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Candidate Style Answers with commentary

H072

ENGLISH LITERATURE

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
SECTION 1	
QUESTION 1(A)	4
QUESTION 1(B)	6
QUESTION 2(A)	8
QUESTION 2(B)	11
QUESTION 3(A)	14
QUESTION 3(B)	17
QUESTION 4(A)	19
QUESTION 4(B)	21
QUESTION 5(A)	23
QUESTION 5(B)	25
QUESTION 6(A)	28
QUESTION 6(B)	32
SECTION 2	
QUESTION 7	36
QUESTION 8	39
QUESTION 9	43
QUESTION 10	46
QUESTION 11	48



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INTRODUCTION

At the time of publication, authentic answers from the work of students were not available so OCR senior examiners have created these candidate style answers. These exemplars should be read in conjunction with sample assessment materials and mark schemes (and Principal Examiner's Reports once they become available) on the OCR website. This content has been selected to illustrate how questions on the new texts might be answered, and to demonstrate that approaches to question setting and marking will remain consistent with past practice. The candidate style answers are intended to exemplify work which would fulfil the top band criteria, supported by examiner commentary and conclusions. These exemplars should in no way be regarded as model answers. OCR is open to a wide variety of approaches, and answers will be considered on their merits. It should be remembered that the standard used in marking these candidate style answers has not gone through the usual rigorous procedures and checks applied to live material.



SECTION 1

QUESTION 1(A) CORIOLANUS

'Coriolanus is a play in which actions speak louder than words.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view?

Coriolanus is one of the most continuously action-packed of Shakespeare's plays,¹ as Alan Howard's athletic first act performance for the RSC in 1979 demonstrated. He leaped across the gates of Corioli on the shoulders of bloodstained soldiers and burned so much energy that an interval was taken after Act One so he could recuperate. Even when the hero returns to Rome in Act 2 the action is continuous: the candidacy, with its on and offstage manipulation, the swaying crowd scenes, the threat of execution via the Tarpeian rock, the clandestine meeting with Tullus Aufidius, the return to Rome for the great set-piece nemesis with Coriolanus's mother. The hero dies in a political coup that is bound to be exciting on stage, whether it involves assassination via machine gun fire in a modern dress production, or a dagger scene **anticipating the death of Julius Caesar**² in a more traditional one.

Nevertheless, however lively the action, the impression persists that Coriolanus, like all Shakespeare's Roman plays, is essentially a play of rhetoric, not events. **It has even been called as much a debate as a play,**³ though it is not always clear what the subject of the debate is, nor with which side we should sympathise. Almost every character, except Coriolanus's wife Virgilia, is a professional talker. Many of them are politicians, used to being economical with the truth. All are good at insulting their opponents, making the 'debate' highly personal and negative. **Coriolanus is himself very adept at using words for satirical purposes, his favourite images drawn from animals or disease.**⁴ For instance, the multitude are 'scabs', and a kind of composite beast 'with many heads', each head needing to 'wash their faces', or 'keep their teeth clean'. Their breath is 'reek o' th' rotten fen.' Meanwhile he attacks the Tribunes as 'Tritons of the Minnows' and carriers of 'measles'. One of them is an 'old goat'. The Tribunes reply: Coriolanus is a 'diseased limb', 'gangrened' so deep it must be cut off. **Words are plentiful, but they buffet rather than communicate.**⁵

Thus the play's continual political argument gets little done, and never the right things. The Tribunes, for example, speak only to get a working majority in whatever gathering comes up next, whereas the conservative spokesman, the old flâneur, Menenius, is a poignant and ridiculous figure, lying to no purpose, rejected by his protégé and favourite, Coriolanus. His Parable of the Belly, however skilfully he hoodwinks the citizens with it, is little more than the defence of an idle, consuming class. The other politicised group, the soldiers, live in their own rhetorical world, exchanging speeches in specialised homoerotic language passing the love of women: **'Let me twine/Mine arms about that body' Coriolanus greets Aufidius (his enemy) 'where against/ My grained ash a hundred times hath broke/ And scarred the moon with splinters.' This kind of stylised language seems merely to introduce a new generation, like Coriolanus's son, to destructive martial ethics.**⁶

1. The candidate establishes at the outset that the play is filled with action by supplying a well-informed list of relevant content (AO1, AO2).

2. The play is contextualised with another of Shakespeare's works (AO3).

3. An AO5 view is supplied.

4. The language of the play is brought into discussion, and a series of apt quotations will follow (AO2).

5. The argument is effectively developed: there are plenty of words, but limited communication (AO1).

6. Once again, language is cited and analysed, but the essay argues its limitations (AO1, AO2).



The play's dialogue is thus made up of insult, polemic and specialised vocabulary. There are very few insights into their own characters, and their estimates of others (especially Coriolanus) are often partial, making it hard for the audience to get to know anyone. **In almost all Shakespeare's other tragedies, Hamlet for example,**⁷ we gain access to the inner life of the hero, often by means of soliloquy. In Coriolanus, where the hero has just one soliloquy, this never happens. Coriolanus's mastery of battle and his addiction to certain kinds of rhetoric, for example, mask his lack of secure judgement of his inner life. **As A.C. Bradley suggested, 'he has no more introspection in him than a tiger.'**⁸ We know the bond between Volumnia and her son Coriolanus is strong and complex (one critic has called her the archetypal 'castrating mother'), but it is hard to see how and why her embassy makes him so fragile. He hardly says anything. He shows us no moment of self-knowledge, of anagnorisis, as she delivers her long, rather formal speech, which is mostly not Shakespeare but **straight out of North's Plutarch,**⁹ if there are clues as to how and when it affects him, they are all in the sub-text. As critic Bruce King puts it, "When Aufidius briefly says "I was moved withal" in reply to Coriolanus 'would you have heard a mother less?' we feel more is meant than said."

Coriolanus is a noisy and muscular play; but its deepest moments are silent, or half-silent, or absurdly understated, like Coriolanus's wife Virgilia, whom he calls his 'gracious silence', or like Coriolanus himself, when **he confronts the great moments of his destiny with actions rather than words,**¹⁰ banishing the Romans and their history by walking inscrutably into the wilderness, 'There is a world elsewhere!'

7. A literary context is invoked (AO3).

8. AO5 is often addressed in the essay via its argument, but here a critic is quoted.

9. Shakespeare's source material is referenced (AO3).

10. The quotation from the question is neatly referenced in the conclusion.

Examiner commentary

This essay is clearly argued and well illustrated. There are detailed examples of both actions and words (AO2), and the answer demonstrates how the actions are unarguable, whereas the words sometimes amount to little more than rhetoric, and are limited in their power to communicate (AO1). The context is literary, consisting of references to other Shakespeare plays and to North's Plutarch (AO3); criticism is neatly employed, and the candidate's argument makes it clear that he can see a range of interpretations. Expression is eloquent and controlled throughout.



QUESTION 1(B)

CORIOLANUS

'As the play unfolds, it becomes increasingly hard to sympathise with Coriolanus.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view?

Coriolanus is often described as a play in which it is hard to sympathise with any of the major characters, the protagonist included. **The class-debate between haves and have-nots still governs modern politics,**¹¹ so it should be helpful in giving the theatregoer his or her bearings. Yet it becomes rapidly clear that neither the career-politicians on the left nor the heroic bigots on the right are meant to be fully sympathetic. The crowd is moved by appeals to its vanity and has no notion of gratitude. Even the women of Rome are partly brutalised, delighting in **imagery of wounds and slaughter,**¹² of cats 'mammocking' butterflies. Shakespeare has written a tragedy in which characters remain at a distance from the reader or audience, and in which motives are often enigmatic.

Arguably Martius is impressive in the play's first act,¹³ the blood-stained hero of the early Republic, executing heroic deeds that will only grow in the telling. He conquers Corioli single handed, and his athletic exploits, even in modern films or productions, can be compared with those in computer games, or, perhaps better, to heroic exploits in the 'local wars' of modern times, as happens in the **2011 Ralph Fiennes film,**¹⁴ largely filmed in Serbia. Yet once Caius Martius returns to Rome his battlefield authority diminishes, his dealings with the people degenerating into a mixture of diffidence and bad temper, connoted by frequent references to their 'stinking breaths'. Even his friends think he lacks 'mildness' in his campaign for the consulship. The Tribunes speak of his 'soaring insolence', with what 'a proud heart he wore / His humble weeds'. If the crowd members take a little longer to express their dissatisfaction it is because the wounds of Corioli (which they are not shown) genuinely impress them, and only on reflection, prodded by the Tribunes, that they bring out the malice (Coriolanus calls it the 'measles') of his words. Even when he defies the Tribunes' sentence of death and voluntarily 'banishes himself' it is to become not a confidante of the audience but a terrible legendary figure, a 'lonely dragon', sitting at the head of a foreign army. In determining the destiny of his native city, Coriolanus shows no particular political insight, merely his determination to take revenge, or to work up his reputation: 'I shall be lov'd when I am lack'd'. If he has deeper motives, whether public or private, he does not show them to us. If anything he becomes more remote in the concluding scenes of the play, more indignant and more terrible.

11. The play is seen in the context of modern political life (AO3).

12. The language of the play is brought into the argument (AO2).

13. The answer starts to shape towards AO5; there is a feeling here that the view of Martius is likely to change or become more complex (AO5).

14. A production is a helpful way to introduce AO5.



Yet if Coriolanus is threatening and enigmatic, so also are the figures ranged with him or against him.¹⁵ The Tribunes are devoted to strategy, not principles: 'Now we have shown our power/Let us seem humbler after it is done/Then when it was a-doing.' The citizens can be persuaded to do anything, but never to take responsibility for what they have done: 'though we willingly consented to his banishment,' says Third Citizen when the Volscian army turns up, 'yet it was against our will.' Menenius likes to lay the blame where it is due, at the Tribunes' door, but does little else as the crisis develops. Then when he must make a great speech at Coriolanus' feet all he can offer is limp political hyperbole. Volumnia lacks maternal softness. Her speeches drive through the crowd like those of a tragedy queen: 'Anger's my meat: I sup upon myself.' She doesn't woo our sympathy. **As Coppélia Khan writes, she represents 'the paradoxical position of mothers in patriarchy, for it is the hero's relationship to his mother, Volumnia, that accounts for both his greatness and his downfall.'**¹⁶ There is a touch of human warmth about the little speech in which Coriolanus explains that what his mother has done will prove mortal to him; then, distant and enigmatic, he goes to his fate.

Shakespeare's play, **like Plutarch,**¹⁷ ends with the slaughter of an arrogant Coriolanus. 'He wants nothing of a God but eternity, and a heaven to throne in' says Menenius; adding there is no more of mercy in him 'than milk in a male tiger'. When the cautious Aufidius turns on him, the touchy Coriolanus rises to the bait, and is shown roughly how a promise-breaker bearing the name Coriolanus is treated in Corioli. So distant is Coriolanus from the play's main interest at this point we are less concerned about the very public slaughter than whether Aufidius will be able to cover it up. What Aufidius does isn't very attractive. But then nobody is by the final act of Coriolanus, neither the insolent hero nor the designing champion-in-waiting who brings him down.

15. A balanced view is developing (AO1, AO5).

16. AOS is further developed with a quotation from a critic.

17. Shakespeare's source material is referenced (AO3).

Examiner commentary

This answer demonstrates a detailed knowledge of the text and confident handling of the argument. Although the candidate concludes by agreeing with the quotation in the question, he finds some shades and complexities in the workings of the play during the course of his essay, and incorporates other views from a critic and by referencing a production (AO5). Context is appropriately brief and sensible (AO3), and quotation from the text is well used to support the argument (AO2).



QUESTION 2(A)

HAMLET

'In the world of Hamlet trust is a rare commodity.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the play?

Hamlet believes that his mother has betrayed his father for, having followed his body 'like Niobe, all tears', within a month she had leaped into 'incestuous sheets' with his uncle. When sought out by his 'excellent good friends' Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet questions them with 'Were you not sent for?' and asserts they are instruments of his uncle.¹⁸ Trust, which is confidence and belief in the integrity and veracity of relationships both domestic and within the state, is presented and betrayed in the world of Elsinore with tragic consequences.¹⁹ However, though 'rare', trust is not entirely absent in the play; it is constant, for example in the friendship of Hamlet and Horatio. 'Hamlet' explores the tragic consequences of the absence and betrayal of trust on many levels: in the family, in sexual relations, in friendship, in the affairs of the state but also, in Hamlet's doubt and questioning of fundamental aspects of his identity and existence.²⁰

The play opens with Bernardo's 'Who's there?' and this abrupt interrogative immediately creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and mistrust, dramatically symbolised in Olivier's film of the play with swirling mists around the castle battlements.²¹ Horatio, the sceptical Renaissance scholar, does not trust the words of the soldiers ('Tush, Tush, 'Twill not appear') but he quickly trusts the evidence of his eyes. Sagar argues that Shakespeare's audience would have accepted the reality of the ghost but its provenance and significance, the truth of its words, cannot be trusted. Hamlet describes the ghost as of 'questionable shape'; Greenblatt observes the ghost raises a paradox, 'a young man from Wittenberg, with a distinctly Protestant temperament, is haunted by a distinctly Catholic ghost.' Is the ghost Hamlet's 'father's spirit' visiting from purgatory with a sincere message to tell of 'murder most foul' or, from a Protestant viewpoint, 'a goblin damned', what Clinton describes as 'a diabolical manifestation on a mission to trick Hamlet into forfeiting his soul'? The presence of the ghost introduces a questioning, distrustful uncertainty and mistrust which pervades the play and its words, 'Remember me', haunt Hamlet and are central to his tragic descent from physical collapse ('And you, my sinews, grow not instant old/But bear me stiffly up') to mental turmoil in his 'distracted globe'.

18. Quotations from text appropriately selected (AO2) to introduce and address question (AO1).

19. Shows understanding of key term in question and relates to text (AO1)

20. Explores the potential of the question and introduces a structured approach to answering it (AO1).

21. Close focus on textual detail (AO2), incorporates critical and production knowledge (AO5) and goes onto to unpack and debate the significance of the ghost (AO1, AO3).



Polonius's relationship with his family and with the state dramatises how trust is a rare commodity in the world of Hamlet.²² On a domestic level he distrusts his daughter, Ophelia, (and spies on Laertes too) seeing her as a 'green girl' likely to be seduced by the Prince thus losing her, and perhaps more importantly 'his', honour and rendering him a 'fool'. Polonius subsequently 'looses' Ophelia to Hamlet, like a bait in trap, so he and Claudius can spy on Hamlet, extending the web of surveillance, duplicity and distrust in the play and, in this case, Ophelia's 'trust' does seem to be a 'commodity' which can be traded and manipulated in the world of Elsinore. Polonius's distrust of Ophelia and his using her to eavesdrop on Hamlet, fracturing their relationship, are crucial stage in the development towards Ophelia's tragic death.

