

General Certificate of Education  
January 2005  
Advanced Level Examination



**ENGLISH LITERATURE (SPECIFICATION B)**  
**Unit 6 Exploring Texts**

**LTB6/PM**

To be issued to candidates on Monday 24 January 2005 for examination  
on Monday 31 January 2005 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm

**Pre-Release Material**

- To be given out on or after Monday 24 January 2005.
- On receipt of this material, you are advised to check carefully that the booklet is complete and that no pages are missing or illegible. There should be 20 pages. If you experience problems you should consult your teacher.
- You should use the time between receiving this material and the examination to familiarise yourself with its contents.
- You are permitted to make **brief** annotations on the pre-release material. Such annotation should amount to no more than cross-references and/or the glossing of individual words or phrases. Highlighting and underlining are permitted.
- You are **not** permitted to bring any additional written material with you into the examination.
- Your teacher is **not** permitted to discuss the pre-release material with you before the examination.
- **You must bring this material with you to the examination.**

**Pre-Release Material**

**Conflict in Literature**

**Contents**

- Item One**      Extract from *Amy's View* by David Hare.
- Item Two**      The works of David Hare.
- Item Three**     Some comments on David Hare and *Amy's View*.
- Item Four**     Extracts from an interview with David Hare.
- Item Five**     Extracts from an article in *The Guardian*.

**Item One**

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## Item Two

### The works of David Hare

David Hare was born in 1947 in Sussex. He began writing when the Portable Theatre, a touring company Hare had founded with Tony Bicat, was left without a play when a playwright failed to come up with the script. Hare wrote a play in the four days remaining before the performance was due to take place. Since then he has become an increasingly prolific playwright. He has written twenty-two plays and is one of Britain's leading playwrights.

Hare's plays deal with complex issues and often have a political focus. *Amy's View*, 1997, looks at the nuances and ambiguities of a mother/daughter relationship and in the process examines the relationship between theatre and life, between the artist and the worker and between genuine art and pseudo art.

Hare's characters are taken from the middle-class with a focus on the conflict resulting from the clash of idealism with the corruption of society and the cynicism of political life. The conflict inevitably leads to stalemate and disintegration for the characters concerned.

Amy's mother Esme, herself a well-known actress, inveighs against television journalism which she encounters at close quarters in the shape of Dominic Tyghe, Amy's fiancé. In Act One Dominic is writing a gossip column for a national paper, which is based on obtaining information from people through flattery and then publishing something derogatory. By the second act, six years later, Dominic has progressed to become the producer of a television programme. Its aim is to 'educate' the nation on the way in which they have been misled by the Arts establishment into thinking that certain works are 'good' just because that is the received wisdom. To Dominic the theatre is boring and outdated. Since the theatre and the established Arts are Esme's passion, this leads to some of the dramatic high points of the play. In Act Two Esme, wrought to a pitch of fury by Dominic's scorn for the theatre, exclaims:

Have you noticed? It's always the death of the theatre. The death of the novel. The death of poetry. The death of whatever they fancy this week. Except there's one thing it's never the death of. Somehow it's never the death of themselves . . . The death of television! The death of the journalist! Why do we never get those? It's off to the scaffold with everyone except for the journalists!

David Hare's plays have helped to ensure that the theatre is far from dead in Britain. One critic comments that what Hare has been doing for the last thirty years is "setting loose complexly conflicted characters caught in sparkling irresolvable dramas that grapple with the questions, 'How do we change the world? And if we cannot change the world, how can we live in the world as we find it?'"

*Amy's View* is both funny and serious. It satirises human frailties such as self-deception and pretension, but Esme and Amy both have a good deal of self-awareness. Amy's inability to accept the truth about Dominic's nature and motivations early in the play leads to conflict with Esme, whose shrewd assessment of Dominic's character is brought out through the wit and vitality of her lines. Hare has always shown great flair for writing naturalistic sounding dialogue. The voices are woven together apparently effortlessly, but Hare crafts each line skilfully and with an understanding not just of the speaking voice but also of human psychology.

Hare insists on the importance of understanding the complexity of human relations, whether in writing about real or fictional situations. Hare believes that theatre is a medium that can communicate uniquely and is gratified when his plays arouse heated debates. The characters in his plays provoke such debates through their own passionate example, as we can see from *Amy's View*.

**Item Three****Some comments on David Hare and *Amy's View***

- (a) David Hare's forte is in dramatising conflicting ideas and viewpoints.
- (b) Hare's characters tend to be tools for the expression of ideas rather than fully realised individuals.
- (c) Most of Hare's characters are misfits in their society.
- (d) In *Amy's View* the characters are finely observed and presented with attention to psychological detail.
- (e) In Hare's plays the action tends to be focused on a small group of people in an enclosed, claustrophobic location where they play out their intricate and often dysfunctional relationships.
- (f) The wit and polish of Hare's lines have led some critics to ignore the trenchancy of the moral vision underlying them.
- (g) In *Amy's View* Hare focuses on a mother/daughter relationship which is complicated by Amy's choice of Dominic as partner. Some critics have seen Esme, the central focus of whose life is the theatre, as representative of the past, and Dominic, with his interest in film and television, as representative of the future. The introduction of Dominic into the equation gives rise to a heated debate on one of Hare's central concerns, the value of theatre.
- (h) Amy, Esme and Dominic, like many of the characters in Hare's other plays, try to make sense of their disillusionment with society. They struggle against the confusions of their world, seeking, like the playwright himself, to impose some kind of order on chaos.

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**Item Four****Extracts from an interview with David Hare published in 'Theatre Quarterly'**

Hare at one point wrote a play called *What Happened to Blake?* He commented that it was complex and 'much more formally demanding' than his successful play *Slag*. He thought that because the Portable Theatre could meet the demands of the new play more easily than the commercial theatre, he could write it easily:

*But it was arrogance which made me think that I could just toss a play off. To write a play at all you have to work extremely hard on what you believe about the subject – and the writing process is finding out the truth or otherwise of what you believe by testing it on the stage. So you're just not conscious at the time of where you are going to sell it.*

When Hare is asked about his political views in the 1970s, he replies:

*It's really only as a writer that I've begun to think myself straight, work out for myself the answers to political questions. It's a rigorous discipline, playwriting, in the sense that you need to answer questions which are never answered by polemic or journalism or propaganda.*

It's as conscious a process as that when you're writing?

*I think it's become more and more so. Playwriting is a ruthlessly truthful medium, and I've come to believe in it much more as I've gone on working. I think that the judgements the audience make show up insincerity, reveal the superficial, and more and more I have trouble writing until I've worked out in the greatest possible detail what I think myself about some subject or other, whatever I'm writing about.*

One gets the feeling from what you've said about your plays that once they're written and staged you regard them as almost . . . disposable.

*I think so. I think if I were honest, which I'm not, I would stop them being done after a period of time.*

Is that something that will continue, or is there going to come a time when you will be able to say, yes, that's mine, and still worth doing?

*I don't think 'Knuckle' or 'Teeth 'n' Smiles' have been superseded as plays either by what I now think, or by what other people have written after me. They stand. The rest of my work I'm happy to consign to oblivion.*

**Item Five**

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**Item One** DAVID HARE, *Amy's View* (Faber), 1997.

**Item Four** Adapted from an interview with David Hare, from *New Theatre Voices of the Seventies*, Simon Trussler (The Pitman Press). As shown in the original Methuen publication.

**Item Five** Adapted from an article by PAM GEMS, *The Guardian*, 17 May 2003. © Pam Gems.

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