberon", reinforcing the patriarchal views of society that power belongs in the hands of men, and women have no right to question it. Titania eliminates the traditional view of patriarchy and male power by refusing to hand over the child "Not for thy fairy kingdom" and exits the scene.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a low Level 4 response. The candidate has made a clear link between the text and its context, using details of the text to drive the point. More detailed and nuanced reference to the significance of a female monarch would see the response moving up the level and some further consideration of the final outcomes for Titania would make this a more sophisticated argument.

Question 10

A very small number of candidates chose to look at Shakespeare's use of plot lines in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Most candidates were able to explore clearly the Athenians / Fairies / Mechanicals plots - often separately. Strong responses looked in detail at Shakespeare's manipulation of language and structure, linking his crafting to the conventions of dramatic comedy and evaluating critical debate around the play. Weaker responses tended simply to describe the various plot lines and to cite names of critics without engaging with their ideas.

~~The placement of the~~ ^{regal} The opening scene of Athens in Act 1 scene 1 is juxtaposed with the chaos of the Mechanicals scene in Act 1 scene 2. The audience will recognise Athens as a place of great philosophical thinkers and democracy, and this expectation is fulfilled with the Egeus entering the Theseus' court to uphold the 'Athenian Law'. Shakespeare uses the seriousness in nature of this scene - ~~literally a matter~~ where Hermia ~~is to marry~~ faces the possibility of death ~~for doing so~~ if she disobeys her father's wishes - with the Mechanicals squabbles and misuse of language in scene 2, thus creating a sense of comedy.



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Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a Level 5 response. Note the clear focus on Shakespeare's dramatic purpose rather than on simply describing the plotlines.

Question 11

Of the candidates who had studied Measure for Measure, very few chose to explore the settings in the play. Most responses considered the ways in which settings are used to foreground the play's political, social and religious themes. Strong responses analysed Shakespeare's crafting of symbolism around settings and also his use of incongruent settings for dramatic effect. Language and structure were also analysed purposefully, with candidates exploring, for example, the informal language of the street settings with the formality at court. Weaker responses tended to describe settings or to drift off towards character studies.

Question 12

The question on the presentation of the Duke in Measure for Measure was generally well-handled, with many candidates engaged fully with the ambiguities of the Duke's character and of the play itself. Most focussed on his self-confessed failings at the opening of the play and there was much discussion of the imagery (armour, lion) used to describe his dereliction of duty. Almost all the Duke's actions lend themselves to multiple interpretations and responses to AO5 were generally thoughtful and thorough. Context was less well-handled. Obviously there are parallels between the Duke and James I, but some candidates came close to asserting that the Duke equals the king. Likewise, there was a tendency to over-simplify religious contexts - assuming, for example, that a post-Reformation audience would all share the same attitude to 'Christian' friars and nuns. Comments on context need to be discriminating; they should be used to support and illuminate argument, not replace it.

Marrion Cox says the Duke: "... exchanges power over the body (torment and imprisonment) for power over the soul." The manipulation and control

* In an extremely Christian society, lying to a monk would be sinful and therefore the Duke uses his disguise to manipulate the truth from all his subjects.

of Isabella shows him gain power over the soul of a nun and it is ~~made~~ for this reason that he relies on ~~his~~ his schemes to solve Isabella's problems than with his own judicial power.

His desire for power over his subjects overcomes all else. In fact, after ~~that~~ all the deception: the bed trick, the false execution of Claudio, his disguises and more, he says to Isabella - "... Give me your hand and say you will be mine." ~~This desire for power over~~ Despite the fact ~~she~~ he has spent the play working to spare Isabella from Angelo's sexual manipulation

in so she can remain a nun, he proposes to her. The lexical choice of 'give' and 'say' shows that he is not giving her ~~the~~ a choice. Isabella says nothing for the rest of the play. His taste for the control over God's wife - as nuns were seen to be - has given him the feeling of being ~~beyond~~ a deniged. He finishes the play with power over people's personal and private lives.



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Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a response that achieved Level 5 on AO5. Note how the candidate takes hold of Cox's argument and uses it to develop a strong personal position about the presentation of the Duke, based on close analysis of the text itself.



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Examiner Tip

It is really important that you properly integrate points about context into your argument. Candidates who produce lengthy, stand-alone paragraphs, giving a potted biography of a playwright or extended descriptions of contemporary life are not fulfilling the requirement of higher levels to be 'discriminating.'

Question 13

Around half the candidates who had studied *The Taming of the Shrew* chose to respond to the question on courtship. Most had plenty to say about the presentation of the courtship between Kate and Petruchio, which was seen to be highly unusual and many also looked at the courting of Bianca by her array of suitors. Candidates noted Shakespeare's use of parallel plotlines. Weaker candidates tended to get bogged down in discussions about gender and whether or not Shakespeare was a 'feminist'. Stronger responses considered his satiric purpose, exploring, for instance, the theme of idealised versus actual romance and considering the extent to which Shakespeare conforms to or usurps the conventions of comedy. In responding to AO5, there was also much made of Catherine Bates' arguments about the 'theatrical illusion' of Petruchio's triumph over his bride.

Question 14

Candidates responded enthusiastically to the question on plays and play acting in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Many were able to explore the play in relation to the conventions of comic drama. There was much discussion around the frame narrative and the plentiful use of disguise. Some candidates commented on the poetic licence allowed by the play's theatricality and considered the resulting disruption of social and gender expectations. Many of the best responses showed a solid grasp of the theories of comedy exemplified in the early part of the Critical Anthology.

This is further supported by the roles that the servants take, specifically Tranio. Tranio is able to impersonate Lucentio successfully to Baptista and Bianca's other suitors showing that someone of a low status can outsmart those in places of high power: a servant was conventionally a lot smarter than their master and Shakespeare uses this convention to appear to be just using conventional typical comedic slapstick comedy, but it rather acts as satire to ~~examine~~ show that people of a lower status can be better than those of a higher one. Tranio ~~states~~ and Lucentio 'exchange clothes' than Tranio states "I am content to be Lucentio, because so well I love Lucentio", which starts the plot of disguise, introduced in the Induction. ~~Tranio~~ By 'exchanging clothes' they fool others and this allows Shakespeare to mock society for their foolishness and foolishness. This would be comical for a contemporary audience due to its silliness but shows how rigid social roles are because they can be so easily switched.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The response is an extract from a Level 4 response. It is a good example of engagement with both social and literary contexts and it is beginning to explore different types of comedy (slapstick; satire) in relation to the text.