Polonius's spying and, ultimately fatal, eavesdropping are powerful dramatic symbols of a wider political network of duplicity and mistrust in the play. **As Hadfield argues, an Elizabethan audience may well have seen echoes here of the surveillance culture of the Court of Elizabeth overseen by Lord Burghley. Certainly, many modern critics and productions of the play have emphasised how Elsinore is presented as a 'prison', a place of spying, eavesdropping, duplicity and betrayal. Jan Kott in the 1960s saw the play as 'a fable about totalitarian tyranny' and in his 1996 film, Branagh uses the motif of mirrors to suggest the surveillance society and how the individual can trust neither personal relationships nor the operations of the state.**²³

Claudius is central to the concept of trust on both a domestic and political level exemplified by his killing of his brother, King Hamlet, his 'foul and most unnatural murder' (my emphasis). He is guilty of fratricide and regicide and this act is the primary source of the tragic catastrophe. As Spurgeon observed, 'Hamlet' is informed by multiple images of corruption and disease ('things rank and gross in nature,' 'kissing carrion', 'something is rotten'); this exudes from the 'cursed hebona' poured into King Hamlet's ear' by Claudius. **Furthermore, Claudius is the duplicitous politician who manipulates trust. Shakespeare's audience would observe the Machiavellian duplicity of Claudius's speech in Act 1 Scene 2 and now we might note the clever manipulative skills of a spin doctor! This speech is a masterpiece of rhetoric:**

**'Have we, as twere with a defeated joy,
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,'**

The command of parallelism, rhythmic patterning, contrast and metonym are the arts of the duplicitous political rhetorician trying to win trust. Arguably, the tragic outcome of the play purges this betrayal of trust whose source is in Claudius.²⁴

Hamlet extends the dramatisation of trust, or more accurately distrust, in the play. It develops from the distrust of all his relationships, with the exception of Horatio, to a self-distrust of his identity; unable to fulfil his destined role he questions who he is and asserts he is 'a dull and muddy-mettled rascal'. Furthermore, Hamlet experiences metaphysical uncertainties about death and the after-life: 'For in that sleep of death what dreams may come'. This questioning doubt has been central to defining Hamlet's distinctiveness as a tragic hero, what Foakes identified as 'Hamletism', his procrastinating intellect.²⁵

22. Develops argument cohesively (AO1) with closely referenced examples from play (AO2).

23. Draws on critical (AO5), production (AO5) and contextual knowledge (AO3) to develop argument (AO1).

24. Close analysis of text and language to develop how question of trust is developed through presentation of Claudius (AO2) and awareness of how perceptions of his character may be influenced by critics and context (AO5).

25. Further development of argument down a fresh path (AO1) and linked to Hamlet's tragic character through quotation (AO2).



In this world the tragic consequences of the lack and betrayal of trust are played out – nine major characters die and the state is overthrown. **However, there are examples of trust being either affirmed or restored.**²⁶ Hamlet trusts Horatio and praises him as the ideal friend; his soul 'sh'ath sealed thee for herself'. **Horatio lives to present the Prince transcending the corruption of the state:**

'Now cracks a noble heart. Goodnight, sweet Prince.'

We may also see the restoration of trust in the relationship between Hamlet and his mother as Gertrude disobeys Claudius in the duel scene to drink to her son: 'I will, my lord.'

Hamlet is restored to a trust and belief in his own integrity and identity on his return from England; he confidently asserts 'This is I, Hamlet the Dane' and his anagnorisis is achieved in his acceptance and trust in the will of God and his Providence:

'There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow...The readiness is all.'²⁷

It is a moot point as to whether Fortinbras restores trust in the state at the end of the play. He has Hamlet's 'voice', has been praised by him as a 'delicate and tender prince and can be seen in the tradition of other young men in Shakespeare's tragedies who take the kingdom forward after the catastrophe: Cassio ('Othello), Edgar (King Lear), Malcolm (Macbeth). However, some modern productions have presented Fortinbras as little more than a power seeking opportunist in what Bogdanov sees as a play about the 'territorial imperative'; in Bogdanov's 1980s National Theatre production Fortinbras's soldiers enter the stage and seize power brandishing AK47s. As Gibson notes we are at best uncertain as to whether Fortinbras's rule will be 'benign or tyrannical', whether the commodity of trust will be less rare in his Denmark.²⁸

Examiner commentary

This is a closely argued response which unpacks the potential of the question and the concept of trust on several levels exploring its relevance to the play with extensive textual detail. The response is informed by knowledge of critical views and productions and keeps the notion that 'Hamlet' is a play firmly in mind, showing how the concept of the lack of trust leads to the tragic outcome. The conclusion of the response is a good example of its awareness of interpretative possibility. Contextual knowledge is well integrated including an appropriate awareness of how the reception of the text may change over time.

26. Presents an alternative view on question (AO1 and AO5).

27. A series of specific examples, supported by quotation to develop argument (AO2).

28. A strong conclusion drawing in references to other plays (AO3), critics and a modern production (AO5) and leaving the reader with a close focus on the question and something to think about (AO1).



QUESTION 2(B)

HAMLET

'A great surprise of the play is that Claudius has a conscience.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view?

Even Hamlet, who perceives Claudius in the play as a 'Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain', assumes that Claudius does have a conscience for he asserts that 'The play's the thing/Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King'.²⁹ Claudius is not merely a 'satyr' but, in terms of Elizabethan theology, he does have a 'rational soul', the soul which separates Man from the animal kingdom.³⁰ Furthermore, Hamlet's attempt to trap Claudius by prompting his conscience in 'The Murder of Gonzago' reminds the audience that far from being a two-dimensional villain, Claudius is dramatised as a complex character; at the heart of this complexity is the presentation of a murderer who is aware of his sin, is tortured by this consciousness, yet is unable to seek redemption.³¹

It is possible to play Claudius as a straightforwardly wicked villain, and in this sense the revelation of his conscience might come as a 'great surprise'.³² Tennenhouse observed 'What more heinous crime could be committed against the aristocratic body than a fratricide that is also a regicide?' Bogdanov, in his 1980s National Theatre production emphasised the role of Claudius as an amoral Machiavellian and yet simultaneously modern villain simply seeking power.³³ This villainy is sustained even after the 'Prayer Scene' where Claudius's conscience can be presented as limited by his reluctance to change as his words 'fly up' but his thoughts 'remain below.' Later in the play his actions in the face of threat are not tempered by conscience in their cunning and ruthlessness. He plots to send Hamlet clinically to his 'present death' at the hands of 'England' and conspires with Laertes to kill Hamlet with the double duplicity of a 'sword unbated' and a poisoned 'chalice.' Furthermore, the construction of Claudius through the words of the Ghost and Hamlet are unequivocal. To the Ghost he is 'an adulterate beast' and, to Hamlet, a 'smiling damned villain', 'a satyr' and a 'bloody, bawdy, villain'.³⁴

29. Immediate close focus on question (AO1) supported by textual quotation (AO2).

30. Appropriate contextual knowledge shown (AO3).

31. Overall argument introduced succinctly (AO1).

32. Terms of the question addressed (AO1) and a particular interpretation introduced (AO5)

33. Critical perspective used to support argument and awareness of how Claudius might be perceived historically and in modern times (AO5).

34. Argument supported by close textual reference from across the text (AO2).



However, such a view of Claudius is only part of the picture.³⁵ The question of 'conscience' resonates far beyond the 'Prayer Scene'. The concept clearly fascinated Shakespeare. **The word 'conscience' has two quite distinct but related meanings in Shakespeare's plays: the familiar meaning, and the dominant one in the consideration of this topic, is that of an 'inner moral voice', but 'conscience' also denoted 'consciousness', the faculty of intellectual awareness and understanding.**³⁶ Both of these meanings illuminate the villains in Shakespeare's tragedies – Iago is perhaps unique in having no inner moral voice, though he is certainly conscious that his villainy is practising the 'divinity of Hell'; Edmund does, I believe, take us by surprise in 'King Lear' when he says before he dies, 'some good I mean to do' and Lady Macbeth's conscience is dramatised in her tormented sleepwalking and relentless 'washing' of her hands. The dramatisation of conscience in characters who commit wicked acts deepens our interest in Shakespeare's villains; this is certainly the case with Claudius.³⁷

Furthermore, conscience, awareness of one's sinfulness, is a recurrent concern in 'Hamlet' beyond the figure of Claudius; this creates a dramatic context for Claudius's self-revelation. The Ghost recalls that he was killed when 'unhousel'd' 'in the blossoms of my sin'. On his return from France, Laertes becomes more than just an archetypal revenge hero when he says, in an aside, just before fatally wounding Hamlet, 'And yet it is almost against my conscience'. Hamlet, in soliloquy, reflects that 'conscience does make cowards of us all', and just before the tragic catastrophe he questions of Horatio, 'Is't not perfect conscience?' (to take vengeance on the King).³⁸

Focusing on the characterisation of Claudius, though villainous, he is arguably far from two dimensional. **His first speech to the Court shows what Mangan describes as a masterful command of rhetoric and paradox in convincing the Court of his grief and suitability for office, 'in equal scale weighing delight and dole'. Though his words may reveal what Sagar describes as the language of 'a hypocrite and a villain', Claudius's performance shows that he is aware of what it is to be sincere and compassionate and can play that role. This is well realised in Patrick Stewart's performance in Greg Doran's 2009 'Hamlet' where the speech is delivered using the full range of nuanced intonation to convey tender feeling shifting towards confident political control as he sends his ambassadors to deal with the threat of Fortinbras: 'So much for him.'**³⁹

Shakespeare contrasts this public command of rhetorical duplicity with a self-revealing aside in Act 3 Scene 1. Responding to Polonius's observation that the appearance of piety often masks 'the devil himself' Claudius responds:

'O tis too true.

(aside) How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!

It is the convention in Shakespeare that asides and soliloquies express sincere thoughts. Claudius's insight seems to be the sincere expression of a burdened soul.⁴⁰ It is not surprising given the dramatic contexts discussed above that the man who can dissemble depth of feeling in public can confide it sincerely as an aside to the audience. What remains to be seen is how this development of Claudius's character will play out.

35. Introduction of alternative argument (AO1/AO5).

36. Close and sophisticated refinement of key term in the question (AO1).

37. Use of wider context of Shakespeare's tragic villains to develop argument (AO3 and AO1).

38. Detailed use of text to show how theme is dramatised beyond the character of Claudius (AO2).

39. Close analysis of text and performance (AO2).

40. Close textual comment (AO2) combined with contextual knowledge (AO3).



Both Olivier and Branagh chose to present Claudius in Act 3 Scene 3 attempting to pray away from the public stage in the privacy of his chapel.⁴¹ This is emphasised in Branagh by placing Claudius directly beneath a crucifix. The immediate dramatic context of this scene is significant; it is a credible self-revelation given that Claudius's conscience has been aroused by The Murder of Gonzago and Hamlet's theatrical antics and explicit commentary: 'A poisons him i' th' garden for his estate.'

41. Performance detail to highlight dramatic effect (AO2)

Claudius's speech, the confirmation that he has a conscience as he acknowledges that his 'offence is rank', is fascinating on many levels. **For Coleridge, the speech is a dramatic exploration of the essence of the Christian doctrine of expiation; it is 'not what you have done, but what you are' which will determine repentance. It contains insights into the political concerns of the play as Claudius comments on the 'corrupted currents of this world'. Above all, the revelation of conscience expresses the personal anguish of the private soul beneath the public mask as Claudius recognises that he cannot repent but he can still appeal for divine intervention: 'Help, angels, make essay.'**⁴²

42. Alternative interpretations of key scene (AO2 and AO5) to develop argument (AO1).

On balance, that Claudius has a conscience is not a surprise.⁴³ Wilson Knight suggests that the 'Prayer Scene' creates sympathy for Claudius and distances us from the protagonist, Hamlet; he contrasts 'this lovely prayer – the fine flower of a soul in anguish' with Hamlet's 'late joy of torturing the King's conscience'. Others might find some satisfaction in the sight of an evil man in torment who is not prepared truly to repent and whose conscience is strictly limited. However, such is the dramatic power of this scene that, as Sagar comments, however deeply we have come to hate Claudius and however remote we feel ourselves to be from Elizabethan religious assumptions, the tragedy deepens as we sense in the theatre that Hamlet must not kill Claudius while he is at prayer wrestling with his tormented soul.

43. Strong conclusion to argument (AO1) presenting personal view but then modified by presenting alternative responses to the revelation of Claudius's conscience and its effect upon an audience (AO1 and AO5).

Examiner commentary

The response is very tightly focused on the question and its specific terms and uses these to structure the argument. There is an appropriately sharp and detailed focus on a seminal scene well supported by quotation and consideration of its dramatic context and dramatic effect. Alternative interpretations of Claudius are considered, as are audience's possible responses to the revelation of his 'conscience', though the response legitimately comes down firmly on one side of the argument. Response is consistently informed by relevant use of critical reception, contextual knowledge (including knowledge of Shakespeare's other tragedies) and dramatic/cinematic productions.



QUESTION 3(A)

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

'The few good characters shine out in a dark, corrupt world.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of *Measure for Measure*?

According to FS Boas, *Measure for Measure* is a 'problem play'⁴⁴; indeed Shakespeare's characterization of evil and hypocrisy in the form of Angelo, the 'licentiousness'⁴⁵ of Lucio and the bawdiness of Pompey and Mistress Overdone have long been problematic for audiences. Even Duke Vincentio, 'the old, fantastical duke of dark corners' who lurks in Vienna disguised and spies on his own people is unsettling for us. Consequently, the honesty of the 'balanced' Escalus⁴⁶, the virtue of Isabella and the patience of jilted Mariana do indeed stand out amongst the brothels and dungeons of the play. Perhaps the most problematic thing for Jacobean (and modern) audiences is Shakespeare's presentation of the corruption of high-status characters, such as the 'lying self-deceiving fraud' Angelo, who jilted Mariana leaving her in 'brawling discontent'⁴⁷.

Shakespeare, in presenting widespread corruption in the play, is perhaps trying to show what happens when 'Liberty plucks justice by the nose'; where the libertarians such as the 'Fantastic' Lucio 'make a scarecrow of the law' of which they are unafraid. Vincentio's abdication of duties once he has let things slide on his watch (similar to Prospero in another of Shakespeare's late plays, *The Tempest*) suggests a society that has sunk beyond his control; when Lord Escalus asks Pompey (the pimp) if his trade is lawful, he replies 'If the law would allow it, sir'. Repeatedly Shakespeare uses images to suggest the ineffectual nature of law and the corruption this breeds. Images of 'forgery'⁴⁸, 'coin heaven's image/ In stamps that are forbid' and 'Let there be some more test made of my metal' would have resonated with a Jacobean audience living in a time of inflation when forgery was rife.

