

GCE English Literature

Case Study 2

Reigate Sixth Form College

Unit 2 Coursework

Explorations in Drama

Edexcel is grateful to the staff and students for their collaboration in supplying guidance and examples of student work

Case Study 2

REIGATE SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

This large centre has been very successful in its approach to AS coursework over the past two years. So many students study English Literature in this centre that it is important that the department keeps a high degree of control over coursework progress. Students study two plays in class (e. g Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*). The Explorative Study is then set and planned for, with the department providing students with a range of support materials (in the form of a booklet, as below) that will signpost them in their exploration of the play's contexts and critical receptions so that they are fully prepared for Assessments 3 and 4.

Thus, the following task:

Upon visiting London in 1592, the Duke of Wurtumburg observed,

"Most of the inhabitants are employed in buying and selling merchandise, and trading in every corner of the world."

Explore and compare the use of trade as a metaphor in Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* and William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

is presented to the student with a Support Booklet that points them to a range of possible resources on the web ('This link has some great Shakespeare/Marlowe / London contextual information: <http://history.wisc.edu/sommerville/367/367-034.htm>') to considerations of contemporary religion and from a variety of inter-textual suggestions('In a memorable scene from the 2001 film *A Beautiful Mind*, John Nash loses to his arch rival Hansen in a game of Go. Nash then states that it is impossible for him to lose because his playing was flawless. Hansen smugly replies, 'The hubris of the defeated...' To what extent is Shylock guilty of hubris?') to significant critical comments from various other readers and a 'stretch and challenge' link to the Open University resources: <http://www.open2.net/drfaustus/index.html>.

Moderator comments:

This approach to supporting students though their coursework in a large centre is very effective. Yes, all students may be set the same task but the diversity of support materials ensures that the final essays are all very individualistic in their approach to the texts in their contexts and in their response to various interpretations by other readers.

The centre takes a similar approach to setting up the Creative Critical Response. Students are presented with the creative task:

Watch Nevill Coghill's filmed adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1967) and write a review of it, using your knowledge of the play and responding to previous criticism, for the Guardian Unlimited website.

An accompanying booklet directs the students to a range of models of criticism for them to read and experiment with:

- An online summary / review of the play itself (<http://www.enotes.com/faustus>)

- A review of Christopher Ricks' book (including criticism of Dr Faustus) by Helen McNeill in The Independent
- Three reviews of the film version (Cinebeats / David Nusair / Dan Mankowski)
- A selection of Amazon customer reviews
- Links to the Guardian Online site (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage>) with a further research directive

A similar collection of resources accompanies another task:

Your Brief

As a development from their Shakespeare and Chaucer "Re-told" programmes, the BBC have decided to commission a series of six one hour plays based upon six more classic works of English Literature under the banner of "Six Classics Re-told." The intended audience for this series will be intelligent young people between the ages of 14-24 who might be studying these texts, or similar, at GCSE, Advanced or even Degree level (the Educational market is not insignificant) but they should also appeal at the surface level to all the family. The budget for this series is relatively high as we expect to sell large numbers of DVDs and to networks abroad, notably the USA.

The first text to be commissioned is the A text of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.

We are inviting you to submit a 500 word treatment that will give us a good idea of how you seek to re-tell this story in a way that retains the interesting thematic and moral complexities of Marlowe's original, with at least some of his "mighty" poetry left intact. We also are looking for original ideas in term of character, locations and suchlike that will appeal to a contemporary audience.

This is a tough challenge, but we would really like to hear your ideas. We attach some further sheets to help you with the more technical aspects of writing a treatment.

The absolutely key factors in assuring your success, and lucrative royalties from worldwide sales will be

- An awareness of who we (the BBC) are and how we expect to be addressed.
- A coherent, accurate and fluently written treatment
- A style, structure and use of language in your treatment that is convincing and persuasive
- Skill in using your treatment to discuss and present your (excellent) ideas
- A thoughtful and effective interpretation of this text within both its 16th century and 21st century contexts, showing that you are aware of how these will be received when finally broadcast.

Good luck,
Stott, Wilson and Cann
(Controllers: Literary Adaptations)

Moderator's comment:

These clear tasks, with suggestions for critical models and further research, support the students in their coursework without inhibiting their creativity.

The candidate from this centre whose work is displayed with this case study was awarded 62 and 18 marks.