Question 15

Twelfth Night was the most popular choice of the comedy plays and many candidates chose to examine the relationship between Orsino and Olivia. Strong responses recognised that, despite these characters not being together often in the piece, their relationship is key to both the play's dramatic conflict and its resolution. Most candidates discussed Orsino's famous declaration of love at the start of the play, commenting on his redundant hyperbolic passion and preoccupation with romantic cliché and unrequited love. Most then drew comparisons between Orsino's non-existent relationship with Olivia and the one forged with Viola / Cesario, and considered the implications of this relationship with its blurred lines between heterosexuality and homosexuality. Many candidates also discussed the excess of Olivia and the absurd nature of her pursuit of a woman, followed by her marriage to a stranger. The most successful responses explored how Shakespeare uses the relationship between Olivia and Orsino to explore class and gender expectations as well as to introduce the 'ethic of indulgence' in this festive comedy.

In 'Twelfth Night', the relationship between Orsino and Olivia is central to the play. Shakespeare uses their unrequited love as a device to create complications throughout the play. The period of Twelfth Night enhances this chaos and allows the comedic elements of the characters to be explored. Orsino and Olivia contrasting views on love set them apart yet their indulgent and excessive ways parallel each other and set the play up for the closure at the end of the play. Orsino's comic love clichés are satirised by Shakespeare as he uses Olivia's desire of romantic love to show how love can create complications for her into a fool.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is an extract from the beginning of a Level 4 response. Note how the candidate expresses a clear sense of purpose, shaping an argument which will look at the function of the relationship and also at Shakespeare's craft (comic devices, parallel plots, use of satire).

Question 16

The question on Twelfth Night as festive comedy proved challenging for some candidates who were perhaps less confident with genre conventions. One examiner commented: 'Candidates seem to find it harder to write about comedy than tragedy in terms of generic conventions. Perhaps this is because Aristotle has bequeathed us a distinctive terminology - *hamartia*, *peripeteia*, *anagnorisis*, *catharsis* - which were all widely and often accurately used in the questions on tragedy. Not all realise that comedy has its conventions too - puns, innuendo, misunderstandings and mistaken identity, bawdy, physical humour, dramatic irony, the pleasures of *schadenfreude* etc. - which writers exploit and manipulate at will'.

The majority of candidates, however, had plenty to say about contemporary expectations of Twelfth Night and notions of 'the carnival.' Effects of the temporary suspension of hierarchies and moral strictures were explored with confidence. Everyone wanted to write about Malvolio and he provided a rich source of relevant comment along with the opportunity to challenge the question and explore critical debate around 'festive comedy' as his sub-plot gradually darkens and his vow of revenge disturbs the general joy at the play's end. Weaker responses tended to focus only on contextual issues; stronger responses looked closely at the play's language and structure as part of their argument.

Feste is responsible for much of the festivity and comedy included in the play, however this does not stop his songs being full of melancholy warnings for the rest of the players and audience alike. For example in Act 2 Scene 3 ~~amidst~~ amidst their revelry Sir Toby and Sir Andrew call for a song from Feste. By using the command "O stay and hear your true love's coming" Feste creates a tone of hope and innocence, and by using the phrase 'true love' which has links with fairy tale, Shakespeare creates an atmosphere of the fantastical which would lift the festive spirit of the characters and audience. However Shakespeare then uses the rhetorical question "What is love?" to give the second verse a far more poignant and bittersweet tone, and ends on the warning "Youth's a stuff will not endure" which urges all the players and audience to seize the moment. While

not only demonstrating Feste's surprising wisdom, this song also presents a contrast to the festivity and comedy that ~~it~~ is expected of Feste, as the fool. This presents an argument against the statement made by the critic John Hollander who cited that "Feste... is the apostle of merriment." As it is clear from his melancholy songs that, while the audience expects Feste's character to provide nothing but festivity and comedy, the 'fool' is wise beyond his station and introduces a very real warning

The contrast between what is expected of the ~~fool~~ festive fool and what is delivered, is again demonstrated by Shakespeare in Act 2 Scene 4 when Duke Orsino calls for a song. Feste sings "Come away, ~~come~~ come away, death and in sad cypress let me be laid..." By using the noun 'death' and the adjective 'sad' this song is very quickly introduced as another contrast to Shakespeare's festive play and also shows that Feste understands that Orsino's love for Olivia is slowly ebbing away as the juxtaposition 'fair cruel maid' could be used to represent Olivia. This again reiterates ~~for~~ Feste's wisdom as he understood this without having to be told, but the overwhelmingly ~~by~~ bleak tone of the poem is again in contrast to the festive overall festive theme of 'Twelfth Night'.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a Level 3 response. Note how the candidate uses knowledge of the conventions of comedy and critical views to shape a clear personal argument about Feste being part of the play's 'darker' themes. The rest of this essay did not extend beyond the character of Feste which is why a higher level was not achieved.

Question 17

Dr Faustus was a popular choice of play in Section B and the majority of candidates chose to explore the play's presentation of ambiguity. Mephistopheles' function both as cautioner and tempter was a common starting point. Faustus' hovering between damnation and redemption also drew much analysis, as did the roles of the God and Bad Angels. Context was securely grasped and in most cases applied relevantly to the topic of the question. In the scenes with the Pope, for example, some candidates debated whether Marlowe wanted us to applaud the satirical attack or condemn Faustus for squandering his powers on childish tricks. Some of the discussions of Luther and Calvin were so detailed that Marlowe and the play itself became part of the background. Candidates must take care not to overload their responses with contextual material.

A ambiguity in Dr. Faustus is a product of the polarizing philosophies from Marlowe's time, medieval, simplified moralism contrasted with complex Epicurean scepticism, or the Stoic medieval conservatism against the revolutionary Renaissance Protestantism. A ambiguity is created by Marlowe creating a dualistic image of Faustus' tale; on the one hand for an audience in Marlowe's time Faustus' exploits would've been seen as a product of dabbling with the supernatural and thus his end would be a deserved one due to his sins. Conversely, to a more critical modern audience there is a man to sympathise with, as his temptations were natural (i.e. human, not something external) and his fall tragic in the vein of Icarus. The relationship between Faustus and Mephistopheles is the foremost juxtaposition in the play;

Faustus begins with "Settle thy studies, Faustus" and ends with "I'll burn my books! Ah, Mephistophilis!". This mirroring implies that Mephistophilis may be part of Faustus, a representation of his Superego, and thus it would seem evil is within man, yet he is portrayed as physical, with his initial image being of a Catholic Franciscan friar. Thus the dichotomy is set: the play is in limbo between Catholicism and Protestantism, fatalism and freedom, Renaissance and medieval, mechanical and dialectical. Whether the play is as simplistic as Good and Bad Angels or as complex as Faustus and Mephistophilis is the central motif. Juxtaposition, thus, is the central technique.