44. AO3: understanding of literary context; AO5: a (different) reading established

45. AO1: fluent; appropriate register.

46. AO2: understanding of significance of Shakespeare's naming of characters

47. AO2: apposite embedded quotation to illustrate AO1: detailed understanding of play.

48. AO2: well-developed discussion of effects linked to wider context (AO3)



Shakespeare sets much of the play in brothels, taverns and cells as these were all present in Southwark where the Globe theatre was situated on the south bank of the Thames: theatre owners such as the Lord Chamberlain also owned brothels. Indeed some **critics**⁴⁹ have seen Angelo's puritanism as echoing that of the Jacobean period who called for the demolition of brothels in 1603 to prevent the spread of the plague, 'All houses in the suburbs of Vienna must be plucked **down**⁵⁰'. This may account for the dark, bawdy **imagery**⁵¹ and the repeated references to sex and sexual diseases in the play, 'Well, what has he done?/ A woman, 'thou'rt a three-piled piece' and 'a French velvet'.

The title – an **allusion**⁵² to the New Testament (Matthew 7:1-2) – suggests a play balancing justice vs mercy. There are other antitheses Shakespeare employs, including freedom vs restraint and good characters versus bad characters. In contrast to Pompey and Mistress Overdone we have Isabella, Escalus and members of the Church. This contrast is shown clearly with the licentious Lucio greets Isabella at the nunnery, through his inappropriate bawdy language 'play with virgins so' and references to fecundity 'teeming foison' and 'plenteous womb'. Isabella, in her entreaties to Angelo employs Biblical **language**,⁵³

'How would you be

If he, which is the top of judgement, should

But judge as you are?

Which recalls the 'Judge not, lest ye be judged' of Matthew's gospel. However Shakespeare clearly wishes the audience to view Isabella as having elements of **corruption**⁵⁴. This is seen in the images she uses when confronted with Angelo's proposal that she sleep with him to save her brother's life.

Th'impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,

And strip myself to death as to a bed

That longing have been sick for

The reference to 'keen whips', 'strip', 'bed' and 'longing' all **suggest**⁵⁵ a repressed sexual desire and an audience might wonder the real reasons she joined the 'votarists of St Clare', a notoriously strict holy order, 'wishing a more strict **restraint**⁵⁶'. In this sense she is similar to Angelo who in his soliloquy after Isabella's plea for her brother's life states, 'Dost thou desire her foully for those things/ That make her good?' suggesting he there is something unnatural about his feelings of attraction.

49. AO5: exploration of different readings.

50. AO3: context appropriate to question with supporting quotation (AO2).

51. AO2: detailed discussion of effects of imagery with critically addressed quotations.

52. AO2: allusion (AO5)

53. AO2 here also.

54. AO1: detailed understanding of complexity of characterization in play.

55. AO2: close, detailed textual support.

56. AO1: perceptive understanding.



If we see Isabella as the only significant 'good' character in the play, then an audience may feel her repressed sexual urges might make her 'bad'⁵⁷. However, Shakespeare suggests in the play that repression of any kind is unnatural and a corruption of normal urges. Certainly the imagery employed to describe sexual intercourse is not in terms of darkness or corruption, but of 'tilth' and 'husbandry', words associated with agriculture and the natural world.⁵⁸ It is when it is repressed that the Shakespeare's tone is darker and more sordid, 'his concupiscible intemperate lust'

57. AO1: well-structured, confident argument.

58. AO2: natural imagery.

In conclusion, the audience of the play sees a dark, seedy world rife with corruption, sexual promiscuity and its effects. Whilst there are a few 'good characters' in Measure for Measure, such as Isabella, Escalus, Juliet and Mariana, none are 'enskied and sainted', but perhaps that is the point being made by Shakespeare in this late play: we should never 'judge'. Shakespeare's use of antitheses such as 'mercy' vs 'justice' and 'enforce and qualify the laws' helps reinforce perhaps the title, that we should 'weigh up' and not judge others too hastily, if at all; there is only God who can do that .

59. AO1: a conclusion that ties up aspects raised by the question, and explored in the essay, and links them to some of the fundamental aspects of the play.

Examiner commentary

This is a very good answer, clear in its argument and focusing consistently on the contrast between goodness and corruption outlined in the question. There is effective discussion at various points of textual detail (AO2) such as the epithets applied to different characters. The contextual discussion of Shakespeare's London (AO3) is admirably integrated into the candidate's argument. There are brief quotations from critics, but AO5 is mostly fulfilled through the candidate's own argument which supplies a range of views of the play: just how good are the 'good' characters? What different motives might underlie characters' actions?



QUESTION 3(B)

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

'The pardoning of Angelo at the play's end is shocking.'
How far and in what ways do you agree with this view?

In this late play, which is problematic for both audience and critics, perhaps the most shocking moment is the pardoning of Angelo's hypocrisy, lustfulness and duplicity. Samuel Taylor Coleridge found the 'pardon and marriage of Angelo ... degrading to the character of woman'. LC Knights saw Angelo and Mistress Overdone as 'represent[ing] the extremes of suppression and **licence**⁶⁰'. It is possible to consider Angelo as a character who undergoes a sexual awakening in the play; he comes to recognize the irony of his own name, 'Blood, thou art blood/ Let's write 'Good Angel' on the devil's **horn**⁶¹'. Some critics have seen him as representing Puritanism, much like Malvolio in Twelfth **Night**⁶²; in a sense both are presented by Shakespeare as weak characters to be mocked by the audience. Some have seen his repentance at the end of the play as sincere and forgive **him**⁶³, yet others see this pardoning as Shakespeare's was of manipulating audience expectations where, as EMW Tillyard argues, the play 'changes nature half-way through', as it moves from tragedy to comedy in **structure**⁶⁴. Perhaps, in a play that makes extensive use of Biblical language, Angelo can be seen as an Adam tempted by the forbidden fruit that is Isabella.

Lucio, the perceptive eccentric and social commentator in the play, suggests Angelo 'doth rebate and blunt his natural edge/ With profits of the mind, study and fast'. Shakespeare's use of 'unnatural' imagery **associated**⁶⁵ with Angelo suggests how subjugating his sexual urges is wrong. He sees himself as 'carrion' and as having 'in my heart the strong and swelling evil'; he is aware of the sacrilege of forcing a nun to have sex with him. Shakespeare suggests Angelo feels he is evil 'Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary/ And pitch our evils there': the use of 'pitch' with its connotations of **blackness**⁶⁶ help reinforce the 'razing', with its suggestions of sacrilege. Perhaps an audience may feel sorry for Angelo as he wrestles with emotions he has not before felt, but this is problematic when we learn the similarities between his own pre-contract with Mariana and that of Juliet and **Claudio**⁶⁷, 'An Angelo for Claudio'. Shakespeare's use of antithesis shows the difficulty for humans in judging between two things: justice vs mercy and chastity vs life ('Then Isabel live chaste, and brother die').

60. AO5: judgement informed by different readings.

61. AO2: apposite supporting quotation.

62. AO3: context of Puritanism/ other Shakespeare plays.

63. AO1: coherent, detailed argument with awareness of other readings of Angelo (AO5)

64. AO2: structure/ genre awareness

65. AO2: imagery and effects

66. AO2: details of imagery and effects

67. AO1/2: detailed understanding of parallels in play



Whilst he is usually seen negatively, some audiences may recognise redeeming features in Angelo⁶⁸ and are therefore less shocked by his pardoning by Vincentio, 'Love her, Angelo!', but rather pity a man who is to endure a loveless marriage. When asked to become the deputy he asks for 'more test made of my metal' (the pun on 'mettle' suggests his spirit or character) and there is a suggestion that the suspicious Duke is testing Angelo's inner resolve ('what our seemers **be⁶⁹**'). Do we see him as a pawn in the Duke's game? Unlike Malvolio he does have self-knowledge and Shakespeare uses soliloquies to help the audience empathise with him; his guilt of the death of Claudio and the rape of Isabella is seen when he states in IV.iv, 'Alack, when our grace we have forgot, / Nothing goes right: we would, and we would not.' Again, the antithesis shows his agonised state of mind as he struggles with right and **wrong⁷⁰**. This helps humanize Angelo for the audience as does his humility when he realizes his inner self has been observed by Vincentio, 'I should be guiltier than my guiltiness'; the comparison here reinforces the antitheses that lie at the heart of the **play⁷¹**.

Perhaps the most shocking aspects of the ending of the play do not directly relate to Angelo's pardoning⁷². Many audiences have seen Vi as contrived and unbelievable. Others have been disturbed by the use of marriage as a punishment as well as Vincentio's marriage proposal to Isabella. Shakespeare presents Lucio's punishment for whoring using comparison, 'Marrying a punk, my lord, is pressing to death, whipping, and / hanging!' to convey its **harshness⁷³**. The fact that Isabella has no response to Vincentio's 'Give me your hand, and say you will be mine' adds to the difficulty of the ending. Some will find the pardoning of Barnadine incomprehensible and shocking, 'for these earthly faults, I quit them all'.

A Jacobean audience may well have recognized that Measure for Measure was written with James I in mind. The first ruler of Scotland and England, who had been accused of lax rule in Scotland and his interest in the qualities of a ruler (he wrote 'Basilikon Doron' in 1603 on this subject) are recognizable in the **play⁷⁴**. A complex and shocking play still today, it is Angelo's hypocrisy, duplicity and the forgiveness shown by Vincentio at the play's conclusion that we perhaps remember most. However, I believe that Shakespeare is as keen to explore the difficulty in humans judging humans and the allusion to Matthew's sermon on the mount in the title reinforce for me the centrality of this theme above all else.

Examiner commentary

This essay is notable for its use of different readings, both culled from critics and embedded in the candidate's own argument. The introduction immediately opens up a range of views and makes use of the label 'problem play' to show how responses to this text will never be straightforward (AO5). Textual references are well chosen and often examined for their use of imagery and their tone (AO2). Context is sensible, and handled with an appropriately light touch (AO3).

68. AO5: alternative views are emerging from the argument here.

69. AO2: detailed use of supporting, embedded quotations.

70. AO2: antithesis.

71. AO2: comparison.

72. AO1, 5: the argument is widened out

73. AO2: comparison as technique and effect.

74. AO3: clear understanding of context relevant to question in this concluding paragraph.



QUESTION 4(A)

RICHARD III

'There is always humour in the cruelty of the play *Richard III*'.

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view?

The events of Richard III are not obviously funny.⁷⁵ The play culminates in a battle notable for treachery in which thousands died and there are numerous scenes of innocent blood shed in that National Slaughterhouse, the Tower, not least the notorious murder of King Edward V (aged 13) and his brother the Duke of York (aged 11). Tyrrell, who managed the last tragic event, recalls it poignantly and soberly, without a hint of humour, as 'The most arch deed of piteous massacre/ That ever yet this land was guilty of.'

Despite the sober tone of Tyrrell's words, however, much of the play is given over to the lively and devious voice of Richard of Gloucester. The more blood-soaked the events he comments on, the wittier the words he chooses. He speaks with the self-consciousness of a pantomime villain. Richard's soliloquies, particularly early in the play, tend to be lessons in how to tear a land apart, mixed with shy amazement at his own skill in doing so. He wants us to be just as amused as he is that with crooked back, bent body and withered arm the world is happy to accept him as a 'marvellous proper man.' **He can't see why Lady Anne should so easily fall for these charms, especially when they belong to the killer of her husband, father and father-in-law: 'Was ever woman in this humour wooed / Was ever woman in this humour won?'**⁷⁶ Richard, pretending to disbelieve his own feats, is performing for an entourage (the audience) who really want to, need to be in with him. This is the secret of the theatrical black humour of the play.

Many of Richard's funniest lines outside soliloquy are asides in which **he explains his moves to the audience**⁷⁷, again making them feel closer to him than the hapless Yorkist court. This is true of 'I thank my God for my humility' when he is being all things to everyone, and 'had I curs'd now, I had curs'd myself' when he unpicks a complex bit of courtly doublespeak. Yet Richard is also part of a double act with the Duke of Buckingham. The key exchange comes when Richard asks Buckingham if he can tear emotion to pieces, as the best actors do: 'Canst thou quake, and change thy colour, / Murder thy breath in middle of a word, / And then again begin, and stop again, / As if thou wert distraught and mad with terror?'. With these two aspirants to the throne of England, **there's 'daggers in men's smiles' as Malcolm puts it in Macbeth,**⁷⁸ and politics becomes grand theatre.

75. Humour and cruelty are both focused in the introduction to the essay (AO1).

76. A scene of the play is analysed in relation to the question (AO2).

77. The answer is aware of the effect of the play in the theatre (AO2).

78. The play is contextualised by another work of Shakespeare's (AO3).



Buckingham's greatest man-management comes in the very funny scene where Richard, counterfeiting a religious character and appearing reading a prayerbook between two bishops, pretends to refuse the great office of the crown on the pretext of being too absorbed in the religious life. Again and again the townspeople beg him to reconsider. Buckingham has advised Richard to 'play the maid's part, still answer nay, and take it'. The scene takes on the quality of a seduction. It is one of the most outrageous of all Richard's disguises, the devil playing the maid's part.

It is also the last time in the play Richard can be described as a truly comic character. With the crown comes royal care. Richard dismisses 'the deep revolving witty' Buckingham, and slaughters the princes himself. The scene with Tyrrell, the hired murderer, is quite humourless. Nor are there many jokes when he encounters his mother and sister-in-law in the long last scene of the fourth act. He silences his mother not with witty answers but with drums and trumpets. His retorts become surly, rather than brilliantly inventive. **Richard has, by this time, lost his marvellous comic gift with words, and the play's crueller moments are suddenly free from humour.**⁷⁹ Richard is unable to banter with the vengeful ghosts on Bosworth Field. Late in the play Richard becomes quite serious as he faces retribution. 'Is there a murderer here? . . . Yes, I am! There is no longer room for comic business, and his cruelty is directed at himself. **As critic Laurie Maguire has put it he is now less a comedian than a man in a 'moral maze'.**⁸⁰ We recall the extraordinary scenes of black comedy earlier in the play, when Richard killed his brother, ridiculously, in a Malmsey butt; or the long scene in which the beheading of Hastings was mixed up with an order for a ludicrously irrelevant-bowl of strawberries. The last laugh, when he quite seriously offers his kingdom for a horse, is on Richard himself.

Examiner commentary

This is a considered and well-arranged answer which relates the qualities of humour and cruelty and considers their presence and strength throughout the play. There is apt quotation and consideration of specific scenes (AO2); light-touch contextualisation via a reference to another Shakespeare play; and consideration of other views via the candidate's own argument and by reference to a critical quotation, well integrated into the argument of the essay.

79. The answer challenges the statement in the question: where has the humour gone now (AO5)?

80. A critical quotation is incorporated into the argument (AO5).



QUESTION 4 (B)

RICHARD III

'The women in *Richard III* are more than just victims.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view?

Richard III, after Hamlet, is the longest text in the Shakespeare canon,⁸¹ and it is famously dominated by the part of the King, who has more than 31% of the lines. Nevertheless Shakespeare includes in the play an unusual quantity and variety of roles for women, from the time-worn Duchess of York down to the daughter of the Earl of Clarence, who is just a child. After several generations of the dynastic conflict known as the Wars of the Roses, the women sit uneasily as a group, former enemies and patched up friends together, looking on as Richard slaughters their menfolk. At several points in the play they speak of their predicament clearly and loudly. They may be unable directly to influence power politics, but they suffer continually at its hands. **They may be victims, but with power to contest their victimhood and, for some of them at least, opportunity to overturn it.⁸²**

Richard's most intriguing confrontation with a female in the early part of the play is with Lady Anne Neville, daughter of Richard's enemy the Earl of Warwick. In an extraordinary scene, conducted mostly in rhetorical exchanges, Anne moves from thinking of the misshapen and homicidal Richard in grotesque terms ('adders, spiders, toads' and 'weakening a little—a hedgehog')⁸³ to surprising herself that she is starting to flatter him, with possible stirrings of sexual interest. Richard assumes the point of the scene is the irrationality of desire, especially in women. The best stagings often focus on his quirky sexual energy, as in **Laurence Olivier's camp film performance.⁸⁴** But a wider issue may also be present, one that marks Anne as a professional victim, constrained to become the human cement in every royal alliance. Anne Neville is too highborn to choose her lovers - or to intervene in the family conflicts that draw them away from her. So, **like many women of royal blood,⁸⁵** she must graduate quietly and haplessly from one feudal House to another, from Neville to Lancaster to York, just as the patriarchs bid her. If this means finding the 'bottled spider' Richard funny and attractive, then so. He has helped send her father to his death at Barnet; he has stabbed her husband at Tewkesbury and her father-in-law in the Tower. **Anne's acquiescence becomes Shakespeare's wry comment on the part women were forced to play in the medieval system of marital alliances.⁸⁶**

81. The play is contextualised using another work by Shakespeare (AO3).

82. The introduction opens up a direction for the argument of the essay (AO1).

83. This parenthetical quotation is economical and effective (AO2).

84. A reference to a production is an especially helpful way of introducing AO5.

85. A sense of the historical context of the drama is useful here (AO3).

86. The answer widens out to take a broader view of the role of women (AO5).



If Anne's part (one scene) generally survives intact in productions of the play, **the other female parts are often heavily cut,**⁸⁷ which is a pity. Allowed to speak at full length they contribute the most emotionally intense moments of Richard III. Edward IV's queen, Elizabeth Woodville, the widow of a comparatively low-born knight, is possibly the most outspoken of Richard's enemies early on, continually challenging his snobbery, his 'blunt upbraidings' and 'bitter scoffs'. She has the text's most moving lines, too, not as a Queen but as a woman, when King and Prince are sent to their final lodging in the Tower: **Rude ragged nurse, old sullen playfellow / For tender princes, use my babies well.**⁸⁸ Her prayers are, of course, futile. She slips back into the chorus of grieving women, whose passionate complaints bear witness to the brutality of power politics and to the cruel passivity of the woman's role in the royal world. If played fully these passages provide a tirade of resistance to Richard's tyranny. The most celebrated sequence is the eerie, riddling 'I had an Edward, till a Richard killed him', a lament both shared and individualised. These interludes are presided over by the curious figure of Queen Margaret, **the blood-stained killer of 3H6,**⁸⁹ now reintroduced unhistorically (she was already dead) to provide a commentary on how the Yorkist revolution was devouring its children. Margaret has become an aristocrat of pain, training her colleagues to feel more and lament more as witnesses to the depravity of the time, but also as women: 'Think that thy babes were fairer than they were, / And he that slew them fouler than he is.' These are the words of an artist, rather than a victim.

As the plot unfolds Richard's power over his victims loosens, and his enemies, especially the female ones, strike back. Queen Elizabeth, not the 'shallow, changing woman' Richard thinks her, keeps the King's incestuous hands off her daughter, Elizabeth of York. Richard's mother curses him. Anne turns up as a ghost at Bosworth to bid him despair and die. If the roles of the women are sometimes trimmed or marginalised in productions of Richard III, they turn up meaningfully in the last two acts, **not as victims but seeking vengeance.**⁹⁰

Examiner commentary

This answer is well focused on the female characters and demonstrates an excellent grasp of their roles and the way they have been treated by theatrical tradition. Context is considered both in terms of history and theatre (AO3); details from the text are helpfully employed to illustrate the answer (AO2); and AO5 is fulfilled both by the candidate's own argument and by reference to a filmed production of the play. The answer offers mature insights into the issues raised by the question.

87. The candidate refers to the play's performance history (AO3).

88. The candidate introduces an apt quotation to establish the moving qualities of the play (AO2).

89. Another play in the sequence is usefully referenced (AO3).

90. Here the dual role of the female characters is described (AO5).



QUESTION 5(A)

THE TEMPEST

'A play about self-discovery.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of *The Tempest*?

Shakespeare's romance play, *The Tempest*, has been variously seen as a reworking of Montaigne's utopian essays, a play about the tension between revenge and forgiveness; an exploration of power and control; and a representation of contemporary colonialist **views**.⁹¹ However, arguably the play's most important theme is that of self-discovery and change. Several characters gain a greater sense of self-knowledge during the course of the play's three hours' time frame. However, one might argue, given the numerous voyages in the 16-17th **centuries**,⁹² that we might see the play as being about 'discovery' more broadly than 'self-discovery': Miranda's discovery of other humans and romantic love go beyond mere **self-knowledge**.⁹³

The exiled Prospero, the play's deus ex **machina**,⁹⁴ who has created the tempest that opens the play, and brings the characters on whom he wishes revenge on to his island, can be seen as lacking self-knowledge early in the play. We learn that the loss of his dukedom was due to neglect, although to Miranda in I.ii he says, 'By foul play, as thou say'st, were we heaved hence'. His 'magic garment', a **symbol**⁹⁵ of his magical powers, his 'Art', and his daughter Miranda are what he lives for. Some might see Prospero as foolish for 'neglecting worldly ends' as Duke of Milan, whilst others might put the blame squarely on his 'false brother' Antonio. The language employed by Prospero in the first Three Acts is imperative and commanding: 'Come on; obey', but by Act Five it is conciliatory, 'The rarer action is/ In virtue than in **vengeance**'.⁹⁶ Some have seen Prospero as a kind of theatre director who controls the actors (characters) whilst others have even said he could be Shakespeare himself who, when he turns his back on magic – 'Now my charms are all o'erthrown' – is saying farewell to writing **plays**.⁹⁷ By the final Act, to an extent Prospero has learnt of the limitations of his 'rough magic' and has decided that, 'The rarer action is/ In virtue than in **vengeance**'.⁹⁸

91. AO5: different readings in overview.

92. AO3: brief context.

93. AO1: considering terms of question.

94. AO1: accurate terminology.

95. AO2: symbolism.

96. AO2: language and embedded quotation to support.

97. AO5: different readings.

98. AO2: consistently apposite quotations; excellent textual knowledge (AO1).



Arguably, the character who learns the most in the play is Miranda, who until the 'enemies' arrive on the island has only known her father and Caliban. Her falling in love with Ferdinand at first sight, made magical by Shakespeare's use of **asides**⁹⁹ 'Oh, if a virgin,/ And your affection not gone forth, I'll make you/ The Queen of Naples', is perhaps the greatest discovery in the play. Throughout the play Shakespeare presents Miranda as pure and innocent, using symbolism of virginity (vitaly important for females in Shakespearean England), 'if you be maid or no,' 'Oh, if a virgin' and 'Behold this **maid**.'¹⁰⁰ Her name meaning 'worthy of admiration' is understood by Ferdinand, who calls her 'Admired Miranda!' and uses superlatives 'dearest to the world' to convey her rarity. Feminist critics have seen her 'internalised patriarchy' - as a result of only being brought up by her father - as what makes her so precious and **admirable**.¹⁰¹

99. AO2: stagecraft and effects.

100. AO2, AO3 focus, including supporting quotation.

101. AO5: different readings.

There are many transgressive characters in the play who arguably change their ways whilst on the island. For example, Stephano realizes the folly of wishing to be King on the island, 'I should have been a sore one, then.' However, not all seem changed by their time on the island: Antonio is presented as evil and without conscience, 'But I feel not/ This deity in my bosom.' He does not feel remorse for his usurpation or for persuading Sebastian to murder his brother.

Caliban, arguably the most challenging character, seems to be the character that changes least in the play, and who some consider has self-knowledge throughout. Often seen as being symbolic of the colonial **subject**,¹⁰² Shakespeare presents him as an ambivalent character, described by Prospero at the end of the play as 'a born devil, on whose nature/ nurture cannot stick', yet paradoxically Caliban says he will 'be wise hereafter, And seek for grace'. An audience may question whether Caliban can change as we know, he can only use English for profanity, 'You taught me language; and my profit on't/ Is, I know how to curse.' However, Shakespeare gives some of the most poetic lines to Caliban,

102. AO5/ AO2: different reading/ symbolism.

103. AO2: detailed discussion of effects of language here.

104. AO5/ AO2 linked here plus AO3 reference.

'the isle is full of noises,

Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.

Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments

Will hum about mine ears.'

The sibilance of 'sounds and sweet airs' and the onomatopoeic 'twangling', coupled with his feeling of 'delight' suggest he is a creature capable of noble emotions. Maybe we are to see that he has indeed gained enough self-knowledge to change.¹⁰³

Influenced by contemporary travellers' tales such as William Strachey's and reflecting this in the language of the sea, 'sea-sorrow', 'sea change' and 'promise you calm seas', Shakespeare suggests that discovery and self-discovery are achievable.¹⁰⁴ In a time when new lands were being discovered, Shakespeare tries to present the wonder and magic of newness and starting afresh.

Examiner commentary

This essay begins with a thoughtful introduction supplying an overview of different critical approaches to the play (AO5) and relating these effectively to the question. The structure of the answer is clear, if rather simple, involving an account of a series of characters which are related to the theme of self-discovery; expression is concise, personal and consistently clear

(AO1). There is liberal quotation in support of the answer and some effective analysis of language at times, especially in the paragraph on Caliban (AO2). Context is apt and generally well integrated; there would be room to develop it a little further, while still retaining a light touch (AO3).



QUESTION 5 (B)

THE TEMPEST

'At crucial moments *Prospero* misuses his power.'

How far and in what ways do you agree?

The Tempest was clearly one of Shakespeare's most highly regarded plays in his lifetime, performed at Court both in 1611 and 1612, then awarded 'pride of place' at the head of the 1623 Folio. Yet in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the responsibility of Prospero as an ideal ruler has been questioned, as the tendency to question authority has grown.¹⁰⁶ As critic David Lindley writes, 'modern habits of mind . . . do not accept, as Shakespeare's society generally did, that the authority of the duke over subject, master over servant, father over child, is fundamentally unquestionable.'¹⁰⁷

In the first scene Prospero raises a fatal sea-storm. His enemies are thus in his power; but so are the lives of every other passenger and mariner aboard ship. His daughter, Miranda, is shocked at the strength of his art, and his determination to use it, and a long explanation is necessary to quieten her fears. It later turns out that the sailors are stowed safely, 'under hatches', the garments of the wedding guests are fresh and dry as when they put them on, and the ship brought safely into a natural harbour by Prospero's chief spirit, Ariel.

Yet even though all is done in 'reverend care' of Miranda and the others, and Prospero has a troop of elves, sprites and other apparently willing spirits working for him, questions still arise in the mind of the modern reader as to whether Prospero is justified in tormenting his servant, Caliban, with beatings and wounds from hedgehog spines; or threatening Ariel with 'torments to lay upon the damned' (imprisonment in the trunk of a 'cloven pine') in order to get a few more hours' work out of him.¹⁰⁸

Caliban is a particularly awkward case. Prospero has decided he is incurably bad, that an elaborate education has been wasted on him, and that 'nurture' will 'never stick' on his 'nature'. He is named in the List of the Actors as a 'savage and deformed slave', and Prospero's treatment of him recalls the treatment of a wide range of 'native' slaves by white masters under colonial rule. **He may be, as critic Wilson Knight puts it, 'shot through with glory' in some ways: habitually speaks blank verse, knows the island better than anyone. Yet there is a darker side to Caliban, of which Prospero is perhaps justly wary.¹⁰⁹** He attempted to rape Miranda, and his plot to murder Prospero is foiled only by the incompetence of Stephano and Trinculo.

106. The candidate opens with apt literary context, considering how the play has been received over time (AO3).

107. A critic is employed to offer a relevant view of the play (AO5).

108. The answer is well-focused on the question, and the candidate uses apt quotation to support his ideas (AO2).

109. The answer incorporates a critical view (AO5).



If Prospero's judgement of Caliban may be seen as shrewd (if not very attractive) his handling of his daughter's 'love at first sight' of the Prince of Naples is distinctly quirky.¹¹⁰

He sets him tasks (gathering logs) totally unfitted to one of royal blood, or anyone on the island, hitherto, save Caliban. It is as if he were playing the part of a king in a fairy tale whose daughter must be guarded (like Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*) by strange conditions before he gives her away in marriage. **And even when he relents, and conjures a marvellous pageant (very like a contemporary Court Masque) to decorate their nuptials,**¹¹¹ he is still making conditions, reminding Ferdinand that if he breaks 'her virgin knot/Before all sanctimonious ceremonies may/With full and holy rite be ministered' the marriage bed will be strewn with all kinds of metaphorical weeds. Prospero, it is clear, likes 'sanctimonious ceremonies.' Like many influential 'magistrates' of his age, he stands on them.

Prospero's power is directed less at the King of Naples's son, Ferdinand, than at his father, Alonso, who treacherously supported Prospero's brother, Antonio, in his conspiracy to overthrow him as Duke of Milan twelve years before. Alonso, apparently bereaved of his son and heir, ailing and guilty, is an ideal subject for Prospero's power: he hears his sin echoed by nature itself, both water and wind pronounce 'the name of Prosper', and he is soon reconciled to 'heart-sorrow/And a clear life ensuing.' **This is probably how Prospero intended to work: as God's deputy, staging a kind of Christian drama of sin and expiation.**¹¹²

But Antonio, Prospero's brother, closer to him in blood and possibly love, is another matter. Victorian and early twentieth century stagings of the play were frankly embarrassed that Antonio behaves so rudely when Prospero asks for his repentance and offers him forgiveness for cruel usurpation. Shakespeare gives him nothing to say in the final scene except part of a rather bad joke. **Macready in the 1830s initiated a long theatrical tradition in which Antonio kneels in deep humility, imploring forgiveness, and this, or variations on it, was the standard staging until Auden's verse commentary on *The Tempest*, 'The Sea and the Mirror' suggested another approach.**¹¹³ Auden presents Antonio less as a miscreant than as a deliberate exception to Prospero's rule. Prospero has the power to dominate everything, and wishes to use it. But he will never control Antonio. Auden's Antonio says this:

Your all is partial, Prospero;

My will is all my own:

Your need to love shall never know

Me: I am I, Antonio,

By choice myself alone.

Thus Prospero's elaborate, even God-like, effort to control the outcome of events and his own life culminates not just in calm seas and clear life ensuing, but in the scorn of a remnant of rebels, Antonio and possibly Caliban for instance, who will never bend to his yoke.