The ironic parallels between Mephistophilis and Faustus indicate that the seemingly external evil is in Faustus, or his image; the impatient and sadistic title of "Master Doctor" for Faustus when he is as powerless as a parlour magician and Mephistophilis' (Mephisto's) Franciscan disguise hiding his devilish reality highlight the same thing, that being the futility of pursuits to advance or

book up illusion, illusions

warning; devil or

change oneself. In this sense Calvinistic determinism is negated, but in the spirit of Protestantism there is a humanistic tone in that the Faustus - Mepha. duality is an internal struggle. In this sense the play is comic, ~~portraying~~ portraying Faustus' struggle as pointless, with the height of the Pope's up on par with R his end R age stealing the Vinter's goblet. And yet the imagery is starkly different, showing Faustus' struggle as 'real'. The ambiguity comes from not knowing what is a human fantasy or a supernatural reality, and furthermore whether Faustus is well to eyed bird or not.



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Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a very secure Level 5 response. The candidate sustains a clear focus on 'ambiguity' whilst shaping a sophisticated argument around the mirroring of Faustus and Mephistopheles. Close reference to the text is made and references to context are fluently embedded.

Question 18

Responses to the question of the presentation of Wagner in Dr Faustus covered a wide spread of performance. Some candidates, having noted that Wagner is in many ways a foil to Faustus, tended to write only briefly about him and focussed the majority of their response on Faustus himself. Nevertheless, there were some very sophisticated responses to this question, with detailed analysis of the ways in which the character functions as a comment on Faustus' behaviour, together with thoughtful comments on the context of Renaissance philosophy and beliefs. Weaker responses tended to focus only on Wagner's comic function in the play, often linking this to medieval morality plays. Most candidates, however, were able to discuss the significance of Wagner's intellectual curiosity and his sophisticated use of language.

Marlowe insists that Wagner is more than a simple servant as he has greater ambition than his master - the exclaimed scholar Faustus. In fact, Marlowe makes Wagner the master of scholars as he uses grammar and the equality found in knowledge to elevate Wagner into a position that he himself could never reach. ~~Marlowe~~ Marlowe ensures that Wagner promises more to the clown than Mephistophilis does to Faustus, to support critic Doncaster's view that the subplot "underlines the stupidity of Faustus' fall." Marlowe uses Wagner to show to his audience that even those of no class can ~~deserve~~ deserve power and ~~preferred~~ influence.

Wagner is depicted by Marlowe as having a greater desire for power than Faustus. Faustus insists that "I'll have them..." four times in his opening soliloquy yet, by Scene 10 he submits

himself the power of another: "I am content to do whatsoever you command me". However, Marlowe never outlines Wagner's ambition so excessively as he does with Faustus, instead Wagner simply demand power: "Call me Master Wagner". Faustus' ambitions are portrayed as unnecessarily excessive as ~~for~~ Marlowe exceeds the classical use of triads ~~to~~ and adds a ~~fourth~~ fourth "I'll have them". Similarly, the liquid "l" sound in "I'll" shows that Faustus is simply deceiving himself in his wish "to assume Godhead" [Harold Bloom]. Marlowe clearly "juxtaposes the reality of Wagner and Faustus' power and ambition through the contrasting of "Command" and "Master"; Faustus receives orders, whereas Wagner commands the ~~scholarship~~ Clown. Both Faustus and Wagner wish to elevate their social standings and go against the "Great Chain of Being" - an Elizabethan belief that every person has a fixed placed in society and to change your position is to go against God's wishes. At the outset, Marlowe makes it clear to his audience that Wagner and Faustus stand in different places in the Great Chain of Being, yet both are united in their desires. However, their fates are very different as Wagner fulfills his ambition and Faustus ~~fails~~ fails to. Therefore, Marlowe ^{may wish to insist} insists that Wagner is greater than Faustus because he achieves what Faustus

cannot: power.

Marlowe also allows Wagner to become the master of scholars as he orders them to "be attentive". This imperative shows that Wagner has control over them and so defies his place as a servant. Marlowe may have used this to prove that ^{social} equality can be sought in knowledge and the Renaissance offered those of lower classes - like Marlowe and Wagner - this opportunity to elevate themselves through knowledge. Marlowe gives Wagner a greater command of rhetoric than the scholars ~~through~~ as the polysyllabic "highly solemnized" proves this; the scholars ~~use~~ are given ~~an~~ incorrect grammar as they describe Helen of Troy as the "beautifullest" and "admirablist lady". Marlowe uses the irony of this ~~an~~ incorrect grammar of scholars and Wagner's command of rhetoric potentially to voice his own frustrations of society. Marlowe had won a scholarship to attend King's School in Canterbury because he was not wealthy enough to afford it. However, this ~~scholar~~ scholarship demanded that he sat extra examinations those those of a higher class than himself. Marlowe himself knew that knowledge and intelligence was not defined by class and

his frustration that society thought otherwise is displayed through Wagner's command over the scholars.

Marlowe uses Wagner to undermine ^{his} Faustus' folly because Wagner promises the Clown more than Mephistophilis offers Faustus - and Wagner does not demand a Faustian pact. Mephistophilis tells Faustus plainly that he "flies in hope to get his soul" and nothing more - it is Faustus who assume greatest and majesty will follow ~~but~~ ~~then~~ However, Wagner tells the Clown that he "will teach thee to turn thyself into anything, to a dog, or a cat, or a mouse, or a rat". Marlowe uses the intangible promise of "hope" from Mephistophilis to contrast Wagner's promise to "teach" and prove that Wagner offers more than Mephistophilis. Both Mephistophilis and Wagner can be viewed as symbols of Humanism - as a personal relationship with higher powers - and Marlowe uses the excessive list from Wagner to show that he has more potential than Mephistophilis. The 't' alliteration of "~~teach~~ thee to turn thy." would have resonated around Marlowe's stage ensuring that all of his audience hear this greater promise from Wagner. The list ^{of animals} given may have been specifically chosen to evoke memories of the

plague, as all ~~are~~ of the animals listed were believed to be a source of the plague - especially the "rat". Therefore, Marlowe is fully undermining Mephistophilis' lack of promise to Faustus by making Wagner's greater promise ~~is~~ nothing that anyone of class would aspire to. Marlowe presents Wagner in this way to further ^{undermine} Faustus' stupidity in signing the Faustian Pact ^{that guaranteed} for nothing in return.