Prospero's reaction to his use and abuse of power can be judged in a deeply humble 'Epilogue'. He may not have abused that power – much. But he is thankful to have got rid of it.¹¹⁴

He renounces his 'charms', sets free his elves to their various haunts, and asks the audience to pardon him, in words that seem a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer ('As you from sin would pardoned be/ Let your indulgence set me free'). He is no longer Duke of Milan but a humble actor soliciting applause, no longer a 'Prince of Power' dominating this world but an unobtrusive figure, meditating on the next: 'And every third thought shall be my grave.' If he is an authority figure, it is only for a short time.

110. The answer registers the idea of misuse of power, and gives further examples (AO1, AO2).

111. The candidate makes economical use of contextual material here (AO3).

112. The candidate offers an interpretation of the play which fulfils AO5, although a source for the idea is not given.

113. The answer again considers the way that different audiences have received the play during its performance history (AO3, AO5).

114. The candidate offers a clear conclusion to his argument (AO1).



Examiner commentary

This is a clearly arranged and well-argued essay, which incorporates effective references to contextual and critical material. The candidate demonstrates an excellent understanding and analysis of the primary text, and provides a consistently detailed commentary on the role of Prospero.



QUESTION 6(A)

TWELFTH NIGHT

'A play driven by disguise and deception.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of *Twelfth Night*?

In Trevor Nunn's 1996 film of 'Twelfth Night' Viola makes much of her adoption of a transvestite disguise, achieving an effect which is visually humorous. This act prefigures how an initial act of deception and disguise drives the humour, comic purposes and concerns of the rest of the play.¹¹⁵ On a straightforward level, as we shall see below, deception and disguise create humour of language, character and situation. However, serious comic purposes are achieved through the exposure of human folly, the satirical ridicule of human vanity and vice and the exploration of narcissism, gender identity and sexuality. Elam notes how modern readings and productions of the play, such as Belsey and Posner, foreground 'currently fashionable issues' of gender and sexuality.¹¹⁶

The opening scene introduces self-deception.¹¹⁷ Orsino has frequently been presented as languid and effete in a state of what Elam describes as 'self-pitying prostration'. Peter Gill's 1974 RSC production famously included 'an erotic, pale mural of Narcissus' peering down onto the action of the play. Gill presented Orsino delivering his opening lines lounging on cushions in a Narcissus like pose. Shakespeare deploys a common place Elizabethan pun to invite us to mock Orsino's self-obsessed desires when Orsino says how he hunts his 'hart'. This anticipates the revelation of his narcissism and his self-deception, suggested in his allusion to the story of Actaeon and Diana; when he did 'see Olivia first':

'That instant I was turned into a hart,

And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,

E'er since pursue me.'

This portrayal of the folly of love as it self-deceptively turns in on itself, is gently comic but, more than this, it is significant to the development of the whole play; Viola, in disguise as Cesario, gradually erodes Orsino's narcissism and self-deceptive love for Olivia. This opening scene also foreshadows the ridicule of Malvolio's self-love.¹¹⁸

115. Immediate focus on example and significance for question succinctly introduced (AO2, AO1, AO5).

116. Approach to question and contours of argument unpacked. Critical approach referenced (AO1 and AO5).

117. Clear signalling of argument (AO1).

118. Succinct analysis of opening scene, its language and imagery, dramatic impact and performance knowledge relevantly applied (AO2, AO5 and AO1).



Viola's disguising herself as a 'eunuch', **in the carnivalesque spirit of the 'mumming' rituals of 'Twelfth Night',¹¹⁹** is visually comic in itself and is well realised in Nunn's film where Viola cuts her hair, binds her breasts, swells her trousers and practises walking like a man. **This disguise plot is developed to create moments of farce, comedy of character and language. For example, in the duel scene between Sir Andrew and Viola, this disguise is used to mock the effeminate of Sir Andrew ('I'll not meddle with him') and highlight Viola's ambiguous identity as she lacks the 'little thing' to be a man.¹²⁰**

However, the scenes between Orsino and Cesario and Olivia and Cesario present more complex ways in which Viola's disguise drives the play.¹²¹ In Act 1 Scene 4, for example, Orsino's speech beginning 'Dear lad' deconstructs Cesario's appearance of masculinity.¹²²

The allusion to Diana suggests Cesario's feminine beauty whilst the puns on Cesario's 'small pipe' and the 'maiden's organ' entertain us whilst de-stabilising notions of gender identity and sexuality. Cesario is a boy actor playing the part of a young woman playing the part of a young man. Has Orsino seen through the disguise? Is his self-deceiving 'love' for Olivia beginning to be broken down? Or is he flirting with Cesario, a young man, a homoerotic subtext foregrounded in modern productions such as Lindsay Posner's 2001 RSC version?

Furthermore, in Act 2, Scene 4, Orsino and Viola's dialogue on love and desire similarly show how Viola's disguise drives an exploration of masculinity, femininity and sexuality:

'I am all the daughters of my father's house,
And all the brothers too.'

Catherine Belsey notes that Viola's cross-dressing and doubling as her own twin has the effect of disrupting sexual difference. She asks who is speaking in Act 2 Scene 4 and observes 'the answer is neither Viola nor Cesario, but a speaker who at this moment occupies a place which is not precisely masculine or feminine'.¹²³

Cesario's interactions with Olivia are similarly complex and de-stabilising.¹²⁴ If Orsino is self-entrapped by narcissism and a self-deceiving 'fantastical' desire for Olivia then Olivia is equally entrapped by a 'grief', symbolised by the veil, in which she is self-excluded from 'the company and sight of men'. **However, in Act 1 Scene 5, the interaction between Olivia and Viola takes on a distinctly flirtatious tone as Cesario asks to see Olivia's face and impersonates a yearning lover who cries out 'Olivia'. Olivia interrupts with 'You might do much/What is your parentage?' Is this humorously dismissive or suggestive of the awakening of Olivia's desire through the agency of Olivia's disguise?¹²⁵**

119. Glancing reference to relevant context (AO3).

120. Detailed examples of how disguise drives and is a catalyst for comic effect (AO1 and AO2).

121. Cohesive development of argument signposting how response to question is developing (AO1).

122. Specific episode and then its significance debated with selective textual detail (AO2 and AO5).

123. Use of critical approach to support and anchor argument (AO1 and AO5).

124. Development of argument signposted (AO1).

125. Detailed textual reference and meaning debated (AO2 and AO5).



Viola's disguise and deception creates confusion, a 'hard knot for t'untie'. However, paradoxically, though deceived by Viola's disguise, Orsino and Olivia experience a sexual and emotional awakening which will release them from their self-entrapment and so the disguise drives change and enables the comic resolution.¹²⁶ These emotional awakenings are presented in two striking and affecting moments of dramatic poetry. In Act 4 Scene 1, Olivia is startled into the declaration of her love for Sebastian who she takes to be Cesario:

'He (Sir Toby) started one poor heart of mine in thee'

A line on which Mark Rylance in Carroll's 2002 production fainted!

Sebastian's responses capture the emotional impact of this declaration as the dream like transport of the lover; 'fancy' (the imagination and sexual desire) takes on the qualities of the life affirming flow of water and day to day sense is forgotten in a Lethean oblivion:

'How runs the stream?

Or I am mad or else this is a dream.

Let fancy still my sense in Lethe steep:

If it be thus to dream, still let me sleep'

The unity of the lovers is captured in a couplet when Olivia's 'ruled by me' rhymes with her half line 'and so be'.

The revelation of the twins' identities, the untying of the disguise in Act 5, is even more evocative:

'One face, one voice, one habit and two persons:

A natural perspective, that is and is not.'¹²⁷

This untying of Viola's disguise can be read in many ways.¹²⁸ For Northrop Frye it is the final stage in the structure of the comedy where the winter of Orsino's love-sick sadness and Olivia's grief stricken bereavement gives way, after festivity and sexual confusion, to a renewal of individual and social identity in the union of lovers which are 'More matter for a May morning'. For postmodern critics Orsino's speech brilliantly summarises the dramatic truth that Cesario is a 'blank', the aggregation of the identities of Viola and Sebastian, masculine and feminine, arousing heterosexual and homosexual desire. When Cesario becomes 'two' then Sebastian can assume his rightful place as the lover of Olivia and Viola her rightful place as the lover of Orsino; the disguise has been an agency of awakening and change.

126. Development of argument and link to question signalled and unpacked (AO1).a

127. Extended close analysis of language, imagery and dramatic impact of text (AO2).

128. Close focus on interpretations of specific example of disguise drawing on critical and contextual material (AO2, AO5 and AO3).



The mood at the end of the comedy is darkened by the figure of Malvolio,¹²⁹ and, as Elam points out, spectators 'regularly place Malvolio at the centre of their responses.' Deception drives the Malvolio plot in two ways. Like Orsino he is guilty of self-love and narcissism: 'O, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio.' This narcissism is subject to the deceptive practices of Maria et al in the letter trick. **Unquestionably audiences laugh at Malvolio in Act 2 Scene 5 where the trick is played out in stages which Draper describes as crossing 'the threshold between comedy and farce, graduating from an overweening ambitious character to a ludicrously gullible automaton'; this deception is neither affectionate nor affirmative but is a wickedly funny satire on Puritanical repression, social pretension ('Art any more than a steward?'), egotism, pedantry and narcissism as Malvolio ironically proclaims: 'I do not now fool myself to let imagination jade me.' He is gulled like a 'woodcock' in a trap.¹³⁰**

This gulling of Malvolio leads quite viciously and inexorably to his confinement in the madman's prison, where Feste, in disguise as the parish priest Sir Topas, torments him as though he is possessed by the devil. **Modern audiences may well balk at this treatment of Malvolio and be unsympathetic to its Elizabethan association of madness with demonic possession, 'Fie, thou dishonest Satan!' They may see Malvolio as a victim rather than the legitimate object of torment and ridicule:**

'They have laid me here in hideous darkness',¹³¹

The denouement of the comedy, in which disguises are dropped and deceptions revealed, may leave the audience in a state of emotional ambiguity. Certainly, as is conventional in Romantic comedy, the play ends with a life-affirming celebration of sexual love, marriage and social harmony, a 'golden time'. However, the pairings leave Antonio alone, an outsider, separated from his friend, Sebastian (and perhaps, as in Posner's production, his lover) and a strongly discordant note is struck in the undeceived, and arguably justified, anger of Malvolio who, 'poor fool', leaves the stage vowing vengeance on those who have deceived him:

'I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you.'¹³²

Examiner commentary

This is a huge topic and the response legitimately focuses on the ways in which Viola's disguise drives the play in both straightforwardly humorous and in more serious ways. Well constructed, the answer draws upon contemporary critical approaches to good effect and shows good knowledge of context and production. The argument is succinctly extended to consider the significance and contrasting impact on the mood of the play of the self-deception and deception of Malvolio. The response successfully integrates many examples of close textual reference and analysis of effect.

129. Development of argument to consider a contrasting way in which deception and disguise drive the play (AO1).

130. Detailed example, effect analysed drawing on critical and contextual knowledge (AO2, AO5 and AO3).

131. Contemporary response and contextual knowledge deployed to reflect upon impact of Malvolio's deception (AO5 and AO3).

132. Argument concluded by considering end of play and contrasting effects and responses (AO1, AO2 and AO5).



QUESTION 6(B)

TWELFTH NIGHT

'In the end, the audience sympathises with Malvolio.'

How far and in what ways do you agree with this view?

Dover Wilson suggested that 'Twelfth Night' is a 'happy comedy' whilst others (as noted by the editor of the 2008 Arden edition, Keir Elam) position the play as the first of the 'dark comedies' foreshadowing the developments of tragicomedy.¹³³ The way audiences respond to Malvolio, particularly, but not exclusively, at the end of the play, can go some way to resolving this divided judgement. Sympathy can be understood as the extent to which we feel an emotional identification with Malvolio, leading in turn to a sense of discomfort, pity or even injustice in the way he is gulled and then, arguably, tormented in the play.¹³⁴ This can be explored by discussing the shifts in audience's perception over time, the positioning of the audience in this play as a co-protagonist, the ways in which the language of the text influences our sympathies and how, in this most theatrical of comedies, performance affects audience response.¹³⁵

Unquestionably, responses to Malvolio, have shifted over time. In 1602, Manningham, saw the gulling of the steward as 'a good practise (sic) in it' and in 1640 Leonard Digges wrote that 'Boxes, all are full/To heare Malvolio that crosse garter'd Gull' suggesting that great enjoyment was to be had by seeing Malvolio as a 'gull', namely a dupe, a fool, even a simpleton, to be laughed at. In 1660s, Pepys perceived the comedy to be 'silly' (not much sympathy there).

However, over the last 100 years or so perceptions of Malvolio have shifted. Spectators, Elam has noted, 'regularly place Malvolio at the centre of their responses'. Irving's production in 1884 famously presented Malvolio sympathetically as a tragic hero and since then Malvolio has never been dismissed lightly. Van Doren observed in 1939 that 'Modern audiences have bestowed more sympathy upon Malvolio than Shakespeare perhaps intended.'¹³⁶ Notwithstanding the speculation on Shakespeare's 'intentions', the chilling image of Malvolio alone, tormented in a dark room or prison, has many resonances for a liberal, politically sensitised, contemporary audience.¹³⁷

133. Addresses context of play and the debates concerning its dramatic mood (AO3 and AO5).

134. Close focus on key word in question and shows precise understanding (AO1).

135. Clearly signals structure of argument and shows will cover all AOs (AO1).

136. Succinct overview of how audiences have responded to Malvolio over time with detailed examples (AO5 and AO3).

137. Selective reference to key example of dramatic effect and audience response (AO2).



The sub title of 'Twelfth Night', 'Or What You Will', is intriguing. It invites an active interpretation and participation in what is going on in the play and the use of the second person pronoun directly addresses the audience.¹³⁸ It empowers us to take responsibility for our judgements, our laughter, what Ralph Berry identifies as our 'moral responsibility'. Aware of Viola's disguise, we can witness, laugh at, reflect upon and sympathise with the complex triangular relationships between Viola, Orsino and Olivia. **In relation to Malvolio, we are with the tricksters in the box tree as Malvolio reads the letter and we are positioned to laugh uproariously at his absurd arrival on stage in 'yellow stockings' perhaps practising his 'smiling... (which) become thee well'. Edmondson, in his stage history of the play, writes how Malvolio's entrance 'can raise one of the biggest laughs in all Shakespeare'. However, it could be argued, this laughter, aroused by the comic dramatisation of Malvolio's self-love, social pretension and self-deception, lacks the sympathetic identification raised by Shakespeare's comic characters such as Bottom or Falstaff. Ralph Berry, in 1981, identifies the cross-gartering scene as the moment in which the play 'begins to insinuate unease into the audience's consciousness... the joke has gone too far, and we know it.' When we witness the dark room scene and the tormenting of Malvolio our sympathies may well have been aroused but Malvolio's departure from the stage may make us uncomfortable as his exit interpellates the audience as co-conspirators against him:**

'I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you' (my italics).