Marlowe crafts Wagner to reflect his own frustrations at society as ^{this} a man of lower class is clearly worthy of a greater role in society than a servant. Marlowe allows Wagner to command ~~the~~ power and fulfill the ambition that Faustus fails to ^{go his pact} in order to highlight the futility of class. Similarly, Marlowe uses Wagner to prove that Faustus is so "wholly engrossed in the present" [Hippolyte Taine] that he is unaware that Mephistophilis promises him nothing, unlike Wagner's promise to the Clown. Wagner represents the source of Marlowe's ^{personal} frustrations: a man of great knowledge restricting by his low class.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is an example of a secure Level 5 response. The argument is convincing. Interpretations of text and context are sophisticated. There is a clear focus on the writer at work and close analysis of the language and structure of the play.

Question 19

The majority of candidates who had studied The Duchess of Malfi chose this question on the presentation of a corrupted court. Inevitably, the focus was very much on the brothers, but most candidates also acknowledged the role of the Duchess as a counterpoint to their corruption. There was secure handling of contextual material, with links mostly being made to the court of James I and to Webster's commentary on the role of the Church.

Secondly, ~~the~~ Webster identifies the rippling effect of court corruption, ^{to the rest of society} ~~with~~ lower status officials are guilty of greed and lust: Julia Delio ~~asks~~ tells Julia "I have brought you some [money]... hath it not a fine colour?"; ~~indicating~~ Julia's lack of "constancy" to her husband and the lust of Delio and the Cardinal (who is meant to be ~~the~~ celibate). Furthermore, the second, third and fourth officers show a fundamental desire ~~for~~ ~~wealth~~ across society ~~to~~ to look out for one's self as they say "You would have had more money" and Antonio tells the Duchess after ~~capt~~ punishment that "poor men which have got little in your service, vow to take your fortune." Therefore, ~~the~~ Webster is presenting the idea that rulers "carry fire in their tails, and all the country about them goes to wrack for it". ^{*} The character of Bosola is used to enforce that presentation, as he says to Ferdinand "I ~~look~~ serv'd your tyranny... though I loath'd the evil ^{*}... sought to appear a true servant than an honest man". Bosola ~~both~~ desires a cash relationship in order to better his financial situation, and is willing to be loyal only to those who pay him most.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a low Level 4 response. There is a controlled argument, with lots of pertinent reference to the text. The focus on the question is clear and there is a sense of the writer at work. More developed and detailed links to context would move this response up to a higher level e.g. perhaps exploring the links between the mercenary attitudes of Bosola and other characters and the changing face of economy and commerce in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Question 20

A small number of candidates chose to write about uncertainty in *The Duchess of Malfi* and most of these did so very successfully. Many focussed on Webster's frequent references to light and darkness as a means of creating an air of uncertainty. Candidates also pointed to the complex and sometimes inconsistent character of Bosola as playing a part in projecting the moral uncertainty of the play. Some explored the play as a reflection of contemporary political uncertainty and others explored Webster's use of black humour as a source of uncertainty for the audience. Weaker responses tended to be very character-driven and showed limited engagement with the play's contexts.

Some candidates were keen to discuss the role of women in the play and others only wanted to focus on deception: in both cases a good deal of seemingly pre-learned material was included that was not relevant to this question.

One of the main ways in which John Webster achieves the uncertainty is through the character of Bosola. Bosola's very first line ~~is~~ is 'I do haunt you still'; this creates an air of uncertainty in the audience as they do not know whether to trust him or not. The use of the word 'haunt' ~~is~~ ^{suggests} feelings of fear in those observing due to the negative connotations behind it. 'Haunt' ~~also~~ ^{possesses} ~~suggests~~ connotations of the supernatural which is very ~~interesting~~ confusing in itself due to uncertainty around the world of ghosts and spirits and whether they are real.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a Level 2 response. Although there is general awareness of the question throughout, the engagement with the text is fairly superficial - word-level at best - and ideas are not developed enough to show clear understanding.



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Examiner Tip

Looking at how language creates meaning is obviously important, but any discussion of specific lexis needs to be clearly linked to the themes of the play and to the question. Taking an isolated word out of context and making assertive claims for its importance is not analysis. An example in this extract is the exaggerated claim of importance that the candidate makes for the word, 'haunt'.

Question 21

Very few candidates had chosen to study *The Home Place* but of those who did, most chose to explore Friel's presentation of conflicting loyalties. Candidates had plenty to write about, with focus mainly on the Gore family and Margaret. Most candidates showed a good grasp of the political and social contexts of the play. Occasionally contextual material seemed to outweigh analysis of the text as a piece of drama and the best responses kept Friel's craft in view.

Loyalty is a characteristic trait that throughout *The Home Place*, Brian Friel seems to rank with high importance. Set in 1878, at a time of rising tensions in Ireland surrounding the influence of home rule and ~~heavy~~ strong presence of English landlords, Friel is able to indicate the conflict that occurs both within individuals internally and those with opposing, but equally strong views.

Perhaps the most conflicted character in the play, Margaret is created by Friel to indicate that despite doubts, innate Irish loyalty is always present. The opening of the play depicts Margaret standing 'motionless, enraptured', with the power of the traditional Irish music drawing her in. ~~The~~ Friel does not use any dialogue in this opening sequence, with the significance of Thomas Moore, a leader in Irish music, being all the more relevant. Notably, this would have been received particularly well when the play was first performed to an Irish audience in Dublin in 2005. Friel, however, temporarily ~~delivers~~ ^{addresses} these strong feelings throughout the play with Margaret

remaining loyal to the Gores in the final confrontation. Her insistence to Christopher that 'we were all cowardly' includes an inclusive personal pronoun that makes Margaret appear to consider herself part of the household.