The audience is included in the 'you'. The image of hunting in Malvolio's words invites us to sympathise with Malvolio as a victim of blood sports; we shall see that the image of blood sports is a recurrent trope in the pivotal letter scene. Not to murder the metaphor, but at which point in the play might the audience start to run with the fox rather than hunt with the hounds?¹³⁹

Malvolio's first two appearances in the play distances him from our sympathies.¹⁴⁰ In Act 1 Scene 5 we respond negatively to his churlish response to the clown, Feste, as 'a barren rascal'. **This is Feste who encapsulates the spirit of Festus, the Lord of Misrule and revelry on Twelfth Night.**¹⁴¹ Olivia notes that Malvolio is 'sick with self-love', coupling him in the audience's mind with the narcissistic Orsino. **Malvolio's disrupting of the revelry of Sir Toby's crew in Act 2 Scene 3 constructs him as a 'kind of Puritan.'**¹⁴² White observes that the figure of Malvolio may indeed have been suggested by 'a real life puritan court official'. **In the Elizabethan context audiences may have seen in this 'overweening rogue' a sympathetic satirical attack on post-Reformation Protestant fundamentalists who reserved special bile for the Christmas festivities, distancing them from Malvolio's opposition to the 'cakes and ale' of Sir Toby.**¹⁴³ However, some productions have softened these initial images of Malvolio creating some sympathy for him, or at least some identification. **Nunn's film, for example,**¹⁴⁴ has Malvolio sitting up late reading a magazine called 'Amour' just before he is disturbed by the revellers and later he is prompted to speak about Olivia when he sees a naked statue of a woman. Nigel Hawthorne's performance evokes a measure of sympathetic human warmth in Malvolio.

138. Sub-title carefully and relevantly unpacked (AO2).

139. Careful development of argument here, analysing effect of textual detail, drawing on stage history, other Shakespeare plays and reflecting on audience response (AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO5).

140. Introduces close focus on two episodes and embeds link to question (AO2 and AO1).

141. Relevant context succinctly integrated (AO3).

142. Points supported by textual quotation (AO2).

143. Relevant context linked to text using quotation (AO3 and AO2).

144. Draws on specific examples from production (AO2 and AO5).



The letter scene and the yellow stocking scene position the audience as co-participants in the ridiculing of Malvolio.¹⁴⁵ We are distanced from Malvolio by our expectation and anticipation; along with the tricksters we are drawn into the 'sport' and are keen to see the practice play out. **This is achieved dramatically by the comic brilliance of Malvolio's performance: the smile, the stage convention that he turns and does a twirl on 'revolve', the visual absurdity of the 'cross-gartered' yellow stockings and his delusion that Olivia would wish to 'go to bed' him. This ridiculing of social pretension, arrogance and delusion, embodied in what Draper argues is a 'patently absurd figure of fun', allows of no sympathy.**¹⁴⁶

However, there is an alternative view. The recurrent trope of hunting down a prey in the letter scene is unsettling: Malvolio is a trout 'that must be caught with tickling', a 'woodcock near the gin', a brock to 'hang' and a bear to be baited 'black and blue.' Notwithstanding the popularity of bear baiting close to the site of the Globe Theatre, audiences across time may have some sympathy for Malvolio as a hunted animal. However, so far, these tropes are metaphors, but surely for many audiences their attitude to the gulling of Malvolio may turn when Fabian says 'Why, we shall make him mad indeed!?' Sir Toby makes the detail of this only too plain:

'Come, we'll have him in a dark room and bound.'¹⁴⁷

Once again, in the 'dark room' scene the audience watch as Malvolio is tricked. However, the dramatic mood is entirely different. **For example, in two modern productions (Eric Porter's in 1976 and Posner's in 2001), Malvolio is located imprisoned beneath stage with only his hands showing through a trap door or bars. Of course, the under-stage was the location of Hell in the Elizabethan theatre. Malvolio's words are chilling in their direct, affecting frankness and simplicity:**

'I am not mad, Sir Topas. I say to you this house is dark.'¹⁴⁸

Feste as Sir Topas torments Malvolio as if he were 'dishonest Satan!' Temporarily softening his voice as 'Feste' and saying that he will fetch 'light, and paper, and ink', he concludes by addressing Malvolio as if he were the 'old Vice figure' in a morality play and leaves Malvolio, alone and in the dark.¹⁴⁹ Many productions evoke sympathy for Malvolio's suffering here in their stage business. For example, Barton in 1969 had Feste stamp on Malvolio's hands before slamming down the trap door and Porter (1976) concluded the scene with Malvolio's cries as his hands grope out towards the audience through the bars.

145. Clearly signals development of argument by introducing analysis of further key episodes (AO1).

146. Close textual reference and effects considered and linked to question and critical response (AO2, AO1 and AO5).

147. Close textual analysis, presentation of alternative view and glancing contextual reference is embedded (AO2, AO5 and AO3).

148. Dramatic impact analysed by reference to performance (AO2 and AO5).

149. Close textual reference and proceeds to analyse dramatic effect (AO2).



As Malvolio departs the stage vowing vengeance a concluding observation can be made on the audience's sympathies. **The audience may not sympathise with Malvolio as a narcissistic, egotistical kill joy who does not, unlike Shakespeare's tragic protagonists experience anagnorisis. However, in the excesses of the tricks played upon him, through the imagery of blood sports as the 'pack' tease then torment him and in the dramatic power of the dark room scene, the audience may well feel some sympathy for Malvolio and feel his torment has gone too far. In Geilgud's 1955 production, Edmondson notes that Malvolio arrives on stage at the end 'a broken, unloving and unlovable man'. However, Ralph Berry observes that:**

'the ultimate effect of Twelfth Night' is to make the audience ashamed of itself.¹⁵⁰

150. Clear conclusion of argument drawing on key moments of textual detail, production detail and critical comment (AO1, AO2, AO5).

Examiner commentary

This is a carefully constructed and well signposted answer that makes excellent use of critical material, shifting perspectives over time and specific examples of effects created by dramatic productions on stage and film. Key episodes in the text are considered succinctly but with due attention to detail and use of language and imagery. There is appropriate knowledge of cultural context and the context of Shakespeare's other plays. Crucially, the question of sympathy is embedded and the responses of the audience considered with some sophistication.



SECTION 2

QUESTION 7

THE MERCHANT'S PROLOGUE AND TALE

Discuss Chaucer's portrayal of Damyan and his situation in the following extract from *The Merchant's Tale*.

In your answer explore the author's use of language, imagery and verse form, and consider ways in which you find this extract characteristic of *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*.

To read the passage, please go to page 5-6 of the OCR sample assessment material: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/171435-unit-h072-1-shakespeare-and-poetry-pre-1900-h072-01-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

This extract occurs at a pivotal moment in the narrative. It follows on immediately from the description of the physical union of Januarie and May which is both comic and grotesque and told in the style of a fabliau: May, deprived of a voice and 'as still as stoon', is subject to the lustful 'werke' of her old husband.¹⁵¹ The set extract focuses on Damyan whose main function in the Tale is to cuckold Januarie but, as introduced here, his role as a courtly lover is also subject to irony.¹⁵² The style and tone of this extract draws on the traditions of the courtly romance and appears to contrast with the preceding section but the construction of Damyan and his situation is most typical of the Tale as a whole in its multi-layered ironies raising questions about sexuality, women and anti-feminism, marriage and courtly values. The significance of this extract depends upon an understanding of its levels of irony working backwards and forwards throughout the whole Tale.¹⁵³

The opening couplet presents Damyan in the traditions of courtly love by referencing his being stricken, 'sike', with 'desyr' for the Beloved. The warmth of this desire is emphasised by the full rhyme of 'fyr' and 'desyr' and the image of 'fyr' links in with a pattern of fire imagery in the Tale suggesting the intensity of sexual passion.¹⁵⁴ In an earlier passage, Chaucer describes Venus leading the dance at Januarie's wedding with 'hire fyrbrond in hire hand'. This suggests that Januarie only pays lip-service to the religious motivation of marriage which is to lead one's life in 'hoolynesse'. Similarly, Damyan is motivated primarily by erotic desire, by Venus, and is not, as is embedded in the courtly tradition, ennobled by courtly love.¹⁵⁵

In an action typical of the courtly lover Damyan composes upon his 'sorwe' and Chaucer may be gently mocking Damyan in the way he secretes his letter next to his heart in a 'purs of sylk'. More significant is the description of Damyan's Beloved as 'his faire, fresshe lady May'. The soft alliterative phonology of this iambic phrase reinforces the associations of May's cratylic name: spring-time, renewal, natural fertility, elevating the Beloved but also appearing to ennoble Damyan's desire.¹⁵⁶

151. Extract addressed and is placed in its immediate context in the Tale and the tradition of the fabliau (AO1, AO3, AO4).

152. Succinct overview of presentation of Damyan (AO1).

153. Introduces key aspect of extract's style and tone and places in context of Tale as whole (AO2 and AO4).

154. Close analysis of imagery and form (AO2).

155. Detailed link made to rest of Tale and link made back to set extract and context (AO4, AO2, AO3).

156. Close analysis of language, imagery and form (AO2).



However, the levels of irony characteristic of this Tale once more come into play,¹⁵⁷ Typical of the anti-feminism expressed by the Merchant, May's behaviour in the Tale characterises her as cold, opportunistic and faithless as she schemes to cuckold her husband with Damyan in a comic and audacious act of love-making climbing on her husband's back to facilitate their copulation in a pear tree.¹⁵⁸ Chaucer describes May as 'fresshe' three times in the set extract with positive connotations of spring-time and natural beauty, but this epithet is used repeatedly as a motif throughout the remainder of the Tale with increasing irony:¹⁵⁹ the sexual act between May and Damyan takes place in a walled garden which, particularly to a contemporary audience, ironically recalls both Eden and the walled garden of the Virgin Mary with connotations of innocent love and spirituality. However, Januarie's garden is a place made by man for worldly love in the spirit of Priapus, the god of gardens and fertility; it is a pleasure garden and the sexual act is presented as dysphemistically reductive. Damyan is presented in the set extract as a courtly lover but the proleptic irony of this characterisation is revealed¹⁶⁰ when, in the pear tree, he 'gan pullen up the smock, and in he throng'; he is then effectively dismissed in the Tale, more cuckold than courtly lover.

Damyan's worshipping of 'his faire, fresshe lady May' ennobles neither himself nor his 'Lady'. However, his relationship with her is an example of how Chaucer counters the Merchant's anti-feminism. May's character and behaviour are presented as a betrayal and an example of women's infidelity but is she not a product of the predatory patriarchy exemplified by the actions of Januarie?¹⁶¹

The nature of Damyan's situation as May's potential lover in this triangle of relationships is developed as the focus of the set extract shifts to Januarie and May.¹⁶² On one level, the noble and customary traditions of the wedding of Januarie and May and of the household are observed and described. Astrological signs propitious for love are invoked as 'Tawr' (Taurus) glides into 'Cancre', holy mass is observed, 'when that the heighe masse was ydoon', and the Merchant describes 'this goode' man's thoughts of Damyan. However, the reader (or listener) will note the analeptic irony here: the marriage of May and January has satisfied sexual and social necessity not mutual or Christian love in the form of a 'hooly sacrament'. Januarie's characterisation in the first part of the tale in, for example, his lustful desire for 'tendre veel' rather than 'old boef', challenges the perception of Januarie as a 'goode man'. In the tradition of the 'fabliau', the marriage is ripe for cuckolding by Damyan.¹⁶³

The final section of the extract dramatises Damyan's situation through the immediacy of Januarie's direct speech:

'And seyde, Seynte Marie! How may this be,'

The exclamatory phrase and variation of the caesura, interrupt the elegant, formal style of this extract and capture Januarie's surprise at his loyal servant's absence from 'his bisynesse'. The irony draws upon our knowledge of the Tale so far and anticipates events to come.¹⁶⁴ Januarie's invoking 'Seynte Marie' reminds us of how the actions in this Tale show how Christian orthodoxy in respect of marriage and sexual activity collides with human desires and appetites.¹⁶⁵ Januarie's interrogatives draw attention to the threat of Damyan's uncharacteristic behaviour and how the plot will develop: 'How may this bityde?'

157. Cohesive development of argument (AO1).

158. Relevant connection made to rest of Tale and linked back to set extract (AO4, AO2).

159. Detailed comment on language of set extract linked to ironic development in the rest of the Tale (AO2, AO3 and AO4).

160. Shows close understanding of the irony in set extract with appropriate use of terminology and context of courtly lover (AO2, AO1, AO3).

161. Close attention to key phrase in set extract and related to central theme in the Tale as a whole (AO2, AO1).

162. Cohesive development of argument and focus on set extract (AO1, AO2).

163. Close attention to significance of textual detail and levels of irony and position of extract in the narrative discussed (AO2, AO3, AO4).

164. Close analysis of language and form (AO2).

165. Link to wider themes of Tale and Christian context (AO1 and AO3).



Januarie's description of Damyan as a 'gentil squier' is clearly ironic; Damyan has already been introduced by the Merchant as a 'servant traytour' and this irony is confirmed by his subsequent action in the pear tree. However, the phrase 'gentil squier' carries a particular ironic significance in the Tale and in the context of 'The Canterbury Tales' as a whole. To be 'gentil' and behave with 'gentillesse' was the defining virtue of chivalric and courtly values embodying notions of duty, loyalty and overall moral excellence. Such virtues are hard to find in this tale, whether in the actions of Januarie, May or Damyan.¹⁶⁶

166. Close attention to key phrase in extract and analysed in relation to Tale as a whole and wider context (AO2, AO4 and AO3).

The extract concludes with the description of Damyan by Januarie. This takes a comic ironic twist and anticipates the cuckolding of Januarie and the way courtly values are subverted. Damyan will indeed be 'discreet' and 'secree' in his actions, but these actions will betray his duties as Januarie's 'squier'; his 'trouthe' to Januarie will be broken and he will be 'manly' and 'servysable' not to his lord but to his lord's lady!¹⁶⁷ Arguably, in this comic, but dark tale, in which all three principal characters are subject to ironic scrutiny, Januarie and orthodoxy will win out in the end: 'And to his palays hoom he hath hire led'. However, such is the ironic nature of this Tale that the audience is left with the possibility the opportunistic May, who convinced Januarie he 'mysconceyveth', may transgress again.¹⁶⁸

167. Close analysis of textual irony (AO2).

168. Argument concluded and extract placed in context of Tale as a whole and its most significant stylistic feature (AO1, AO2, AO4).

Examiner commentary

This response focuses closely on the set extract, analysing its language and form, whilst acknowledging that its significance should be understood by placing it in the context of the whole Tale as a whole. This enables the development of a tightly structured argument which unpacks Chaucer's irony, a key characteristic of the Tale as a whole. The response maintains a consistent focus on Damyan whilst placing this character and his situation in relation to Januarie and May. Connections are made to the rest of the Tale which are seen as essential to an understanding of the extract and relevant contextual references are made, particularly to traditions of courtly love.



QUESTION 8

PARADISE LOST BOOKS 9 AND 10

Discuss Milton's portrayal of Adam and Eve's actions and their consequences in the following extract from *Paradise Lost Book 9*.

In your answer explore the author's use of language, imagery and verse form, and consider ways in which you find this extract characteristic of *Paradise Lost Books 9 and 10*.

To read the passage, please go to page 7-8 of the OCR sample assessment material: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/171435-unit-h072-1-shakespeare-and-poetry-pre-1900-h072-01-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

This extract follows the deception and seduction of Eve by Satan and Adam's 'choice to incur/Divine displeasure for her sake' by eating of that 'enticing Fruit'. The immediate effect of this action is the arousal of 'carnal desire' so different from the innocent sex pre-Fall.¹⁶⁹ Milton begins book 9 by changing his 'notes' to the tragic' and the set extract towards the end of the Book is pivotal in the development of the Christian tragedy of the poem as their Fall seals the fate of all Mankind. It is equally central to the domestic tragedy of Adam and Eve.¹⁷⁰

The opening presents Adam and Eve's fallen sexuality and Milton goes on to represent the psychological impact of the Fall upon Adam and Eve and their relationship before developing his overarching theme in the poem: to 'justify the ways of God to men'. The unfallen virtues of 'innocence', 'Just confidence', 'native righteousness' and 'honour' have gone to be replaced by 'guilty shame'. This knowledge of Good and Evil and the portrayal of their shame and despair is the subject of the remainder of Book 9:

'high Passions, Anger, Hate

Mistrust, Suspicion, Discord shook sore

Their inward state of mind'

At the end of Book 10 they make peace with each other in the fallen world and make possible the fallen virtues of forgiveness, mutual support and eventually penitence before God.¹⁷¹

169. Places extract precisely in context of whole poem and addresses question (AO4 and AO1).

170. Introduces overall argument and shows understanding of question (AO1).

171. Textual detail is combined with overview of argument to connect the extract to the whole (AO2, AO1, AO4).



The opening lines dramatise the effect of the Fall on Adam and Eve's relationship. There is an assertive urgency to their love-making.¹⁷² The calm mutuality of their innocent sex has gone. The emphatic insistence of Adam is anticipated in the monosyllables of the opening two feet, a spondee followed by a trochee: 'So said he, and...' Before the Fall, reason commanded will, but now Adam exercises no rational restraint as he 'forbore not glance or toy/Of amorous intent.' The image of 'toy' is just one of several examples in this section of the imagery or lexical field of 'play': 'toy', 'disport' and 'amorous play'. Postlapsarian 'play' is carnal recreation or 'concupiscence' as their flesh may be one but their spirits are divided, as witnessed by their 'mutual accusation' later in Book 9.¹⁷³

Eve's eye 'darted contagious Fire', a metaphor which connotes passionate desire (and possibly Hell?) but also the disease, the corruption which has now been introduced into the world as a consequence of their disobedient action. 'Her hand he seized, and to a shady bank...He led her nothing loath'. Adam asserts his dominance over Eve by 'seizing' her hand, an emblem of his rule; as expressed in Genesis 3:16 Man only becomes the ruler over Woman, post Fall. Milton emphasises 'He led her nothing loath' by placing the clause at the end of the sentence.¹⁷⁴ This lack of restraint is 'licence' (the unfettered exercise of desire) not 'freedom' (where will subject to reason), a highly significant consequence of the Fall. Earlier in Book 9, pre Fall, Eve had demonstrated the importance of restraint in her desire to 'prune' the garden which grows 'luxurious by restraint' and later she supports the roses (emblems of passion) 'gently with myrtle band', myrtle being an emblem of marriage.¹⁷⁵

However, this postlapsarian lovemaking takes place on 'a shady bank'; the indefinite article suggests they now copulate casually, wherever they may be. The flowers are significantly chosen, connoting shade (away from the light), and perhaps, with the emblems of the 'Hyacinth' and 'Asphodel' lily, death. Death has been introduced into this world through the actions of Adam and Eve. The use of anadiplosis emphasises that love is now an appetite, a meal and a sport:

'There they their fill of Love and Love's disport

Took largely.'

The seductive phonology of the 'Earth's freshest softest lap' quickly gives way to the sinuous sibilance of 'the solace of their sin' reminding us that this is now not an innocent pleasure but one of 'mutual guilt' which 'seals' their discordant relationship.¹⁷⁶ After much discord there is the attempt to heal this relationship towards the end of Book 10 so that they may 'strive/In offices of love' and 'may lighten/Each other's burden'. (Book 10)¹⁷⁷

172. Question explicitly addressed and contextual knowledge succinctly applied (AO1 and AO3).

173. Detailed analysis of form, language and imagery and succinct connection made to another episode in Book 9 (AO2 and AO4).

174. Detailed close analysis tightly linked to question and glance to contextual knowledge (AO2, AO1 and AO3).

175. Connections made to rest of text and in detail to Book 9 (AO4).

176. Detailed close analysis and effects considered (AO2 and AO3).

177. Precise connection made to Book 10 (AO4)..



The description of their awakening from their 'grosser sleep' emphasises the effect of the Fall.¹⁷⁸ Their senses have been intoxicated and their animal 'spirits' played upon, a sensation evoked by the alliterative fricatives of 'the force of that fallacious Fruit' and the adjective 'bland' (meaning 'appealing to the senses') to describe the vapour. Here it is ironic that 'up they rose' only to be aware of their fallen state. With similar irony their eyes have 'opened' but only to an awareness not of light but of darkness. This pivotal moment is emphasised by Milton's command of rhythm:

'and their minds

How darkened; innocence, that as a veil...'

'Minds', which concludes the line, is emphasised and enjambement connects this to 'darkened' recalling Satan's 'dark intent' as he arrives on Earth. The caesuras, either side of 'innocence', highlight the contrast between Adam and Eve's unfallen and fallen state and what has been lost.¹⁷⁹

Milton develops the consequences using two characteristic techniques: the extended metaphor (of clothes) and the biblical allusion. The 'veil' of innocence has gone and they are 'naked' and 'destitute and bare /of all their virtue'.¹⁸⁰ Along with innocence the unfallen virtues have gone:

'Just confidence, and native righteousness

And honour from about them.'

The biblical allusion to 'Herculean Samson's being tricked by Dalilah as he rose from her 'Harlot-lap' foreshadows Adam's misogyny as he turns on Eve.¹⁸¹ This division and discord, and Adam's assumption of the right to rule is a key consequence of the Fall.

The final lines of the extract present several consequences of the Fall through a series of contrasts recalling recurrent themes:¹⁸² Adam and Eve have descended, away from God, rather than 'Rising' towards him. We may recall the opening of Book 9 where the flowers 'send up silent praise/To the Creator' and the 'human pair' 'joined their vocal worship to the choir/of creatures'.¹⁸³ The deception of the Satan has led to their eyes being opened but to the knowledge of 'Evil' as well as 'Good'. This awareness of Good and Evil, a dramatic consequence of the Fall, is powerfully realised in the line:

'Both Good and Evil, Good lost, and evil got'

In which the monosyllabic lexis and the use of anaphora serve to create a sonorously emphatic effect.¹⁸⁴

178. Cohesive link maintaining focus on question (AO1).

179. Argument developed through close analysis and succinct connections made (AO2 and AO4).

180. Characteristic techniques identified (AO2)

181. Development of argument made through analysis of allusion (AO1 and AO2).

182. Concluding section of argument introduced (AO1).

183. Connection made to another episode in Book 9 (AO4).

184. Analysis of form (AO2).



However, the consequences of Adam and Eve's actions for their relationship is perhaps most striking of all:¹⁸⁵

'O Eve, in evil hour thou didst give ear'

The address to Eve, which in terms of Milton's rhetoric has the impassioned power of ecphrasis, squarely blames Eve for giving her 'ear' to that 'false worm'. The punning on 'Eve' and 'evil' implies a misogynistic attitude which continues in Book 10 where Adam declares that Eve was given to him as a 'perfect gift' and because 'from her hand I could suspect no ill... She gave me of the tree, and I did eat'. However, this misogynistic view is by no means the conclusive judgement on Eve. Earlier in Book 9 it is Eve who argues that a 'virtue unassayed' is meaningless. In this analysis Eve's actions do introduce evil into the world but also show the importance of 'free will' and ultimately making the fallen virtues of penitence and forgiveness possible. The extract concludes with a reference to 'shame', which can be the 'least' of evils for it is a stage on the journey forward, begun at the end of Book 10:

'with tears

Watering the ground, and with their sighs the air

Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign

Of sorrow unfeigned, and humiliation meek,¹⁸⁷

Examiner commentary

This is a tightly argued and well-structured response consistently focused on the terms of the question and the extract, whilst placing the extract precisely in its immediate and wider context. The analysis of language, form and elements of the 'Miltonic Style' is detailed and well sustained, with a constant attention to effects. Detailed but succinct connections are made to other episodes in Book 9 and 10 and there is some awareness of Milton's project in the whole poem. Relevant contextual knowledge is applied.

185. Argument drawing to a conclusion by highlighting one of the most significant points closely linked to question (AO1).

186. Conclusion of argument combines close analysis, development of central point, connections and contextual reference to Milton's other writing. (AO2, AO1, AO3 and AO4).



QUESTION 9

COLERIDGE, SELECTED POEMS

Discuss ways in which extraordinary thoughts arise from ordinary situations in *The Aeolian Harp*.

In your answer explore the author's use of language, imagery and verse form, and consider ways in which you find the poem characteristic of Coleridge's work in your selection.

To read the passage, please go to page 9-10 of the OCR sample assessment material: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/171435-unit-h072-1-shakespeare-and-poetry-pre-1900-h072-01-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

'The Aeolian Harp' is one of a group of poems written by Coleridge which we now call 'Conversation Poems' and which share several concerns and characteristics of content and form. **Typically, these poems begin with the precise recreation of an immediate and particular situation which is invariably very 'ordinary' such as being left incapacitated in a garden to brood whilst one's friends go for a walk ('This Lime Tree Bower'), sitting beside one's sleeping infant on a frosty winter's night ('Frost at Midnight') or sitting with one's future bride overlooking the Bristol Channel ('The Aeolian Harp') which then inspires a meditative journey of remarkable imaginative exploration.**¹⁸⁷

'The Aeolian Harp' is a typical example of the organic form of Coleridge's conversation poems.¹⁸⁸ A key element of this form is the way the ending of the poem returns to the situation of its beginning, what Coleridge describes as the 'snake with its tail in its mouth'. This poem begins and ends with the persona addressing Sara and in between the reader is taken on a meditative journey. **The poem does not have a mechanical shape imposed upon it, say of rhyme or stanza or even logical argument, but rather it develops associatively following the development of the persona's thoughts and feelings as if in an intimate conversation with the reader. This concept of the return, having achieved what are characteristically extraordinary insights into Coleridge's thoughts on the relationship between the imagination, nature and the universe, is also to be found in in Coleridge's narrative or 'supernatural' poems such as 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Kubla Khan'.**¹⁸⁹

The opening of 'The Aeolian Harp' evokes an ordinary situation with precise particularity.¹⁹⁰ The persona, who we can identify as the poetic voice of Coleridge, is **sitting with Sara Fricker on a pre-nuptial visit at Clevedon overlooking the Bristol Channel.**¹⁹¹ The poem is written in blank verse of iambic pentameter, a rhythm which evokes the patterns of ordinary spoken English. **The apostrophe and possessive determiner which open the poem establishes the intimate situation. This is followed by a sentence of eight lines in which the variation of the caesura ('My pensive SARA!'), the extensive use of enjambment ('most soothing sweet it is/ To sit beside our Cot'), the parenthesis in line 5 and the frequent use of exclamatories work together to suggest a particular moment of serenity and enhance the impression of an intimate, natural speaking voice, suggesting spontaneous thought and feeling. Coleridge's command of the phonoaesthetic qualities of language evoke the beauty and immediacy of the scene overlooking the sea, at this stage exquisitely and sensuously evoked but not extraordinary: the use of sibilance, the lateral and nasal sounds, and the half line, introduced by an assertive trochee, comes to rests on 'silence' and a pause created by the caesura:**

'The stilly murmur of the distant Sea

Tells us of silence.'¹⁹²

187. Close focus on the terms of the question (AO1) and relevant, precise connections made to other poems (AO4).

188. Specific focus on form (AO2)

189. Comment on form is developed (AO2) and linked to Coleridge's characteristic concerns (AO1) and other poems (AO4)

190. Explicit focus on close analysis of poem in line with the terms of the question (AO2 and AO1).

191. Precise biographical context established (AO3).

192. Extended detailed analysis of form using appropriate terminology, examples and consideration of effects, essential to this task. (AO2)



This evocation of love and friendship (the Frickers were friends of Coleridge met through his great friend of the moment, Southey) is characteristic of Coleridge's poetry. **Ashton writes that from a very young age Coleridge felt isolated and his poetry expresses a yearning for love and friendship:**

'To be beloved is all I need

And when I love, I love indeed'

These thoughts are intimately explored in many of his poems. 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' begins with departure of his friends on a walk leaving the persona alone in his bower feeling thoroughly sorry for himself. However, his empathetic and creative imagination transforms this ordinary situation into a 'fantastic vision' of the dell, opening up into the vastness of 'The wide wide heaven' which leads to a transcendent thought and feeling where the landscape seems 'less gross than bodily' before returning to an ordinary but changed situation as he reflects upon the bonds of friendship, 'my gentle-hearted Charles', and the unity and beauty of all Life:

'No sound is dissonant which tells of life.'

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' transforms the ordinary situation of a guest about to attend a wedding, a symbol of love and union, into the Mariner's extraordinary, nightmarish vision of the whole cosmos and Man's place within it, or perhaps alienated from it:

'Alone, alone, all, all alone

Alone on a wide wide sea'

The monosyllabic repetition and haunting phonology evoke physical and spiritual alienation. The return to the opening situation leaves the wedding guest with the deep thoughts of 'a sadder and a wiser man'. Thoughts, perhaps, of a horrific and arbitrary universe, 'where God himself/scarce seemed there to be', or more positively of the universe as a community of 'one life'.¹⁹³

After the silence of the opening, 'The Aeolian Harp' takes the reader on a journey which engages us with extraordinary thoughts and feelings. **The associative link is the symbol of the Aeolian Harp making music in the casement.**¹⁹⁴ Coleridge's poetry characteristically uses symbols to convey thoughts and feelings through images which organically gather meaning and appeal to the reader's imagination. The lute is typical of Coleridge's symbols in that it conveys 'an idea, in the highest sense of that word' (Coleridge) and which 'partakes of reality' but is in itself 'a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative'. This ordinary 'wind chime' is transformed into a symbol of 'the one life within us and abroad'. **The process by which Coleridge achieves this is remarkable. The lute is initially compared to a 'coy maid' (Sara) yielding to the caresses of the breeze as a young maid yields to the lover. Sexual feelings and ideas (for in Coleridge's poetry thought and feeling are inextricably linked) are evoked in the sensuous, phonoaesthetic lines:**

The long sequacious notes

Over the delicious surges sink and rise.'¹⁹⁵

193. Identifies characteristic concern of this opening and its 'ordinariness' (AO1) and then develops this with detailed links, supported by quotation, to other poems (AO2 and AO4).