However, Friel is effectively able to exploit her conflict to show the guilt she eventually feels at not being where she belongs, and the unhappiness she feels at The Lodge. Her conversations with David, another character with seemingly conflicting emotions, is dominated by him and their stichomythia where Margaret repeatedly says 'Yes' and 'I do' indicates ^{the} her lack of respect granted to her from the English. The repetition between Irish and English could mirror the repetition of tensions that were rife in Ireland around this time with the subsequent Irish Land Wars somewhat of a peak. Also, in her exchange with Maisie ^{McLaughlin} ~~McLaughlin~~ she claims 'I love your dress' which could highlight her maternal instincts or show Friel to demonstrate the guilt that she truly feels about leaving behind her Irish roots.

Friel also shows the key English landlord Christopher Gore to be somewhat conflicted, in his apparent desire to fit in and settle in a 'Home Place'. Of the English, Christopher is shown to be the more empathetic but usually inadequate and out of touch. His reference to the local Irish as his 'neighbours'

suggests unity however by Friel naming his home 'The Lodge', it seems apparent that his home is only intended to be temporary in the eyes of the Irish. His repeated use of question tags ~~stays~~ ^{effectively} such as 'Why did I want whitewash?' and 'is there?' ^{shows} ~~staying~~ him to be paranoid, ~~and~~ particularly when referencing 'the list' that he fears will target English landlords. This seems to ^{successfully} make Christopher more of an unlikable character, as effectively designed by Friel.

Interestingly, Christopher's wavering support for the English can be noted in his reaction to Lord Lifford and his funeral. He references Lifford as ^{carrying out} ~~an~~ 'physical violence' ^{behaviour of} ~~the~~ mirroring common Irish views of the English landlords but also ~~his~~ labels him as 'poor old' using sympathetic lexical choices and making references to the 'ribe'. Despite these conflicting descriptions, it seems that the link to colonialism and imperialistic ideas is something that Christopher remains loyal to. His insistence in his ^{affection} ~~affection~~ for Margaret ^{whom he calls 'elegan'} is presented by Friel as a means of trying to find a home and therefore, exploits his inner conflict to show that there is only one place he can truly belong - England.

Finally, certain characters in the play have unwavering loyalties meaning that the conflict between them also Friel to create drama. The

presentation of Con, who is immediately labelled by Friel as a Fenian directly contrasts the imperialistic views of Richard Gore. Con's claim that he is 'not

on the Gore land trespassing' ^{links} to the work of the Irish Land League who aimed to return land to the Irish from wealthy English landlords. In the final confrontation between Con, Christopher and Richard - or symbolically the Irish and English - Con's tone is polite and persuasive. This can be directly ~~compared~~ ^{contrasted} to Richard, who labels Con as a 'creature', dehumanising him and allowing Friel to create anger in the audience at such arrogance of the English.

Indeed, Richard is somewhat mocked by Friel for favouring the colonial view and wishing to unlock the 'entire universe' ^{through his belief in Eugenics} as he places his faith in an empire doomed to fail. His supremacist personality, and the fact that he is a representative of the English, is exploited by Friel in order to create a negative view of the landlords. By positioning this conflict of loyalties ^{towards} ~~at~~ the end of the play, Friel is able to create drama and emphasise the start of what he hopes will be change in Ireland.

It is clear that conflict between personal loyalties plagues some of the characters in the play, effectively trying to find where they belong.



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Examiner Comments

This is a low Level 4 response. The candidate shapes a convincing argument in response to the question and shows a sound grasp of the political and social contexts of the play. More exploration of Friel's craft as a dramatist would improve this largely character-driven essay: for example, some consideration of his use of symbolism to suggest conflicting loyalties.

Question 22

Only a small number of candidates chose to write about nostalgia in *The Home Place*. There were nevertheless some very full responses, with candidates exploring the methods Friel uses to create a sense of nostalgia such as his use of symbolism (e.g. the falcon as a symbol of hope for a free Ireland) and all the nostalgic allusions to Irish nationalism - such as the music of Thomas Moore. Candidates also looked at the idealised, nostalgic vision created by Christopher Gore of his 'home place' in Kent. Most candidates made clear links between the play's focus on nostalgia and the political and social contexts that Friel wants to explore. Weaker responses tended to be very character-driven, often consisting of nothing more than a portrait of Margaret.

Question 23

A Streetcar Named Desire was the overwhelmingly popular choice of play in Section B. There were various interpretations of the question on points of view, but most focused on the perspectives of Blanche, Stanley and (sometimes) Stella. Many candidates interpreted the question to mean: how would different audiences view characters (e.g. is Stanley a positive role model for working class males or an aggressive and misogynistic husband). This meant a range of contextual ideas were included (e.g. a feminist reading, a Marxist reading etc.) but discussion of these was often vague and not integrated into textual analysis. Several responses also drifted into discussing the conflict between Blanche and Stanley without relating it to their differing points of view. The strongest responses went beyond character and explored Williams' stagecraft, looking at the methods he used to allow the audience to see a character's point of view - for example, through symbolism, clothing, and music and so on. Weaker responses involved writing about the opinions of each character with little acknowledgment of them as literary constructs.

Through the character of Eunice we are provided with an alternative perspective on the stereotypical woman 'I made the spaghetti dish and ate it myself'; 'Tell Steve to get him a poor boy's sandwich 'cause there's nothing left here'; contrasts with the typical association of a feminine role; through Eunice, we are presented with a character who is well-integrated and adapted to the society she lives in. 'She couldn't stay here; there wasn't no other place for her'; shows how Eunice is wise of what to expect from the actions of Blanche and how evolution and adapting to said New Orleans has affected her psychologically; there is a resignating resignation in the way that society is portrayed and how women are reliant on men, 'Don't ever believe it, life has got to go on. No matter what happens you've got to keep on going'; despite the rape of Blanche, leaving Stanley would be more detrimental to Stella than staying with him. Involving discussions on the power given to men within our society, this is reinforced by the omission of sexual assault and abuse from the stage.

Williams cleverly stages the abuse of Stella, only indicating it through the stage directions 'He advances ~~out of sight~~ and disappears. There is the sound of a blow,' the same technique is used when displaying the sexual assault 'He picks up her inert figure and carries her to the bed. The Hot trumpet and drums from the Four devils saunter loudly,' Williams chooses to do this in order to make more controversial discussions surrounding taboo subjects. The omission of the rape and assault make critics to question whether they happened. Their omission can also show care that despite sexuality being something over in New Orleans, criminal acts and the misuse of that sexuality and power is still hidden, causing the audience to recognise the flaws that ~~is~~ remain within society and take steps to rectify them.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a Level 5 response. Note that the candidate has a clear focus on Williams' stagecraft and is evaluating his success in presenting alternative perspectives. In this extract the candidate explores in detail how Williams uses the character of Eunice to allow the audience to see Stella's point of view.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Don't go into an exam with a prepared answer in your head. It's really important to read the question carefully and make sure your response is fully focused on the topic asked about - not on what you've learnt.