194. Return to close analysis of overall structure of the set poem (AO2) with appropriate links to the context of Coleridge's poetics (AO3).

195. Detailed analysis of development of symbol and awareness of the effects of phonology (AO2).



Coleridge arrives at the heart of the poem in lines 26-33 which were added in 1817 some twenty two years later. **These lines reflect Coleridge's belief in the way the active, creative imagination interacts with the vital universe to perceive a vision of cosmic unity – a truly extraordinary thought.**¹⁹⁶ These thoughts are not expressed through abstruse philosophising but through, for example, synaesthesia - 'a light in sound, a sound-like power in light' - and in the lute's music, a symbol of harmony and 'Rhythm, in all thought'. **Such symbols expressing ideas of the one life and the creative imagination can be seen in the activity of the frost in 'Frost at Midnight', the albatross in 'The Ancient Mariner' and in the moon and stars in 'Dejection: An Ode' where the depression ensuing from a loss of the imagination results in a persona who can 'see, not feel' how beautiful they are.**¹⁹⁷

In 'The Aeolian Harp' Coleridge returns to the ordinary (part of that 'systolic' rhythm of expansion and contraction which Gerard identified as the shaping form in the conversation poems). **He addresses his 'Love!' and evokes the immediate situation but then his thoughts expand as his 'passive brain' is inspired into imaginative thought; the symbol of the lute develops to express Coleridge's philosophy of the interaction of mind, 'animated nature' and the spirit of the cosmos in a transcendent vision which he describes elsewhere as 'we are all one life, but everything has a life of its own'**¹⁹⁸

Arguably in Coleridge's finest poems, the 'return' suggests the gaining of a deepened understanding as a result of meditation.¹⁹⁹ For example, the remarkable symbol of the 'secret ministry of frost' and the ordinary, yet magical, image of the 'silent icicles/Quietly shining to the quiet moon' which conclude 'Frost at Midnight'. **In this poem the return to his 'beloved Woman!', whom he deems to be reproving his 'thoughts', could be seen as a charming, almost coy, concession to the world of the ordinary and orthodox views of his intended bride 'who biddest me walk humbly with his God' or alternatively could be read as rather pious in its contrition, the reader being more engaged by the persona's 'vain philosophy' than by Sara's 'mild reproof.'**²⁰⁰

Perhaps the lasting impression of this poem is the way in which the 'desultory breeze' caressing his Cot in Clevedon and playing upon the Aeolian Harp is transformed into an extraordinary poetic vision and meditation upon 'the random gales/that swell and flutter on this subject lute', a symbol of his imagination.²⁰¹

Examiner commentary

This is a very thoughtful answer which analyses the form of the text and specific effects of language in detail and with a high level of insight. It is appropriately selective in commenting upon a quite long poem. The response is closely focused on the specific terms of the question which it unpacks and develops to very good effect. Relevant contextual information is deployed to illuminate the poem and the response is confident in making pertinent and detailed links to a range of other poems.

196. Close focus on the terms of the question and develops argument (AO1).

197. Relevant and specific links to use of symbols in other poems (AO2 and AO4).

198. Cohesive return to set poem and unpacking of its thought closely related to question and context of Coleridge's thought (AO1 and AO3).

199. Understanding of form (AO2) and example of critical judgement and understanding (AO1).

200. Understanding of poem's possible meaning supported by quotation (AO1 and AO2).

201. Argument brought to a clear conclusion (AO1) supported by citation of key quotation and technique (AO1 and AO2).



QUESTION 10

MAUD

Discuss Tennyson's portrayal of his speaker's resentment of people and society in the following extract from *Maud*.

In your answer explore the author's use of language, imagery and verse form, and consider ways in which you find the extract characteristic of *Maud*.

To read the passage, please go to page 11-12 of the OCR sample assessment material: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/171435-unit-h072-1-shakespeare-and-poetry-pre-1900-h072-01-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

The Maud speaker, offering his detailed, often ill-tempered commentary on Victorian behaviour and politics, astonished Tennyson's readers.²⁰² They had expected Tennyson, the newly created Poet Laureate, would return to his most familiar lyrical mode. Instead he wrote from the point-of-view of someone whose grip on reality fluctuated, to say the least. **The result is a 'monodrama' of constantly shifting mood, attitude and metre, matching sharp mood swings in the speaker. To capture this much of the poem was written in irregular verse. The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins called the poem 'an ungentlemanly row.'**²⁰³

The extract is arguably one of the more sustained and disciplined in the poem, an attack on the links between new money and social exploitation in early Victorian England. **Most of the lines are five stress, but there is a good deal of counterpointing ('Sick, am I sick') suggesting a restless, unfulfilled energy. The rhyme scheme, though persistent, is complex and generally irregular, surprising with rhymes in unexpected places, including doggerel couplets;**²⁰⁴ 'Last week came one to the county town,/To preach our poor little army down.' The effect of the writing is to make it far from clear when the speaker is speaking as a social prophet, and when he is merely voicing deranged opinions which might compromise his serious comments.

It can be argued, however, that the passion of the speaker only adds to the texture of his descriptions. **At the beginning of the extract the depiction of 'grimy nakedness' dragging trucks through 'poisoned' (improperly ventilated) gloom is very powerful. It is often compared with contemporary images from illustrated papers of half-naked women and children working in the mines.**²⁰⁵ Both the Maud-persona and the graphic artists condemn estates built on the sufferings of the workforce. With similar force the narrator takes issue with the 'mushroom-Lord's' new grouse-moor. On these issues Tennyson, like his hero, felt very strongly, as **the poem is ultimately rooted in Tennyson's resentments as to the way his father was disinherited**²⁰⁶ for a junior branch of the family, who proceeded to build and live vulgarly like the 'mushroom' family in *Maud*.

202. The answer opens with an explanation of the context in which this text was originally received (AO3).

203. The candidate characterises the quality of the writing in the extract and in *Maud* as whole (AO2, AO4).

204. Detailed AO2 commentary fulfils the dominant requirement for Section 2 answers.

205. Here, analysis of the writing is combined with a reference to the socio-historical context (AO2, AO3).

206. Biographical context is added to the mix (AO3).



Throughout the passage then, there is a quantity of fairly direct social criticism, where the poem's and the persona's interests join together: the labourers in the gloomy mine, the management of land for game-birds, the acquisition of army commissions by payment, so they are likely to go to chinless wonders: 'a rabbit mouth that is ever agape'. Most notable is the speaker's attack on the commercial interests of the Quakers, who seemed to feather their nests preaching pacifism at any cost. Tennyson's **friend Gladstone begged to differ. He could not believe that so passionate and sensitive a poet could possibly take the side of the war-mongers in the run-up to the Crimean War, putting it down to the madness of the young man who speaks the poem, 'the finishing stroke in the picture of a mania which has reached its zenith.'**²⁰⁷ Bellicose attitudes to the Russians were by no means unusual at the time, however, and many thought, like the character in the poem, that pacifist preachers were undermining their country's honour and imperial destiny. So on the **whole I would argue that this passage voices characteristic conservative doubts about social developments in the 1850s**²⁰⁸

It is important to note that this extract is bound to the rest of the poem by elaborately patterned imagery,²⁰⁹ often reflecting the persona's resentments of society in terms of his own overcharged imagination. The images shift from red (as in the poisoner's 'crimson lights'), to pink, as when Maud's dancing feet make 'the daisies rosy', to rose, as in the dancing rose-metaphors of 'Go not, happy day'. In the present extract there is a sudden flash of thematic imagery in the 'gewgaw castle's 'sullen-purple moor'. This image pattern always suggests heightened emotion: here resentment of the grouse-moor. Elsewhere it stands for ominous thoughts (of the blood of the suicide-father) or for passion, as in the 'purple and red' blossoms at the end of 'Come into the Garden, Maud'. Another characteristic feature of this extract are the moments of self-analysis, where the persona reflects that his judgements may reflect his own distress as much as that at society, 'At war with myself and a wretched race', he condemns his own 'evil tongue and evil ear'.

In conclusion Maud offers a colourful, often brutally satirical account of England in the mid nineteenth century, concentrating on the way the profit-motive is compromising traditional rural security.²¹⁰ The distorted nature of the persona's motives sometimes inhibit the authority of his commentary, but in the present extract this happens less frequently than elsewhere in the poem.

Examiner commentary

This answer shows an impressive grasp of the poem in its context, offering a thoughtful analysis of the thoughts and feelings of the Maud persona. Analysis of language is detailed and subtle (AO2) and the argument is effectively developed, showing an awareness of different readings and approaches (AO1). Links to other parts of the poem are well-made, partly depending on the candidate's ability to discuss the poem as a whole and partly on his selection of quotations late in the essay (AO4). Context is fuller than might be expected in answers to this part of the paper, but the discussion is always well integrated into the argument concerning the speaker's resentment of people and society (AO3).

207. Comments on the tone of the poem are coupled with contextual insights (AO2, AO3).

208. The argument of the essay is clearly developed and explained (AO1).

209. This paragraph focuses on detailed analysis of language in the extract and in other parts of the poem (AO2, AO4).

210. The whole poem is characterised in the conclusion (AO4).



QUESTION 11

ROSSETTI, SELECTED POEMS

Discuss Rossetti's portrayal of earthly and heavenly love in *Twice*.

In your answer explore the author's use of language, imagery and verse form, and consider ways in which you find the poem characteristic of Rossetti's work in your selection.

To read the passage, please go to page 13-14 of the OCR sample assessment material: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/171435-unit-h072-1-shakespeare-and-poetry-pre-1900-h072-01-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

Christina Rossetti frequently writes about love, both earthly and heavenly; in 'Twice', she addresses both kinds, and makes it clear that – appropriately for a deeply devoted Christian – heavenly love is superior.

Rossetti presents love through the depiction of three characters: the speaker, her human lover and God.²¹¹ The speaker expresses a desire and a need for love throughout the poem; **her imploring tone is familiar in other poems too, such as 'Echo' ('Come back to me in dreams...')** and 'Maude Clare' ('I'll love him till he loves me best...').²¹² **The poem is composed of six stanzas which follow a fairly regular pattern; as often in Rossetti's work she gains many of her effects from frequent repetition and subtle variation (in this poem, the opening line is repeated in different versions throughout the poem, following the development of the simple narrative). The first half of the poem focuses on human love and is written in the past tense; the second part shifts subject matter to divine love and also alters the tense to the present. The very last line moves into the future ('shall not question...').**²¹³

The central image of the poem is the speaker's heart, representing her love. She opens by offering her heart to another human being, 'I take my heart in my hand'; as the poem progresses, the lover takes her heart in his hand and breaks it.²¹⁴ The opening sounds courageous and suggests that the speaker wants to make a declaration ('this once hear me speak') **but feels that, as a woman, it is not her place; this reminds us of the Victorian context, suggesting that at this time in history it was still for the man to make a declaration of love, and for the woman to play a more passive role. Rossetti herself held conservative views about the place of women in society (in 1889 she signed Mary Ward's anti-suffrage petition), and so her own views are likely to have chimed with her speaker's ('You should speak, not I'), despite the fact that present day readers of the poem will probably see things differently.**²¹⁵

211. The candidate outlines Rossetti's method of portrayal (AO2).

212. A brief comparison is made with two other poems (AO4).

213. The candidate analyses the structure of the poem, an area which many candidates avoid (AO2).

214. The answer registers the poet's use of imagery (AO2).

215. The answer supplies contextual insights about gender roles, and considers how attitudes in the readership may have changed over time (AO3).



The tone of the poem is personal, using human endearments ('O my love, O my love'), but the male lover remains quite distant. This distance in romantic relationships is often found in Rossetti's work, for example in 'Song' where the speaker anticipates her own death, and expects no great commitment from her lover: 'And if thou wilt, remember, / And if thou wilt, forget'. 'Echo' is more intensely emotional, but there is still a distance: the speaker calls to her loved one over a distance of time and begs him to come to her only in memories: 'Come in the speaking silence of a dream.'²¹⁶ In 'Twice', the dismissive speech of the male lover ('With a critical eye you scanned') is received by the speaker with outward calmness ('I smiled at the speech you spoke') but inward disappointment and damage: she loses her capacity to smile and question, and also her joy in nature ('Nor cared for corn-flowers wild'). Rossetti often uses imagery from nature to express ideas about human love, for example in 'Echo' she asks the loved one to come to her 'As sunlight on a stream'. Her loss of interest in nature in 'Twice' might suggest that she is depressed after disappointment in human love, and no longer able to take an interest in the world.

The speaker seems braver in the second half of the poem, where she stands alone before God and asks to be judged. The reader is encouraged to compare the two lovers – human and divine – by the repeated pattern in the verse: 'O my love, O my love' becomes 'O my God, O my God.'²¹⁷ She seems to realise that she was wrong to trust in the human strength of her lover and her own feelings: 'My hope was written on sand'. Now she trusts in God's power to 'refine' and 'purge' her heart, damaged by her disappointing love affair, and is confident that he will hold her heart safely, not set it down and carelessly break it like her human lover.

The last stanza is full of faith and confidence ('I shall not die, but live'). Once again, the female speaker is required to submit to a masculine lover, but God – the divine lover – is far more deserving of trust than man. Her offering of 'All that I have... All that I am' is happily given. The logic of the poem is inescapable: the structure leads us from the flaws of human love to the certainty of faith in God, and the lesson looks like a very simple one. As often with Rossetti, however, there is a surprise: once all reluctance and fear have been swept away, a note of doubt is re-introduced in the very last line of the poem: 'But shall not question much' (my italics). This line seems to reveal both her weakness (an all too human reluctance, a clinging on to the self) and a strength (she knows her own mind, and cannot easily relinquish her own personality and power of self-expression). **This sense of reluctance to give herself completely to God might be related to the Anglo-Catholic tradition of 'reserve' in one's relationship with God. It can also be seen in 'Good Friday' where the speaker refers to herself as 'a stone' because she is unmoved by Christ's sacrifice; at the end of this poem, she can only depend on her hope that God will persist in loving her despite her indifference, and will 'turn and look once more / And smite a rock.'**²¹⁸

The verse form of the poem is regular, based on a three-stress line with repetitions and variations which emphasise the developing narrative: ideas about taking and giving the heart, speaking and questioning are revolved and repeated in ways which contrast the love of man and the love of God. Ultimately, as is always the case in Rossetti's work (and in her life?), the love of God is stronger and superior, and will always out-perform the love of man. The final verse suggests that loving God completely means losing the whole self, and the speaker knows that this step is often too much for humanity.

Examiner commentary

This is a reflective and analytical answer, which makes thoughtful use of social and religious contexts to support its analysis of the set poem. Connections and comparisons with other poems are well made, and help to illuminate the reading of the set poem.

216. There is a thoughtful analysis of tone, supported by well-chosen examples from other poems (AO2, AO4).

217. The candidate shows how patterns in the verse shape its meaning (AO2).

218. The interpretative points made about the poem's conclusion are strengthened by provision of religious context and a comparison with another poem (AO3, AO4).



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