Question 24

Writing about the rise of a new social order in *A Streetcar Named Desire* was the most popular candidate choice on this paper. Significant numbers of responses covered very similar material and in some cases it seemed that candidates were relying on prepared essay material. Responses typically focused on the first few pages of the play; it was common for well over half of an essay to comment on the opening stage directions, and indeed the decision to set the play in New Orleans and the expository facts about the main characters. Often these resembled close readings rather than responses about the play as a whole. Candidates also frequently commented at great length on the costuming of Blanche and Stanley and the reference to a 'moth'. Analysis of dialogue, aside from a few key quotes, was far less common. Weaker responses failed to consider the text as a piece of drama, as shown through the regularity of responses referring to 'the reader'. There was much complex terminology used, with a wide range of security over its meaning and relevance. Context was generally well referred to, and students were able to link their comments to relevant historical and biographical information.

Williams portrays the rise of a new social order in 'A Streetcar named Desire' in many ways. Williams was writing the play in a time when many immigrants were pouring into America to seek a better quality of life; primarily the cause of WW2 which had ruptured many countries. With this came the change of America, the arrival of a new social order, which ~~also~~ "drew out" the old social order as quoted by Williams in his autobiography, "Memoirs". Fundamentally, Williams portrays the rise of a new social order through the conflict between Stanley and Stella in the play; and how Stanley's social order (Polish immigrant/lower class laborer) is stronger than and defies Blanche's "old-money" (upper-class) social order. Williams achieves this through the contrast in characteristics of Blanche and Stanley, and also through the theatrical devices he uses to illuminate the conflict between Stanley and Blanche, and symbolic dominance and rise of a new 'social order'.



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Examiner Comments

This is the introduction from a high scoring response. Note how the candidate clearly sets out the direction the response will take. There is a firm grasp of context and, more importantly, of Williams' dramatic purpose. There is also a clear intention to look at Williams' craft - character contrast, theatrical devices, and symbolism and so on.



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Examiner Tip

Try to avoid writing answers that are entirely character-driven. Always go on to look at wider themes and the writer's craft.

Question 25

The Importance of Being Earnest was another popular choice of play on Section B and many candidates chose to write about the presentation of social status. Responses ranged widely across the whole play - the fine social gradation between Jack and Algernon, the comic exposure of Lady Bracknell's social outlook, the use of status and fashion to fuel the comedy of the spat between Cecily and Gwendolen, the small but important role of Lane. There was general understanding of Wilde's satiric purpose, and diverse contextual factors were, in the main, handled with understanding. The very best responses clearly understood the difference between social class and social status.

In 'The Importance of Being Earnest', marriage throughout the play is regarded by the characters as a business-like proposition designed to elevate social status. Wilde uses the Wildean Dandy, Algernon, to voice his scathing view of marriage in Victorian upper class society as being artificial. When Jack tells Algernon that he has arrived in London to propose to Gwendolen, Algernon remarks, 'I thought you had come up for pleasure? - I call that business.' Although Algernon's ~~epi~~ remark is dismissed by Jack as 'unromantic', the idea of marriage as a business designed to elevate social status is made clear through Lady Bracknell, the epitome of Victorian upper class conservatism in the play. In a farcical reversal of the traditional Victorian scene in which the father interviews the suitor to ~~examine~~ Bracknell interrogates Jack on purely ^{superficial} ~~artificial~~ matters. The ~~important~~ remarks on Jack's address as 'The unromantic side' and refers with sarcasm to smoking as 'an occupation'. Such a narrow focus on Jack's suitability provokes comedy ~~as it is clear that~~ as it satirises the priorities of the upper class in regards to marriage.

The scene is elevated to a farcical tale on the popular melodramatic trope of the orphaned child when, in response to Jack's confusion over his identity, Lady Bracknell remarks 'You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter... to marry into a coal-room and form an alliance with a porcupine?' The absurdly unsympathetic nature of her comment exposes her shallow concerns over social status in regards to marriage.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

In this extract from a Level 5 response, the candidate is exploring the presentation of social status and its links to marriage in the play. Note the clear focus on Wilde's satiric and dramatic purpose and the use of plenty of detail from the text to back up arguments. The candidate also shows an excellent understanding of the literary context of the drama with relevant references to farce, reversals of dramatic conventions, comedy tropes, satire, melodrama and so on.

Question 26

This question was less popular than Q25, but there was lots to explore on the topic of personal identity. Many candidates looked at the links between personal identity and social status. Most discussed Jack's and Algernon's respective ways of escaping the boundaries of their real identities, and the role of Gwendolen as a conventional product of London high society versus the representation of Cecily as an imaginative child of nature. There was discussion about notions of 'doubling' or 'doppelganger' in Victorian writing. Candidates were able to make links between the play and Wilde's own struggles with personal identity, with the best responses making detailed analysis of the coded references to homosexuality in the play and of Wilde's implied commentary on the hypocrisy of Victorian society. Weaker interpretations of the question produced some narrative responses about characters and their alter-egos. There were also some fairly sweeping generalisations about Victorian life.

Question 27

The Pitmen Painters is a play that was studied by a small number of candidates who were clearly engaged by, and committed to, the play. A few chose to explore Hall's use of projections and their responses were generally well-handled. Candidates noted the use of projections for a range of dramatic purposes, including providing the audience with background information and allowing the various works of art to be displayed on stage. Many also noted the emotional impact on the audience of the final projection. The strongest responses sustained focus on Hall's dramatic purpose in using the projections and made relevant and insightful reference to political contexts and also to literary contexts such as Brechtian theatre and so on. Weaker responses tended to skim over the play itself and made few links between the text and their discussion of production techniques.

Question 28

The question on community was the more popular of the two on The Pitmen Painters. There was plenty for candidates to explore with the majority highlighting the contrasts between the community of miners and outside figures such as Lyons and Helen Sutherland. Better responses moved beyond simple comments on class conflict, however, some pointed out how supportive of each other the miners were. Others noted the Young Lad's perception of being an outsider because he was not a miner. Some explored threats to the community - such as Oliver's stipend offer. A few made the interesting point that these miners in fact created a 'new' community - of working artists. Weaker responses tended to describe the plot or 'explain' context with little sense of the dramatist at work or of an audience. Many also tended to get bogged down in debates around political contexts, rather than treating the text as a literary construct.

Question 29

For a text that was a popular choice for coursework, *The Rover* was the choice of surprisingly few candidates. However, the quality of responses was generally very high. Most candidates chose this question on Behn's use of the unconventional in the play and many explored her use of female heroines, the carnival setting in Naples that allowed her to make comments on contemporary society, the changes Behn made to Killigrew's narrative and the play's conventional ending in marriage. Weaker responses tended to be one-dimensional, focussing only on a single topic such as marriage or on specific characters. Some were too concerned to discuss 'feminism' at the expense of the literary features of the text. The best responses looked at the play as a whole, exploring Behn's dramatic purpose, noting the subtleties in her presentation of themes and characters and considering the conventions of Restoration drama and romantic comedy.

However, whilst the carnival demonstrates a temporary overturning of the social order, at the end of the play we still witness a conventional comedic ending; Hellena, Florinda and Valeria are all married. This appears problematic, because it appears to represent a re-establishment of the conventional patriarchal order, a move to marriage ~~to~~ ~~be~~ we entirely subvertive, in contrast to the arranged marriage Florinda had nearly been forced into at the start of the

play. This also demonstrates Behn's royalist leanings; the re-establishment of order echoes the re-establishment of the monarchy in 1660, which Behn had supported, which ~~was~~ brought order to the political crisis the commonwealth had undergone. Following the death of Cromwell, the Lord Protector, especially since William is

1/6y. This ~~only~~ also demonstrates Behn's
~~of~~ Royalist loyalties; the re-establishment
of order ~~se~~ echoes the re-establishment of
the monarchy in 1660, which Behn had supported,
~~and~~ which ~~was~~ brought order to the
political crisis the commonwealth had undergone.
Following the death of Cromwell, the
Lord Protector, especially since Willmore is
~~after~~ supposedly based on Charles II,
the restored monarch.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is an extract from a Level 5 response. Note how the candidate shapes a sophisticated argument - looking at both the unconventional and conventional dramatic approaches taken by Behn. There is clear understanding of historical and biographical contexts - but note how the references are all relevant both to the question (the 'unconventional') but also to the text itself (the marriages; Willmore's role etc).

Question 30

A very small number of candidates looked at the presentation of Belville in The Rover. Weaker responses tended simply to describe the character or to respond as if he were real. Stronger responses analysed Belville as Behn's dramatic construct, exploring his function in the gender dynamics of the play - as a foil to Willmore who offers a more progressive attitude to women - and in the context of comic drama generally: for instance, as a courtly lover or as an example of the 'forbidden love' trope.

Belville's poor luck continues when he is mistaken for Willmore ^{and} arrested, when Willmore reveals his true identity to Pedro after the duel, and when Willmore tries to rape Florinda, disrupting his plan to save her from the house. In fact, almost all of his attempts to communicate ^{with} or save Florinda are obstructed, often by Willmore. He has the bad luck of a tragic lover, such as in 'Romeo and Juliet'; and ~~expresses~~ complains such as in a monologue, saying that 'Fortune' - capitalised to demonstrate the frequent personification of this kind of concept in Restoration drama - 'is resolved never to turn with smiles upon' him. It seems again that Behn is condemning his and Florinda's relationship. Alternatively, she could well be producing the ~~necessary~~ tendency of drama to overplay the 'forbidden love trope.' Either way, Belville is presented as faithful, yet deeply unlucky.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This high-scoring response argues that Behn presents Belvile as a play on the 'courtly lover' tradition. In this extract, note how the candidate moves well beyond simply recounting Belvile's actions to consider his dramatic function, exploring the language of the text in detail and evaluating Behn's characterisation against the conventions of dramatic comedy.

Question 31

Waiting for Godot was the play of choice for a good number of candidates, around half of whom answered the question on Beckett's use of humour. There was a broad range of responses covering all levels of attainment. Many candidates were able to identify different dramatic features in the play, such as the use of slapstick timing to create comic effects. Weaker responses tended to focus on narrative and on explaining why particular scenes might be considered humorous. Some candidates wrote about comedy as a means to pass the time, to highlight human lack of purpose and the futility of existence, to act as a coping mechanism and so on. A number explored Absurdist Theatre and highlighted the tragedy behind the comedy. Many candidates made links to a relevant range of other models of comedy, such as Laurel and Hardy, Chaplin, Keaton, the Goons and Vaudeville acts. The most successful responses maintained a strong focus on dramatic genre and style and were evaluative in their approach.

Question 32

The topic of survival in *Waiting for Godot* clearly engaged a number of candidates and there were some excellent, thoughtful responses to this question. Discussion tended to focus mainly on the concept of whether survival meant the maintenance of existence or the pursuit of a meaningful life. Candidates noted that survival may mean prolonging suffering and referred to the thoughts of suicide presented. Some mentioned the repeated tasks the characters create for themselves just to give themselves purpose in order to survive. Candidates wrote of the importance of companionship and, on a deeper level, psychoanalytical concepts such as the verification of the self by being seen or heard by another. Some examined the differences in the relationship between Vladimir and Estragon and that of Pozzo and Lucky – one being based on co-operation while other is based on control and submission – noting that the latter did not work for Vladimir and Estragon. By way of context, references were made to Beckett's experiences with the resistance in the war and to the comedy of *Laurel and Hardy*.

Plan

P1: *Albert Camus*

How to survive knowing life has no purpose

P2 - *erection* P3 - *acting*

P4: *religion*

P5: *cyclical nature open structure*

~~forget~~ what Estragon forgets what happens - *boy*

fill empty time, 'making for... waiting'

*3 writer
play
with
time*

Godot is end of war? suffering

The theme of survival in *'Waiting for Godot'* is presented through Vladimir and Estragon's futile attempt to give their lives meaning. Beckett was writing after the horrific events of the Second World War and during the tensions of the Cold War, so the questions of human purpose and the methods we use to survive were very relevant to the time in which he was

writing. The absurdity The influence of conventions of the Theatre of the Absurd are apparent in Beckett's vague references to time, such as 'in the nineties', and the, sometimes frustrating, conversations about that always seem to undercut anything meaningful. This critique of habit and conversation topics and ~~obsessive~~ ~~habit~~ meaningless actions serves to ~~show~~ ~~the audience~~ could be argued to be making a wider comment on human survival strategies. The audience may leave the theatre feeling as though Beckett has wasted their time but perhaps Beckett is suggesting that we are all guilty of getting on time with absurd habits. For Beckett, therefore, perhaps he is prompting us to consider how we can adapt our lives and 'make the most of it, before it's too late' and survive through a life with no objective meaning by existing for existing rather than 'waiting for... waiting'.

~~Albert~~ Albert Camus was an influential existentialist philosopher ~~at the time~~ and a contemporary of Samuel Beckett in France. He explored the different survival strategies humans have in living ~~in~~ ~~life~~ in a world devoid of purpose. These methods ~~written~~ ~~it~~ seem to be dramatised through Beckett's characters. For example, Camus said that we often distract ourselves with physical pleasures: Vladimir gets excited, shown by the exclamation mark, when he considers that being harassed

would 'give us an erection!' The non-sequitur, 'Did you reply?' 'How? He can't?' also shows a preoccupation with physical satisfaction. This change ^{technique also} in ~~conversation~~ ~~not~~ only undermines, but creates a climate of competition between the characters, much like the verbal combat between America and the USSR during the Cold War. Camus also suggested that ^{actor} ~~actor~~, who assume different roles, is a joke ^{attempts} ~~attempts~~ of surviving this meaningless life. Given the form of the literature, Kessel explores this metaphorically but also explicitly shows Vladimir and Gnatyev as 'play[ing] Pozzo and Lucky'. The mundanity following of rules stage directions is reflected in Vladimir's aggressive directions, i.e. 'Use me!', 'Smoker!', '~~Use me not to think~~' 'Say, Think, Pig!'. It seems that Lucky's speech is the only part of the play free from stage directions or camera, therefore denying the director ~~or player~~ any control over the actor. Camus ~~explor~~ ^{in his book} suggested that Sisyphus, who is condemned to roll a boulder up a mountain every day only to watch it fall down again, ~~is free from the purpose~~ ~~to~~ ~~act~~ is only free if he embraces the purposelessness of his actions and ~~continues on~~ ~~reg~~ survives regardless. Therefore, Lucky's poor hearer from Pozzo, 'Stop! [Lucky stops.] Back! [Lucky moves back.]...', can only be survived if Lucky acknowledges its absurdity and carries on regardless. This is, perhaps, ~~but~~ also Kessel's interpretation of survival: ultimately, surviving has no

objective purpose, but we must not fall on time with unsuccessful coping mechanisms, such as acting or fulfilling physical pleasures; we must embrace lack of purpose and live on happily regardless.

Many believe that the pain and evil in this world serves a greater purpose and this will be explained that divine justice will be dispensed when we die. ~~Despite~~ In this way, religion could be considered a method of 'survival' in life. In the play, despite Beckett's insistence that if he wanted God to be God, he would have called him 'God', the religious references ~~are~~ certainly suggest that discussion of God and the Bible is a way people ~~strive~~ survive. Pozzo has been considered by critics to be God who doesn't recognize his creation: 'You are human beings none the less. As far as one can see... Made in God's image [He burst out into an enormous laugh] ... Made in God's image!' The Pozzo also 'lyrical [ly]' describes the 'night', his language containing connotations of creation and power: 'pppft!' finished!' followed by 'How did you find my me? God?', mimicking the Genesis 1 and God's declaration that what he created was 'good'. ~~The impotence of Pozzo / his rage~~ Beckett doesn't seem to ~~give~~ entertain this idea, however, portraying Pozzo in the second act as a vulnerable ~~as~~ and mutable: 'I am blind'. Perhaps the impotence of God

in the Bible is ignored in favour of his omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence because the plausibility of an irrational creator such as ~~for~~ 1620 is hard to qualify alongside developments in science. After following the war, the logical positivist aimed to remove philosophy to fit it with the scientific paradigm; perhaps this feeling of God's apathy and a shift in focus towards verifiable facts was prevalent in France as well. Considering God's purpose, perhaps he represents something secular such as the end of the war: Vladimir's reference to 'The tiger tiger (that) bounds to the help of congress?' could be alluding to an army tank (called tiger) and his speech could be mimicking war speeches. The interpretation that God is God could, for Beckett, be frustrating because we try to survive based on the assumption that God will save us and therefore attribute religious significance to everything. We should survive for the sake of survival rather than living for an unverifiable transcendent creator who, as Lucky says, seems to have created an 'unfinished', imperfect, complex-ridden civilisation for humans.

The
Beckett purposefully subverts the traditional form of a play: he rejects the 'three unities' of plot, place and time, replacing them with absurdism and denies the audience any resolution with the play's 'open structure'. This has a jarring effect for the audience, who are not

denied comfort from this play about the purpose of life; they are instead encouraged to believe, ~~that~~ though Vladimir and Estragon's preoccupation with mindless activities such as 'pull [ing]' boots, that their methods of survival are futile. Beckett, true to existentialist philosophy, but seems to have believed that we should not explain our existence in terms of God or trick ourselves into believing there is purpose to life's suffering. We are not 'surviving' life; we need to live it.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is a secure Level 5 response, showing a well-considered response to the question. The candidate has used a sound grasp of Camus' philosophy as a means of illuminating understanding of the play whilst never losing sight of Beckett's craft as a dramatist. There is a highly sophisticated blending of textual and contextual understanding.

Paper Summary

It was clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well-prepared for the new paper, and it was a pleasure to see such genuine engagement on the part of candidates with the plays in their contexts and with the critical debate around them.

- Based on their performance on the paper, candidates are offered the following advice:
- Take the time to choose a question carefully and to plan your answer before beginning to write.
- Don't try to reproduce prepared essays and keep a clear focus on the terms of the question.
- A good deal of work has clearly gone in to critical reading around the plays.
- Don't just name and quote critics.
- Make sure you demonstrate your understanding of, and engagement with, their ideas by linking them to the play itself and to the question.
- Remember that critical comments should enhance, not replace, your own arguments.
- Bear in mind that characters in plays are literary constructs and not real people.
- Try to maintain a critical distance when discussing characterisation.
- Don't spend so much time on contextual material that you fail to analyse the play itself.
- Keep a clear focus on the dramatist's craft and think about how language and structure are used to create meaning.
- Do, however, avoid simplistic word-level analysis which will often break up your argument.

Grade Boundaries

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