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Candidate Style Answers with commentary

H072

ENGLISH LITERATURE

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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) PRIVATE LIVES

'Beneath the humour, *Private Lives* shows how hard it is to make relationships work.'

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

The original 1930 audience was probably drawn to *Private Lives* because of the articulate way it presents a lifestyle of upmarket sexual decadence. **It featured Parisian apartments, Mediterranean suntans, elaborate designer dresses (the white Molyneux dress worn by the creator of the role of Amanda, Gertie Lawrence, became the play's trademark), cocktails and clipped, elegant dialogue.**¹ It was viewed as the height of fashion and the essence of light comedy.

But however frothy the play's effect, at its heart is the relationship between Elyot and Amanda, carried on over many years and in the midst of other liaisons. It seems unlikely that such differences as this couple demonstrate in the play will ever be reconciled, nor that one will keep away from the other long enough for their obsession to die down. A psychological impasse on this scale is arguably quite dark material for romantic comedy. **Every quirky skirmish of wit, even of just two or three lines, between Amanda and Elyot is a microcosm of their relationship.**² All their ingenuity goes into fighting one another, and the battle looks likely to take up their whole lives. Coward's plays are renowned for the sub-text beating beneath what **Sheridan Morley has called the 'clenched romanticism' of his dialogue.**³ In *Private Lives*, especially after the forty minute verbal tennis match that opens Act Two, it becomes clear that what Elyot and Amanda are talking about (or disagreeing about) is much less important than the inevitable fact of disagreement. The only subject on which they do seem to agree is the absence of God and the impossibility of an after-life. Meanwhile they have to fill up their time with a kind of fashionable sexy bickering which continually reveals the hapless 'can't live with you, can't live without you' nature of their relationship. **When their dialogue is fully in tune (or out of it) whole countries seem to represent the weird scope of their passion:**

Elyot The world?

Amanda: Yes.

Elyot Oh, highly enjoyable.

Amanda China must be very interesting.

Elyot Very big, China.

Amanda And Japan –

Elyot Very small.⁴

1. The candidate places the text into theatrical context (AO3).

2. The answer explains how Coward portrays the difficulties in relationships through dialogue (AO2).

3. A critical voice is employed to characterise the dialogue (AO5).

4. An apt quotation is employed to exemplify the nature of Elyot and Amanda's relationship (AO2).



Another reason the spotlight is never far from the inner lives of Elyot and Amanda, is that the play's few other characters can't really compete with them, either for stage space and time or for ingenuity, experience or comic vitality. When the play opens Victor is Amanda's second spouse, and Sybil Elyot's, the first exchanges serving to expose the dramatic irony that they are honeymooning in adjacent rooms. The pressure from Amanda's and Elyot's past (their 'immoral memory') is already felt so strongly by the audience that the coincidence about the room-bookings seems less of a coincidence, more of an inevitability. Thus Sybil and Victor ('flat' and 'rugged' respectively) appear to be in the play merely to reintroduce their former spouses to one another, not to have fruitful relationships with them. **They have opportunities to learn many things from Elyot and Amanda, but what they learn best is how to argue:**

Victor: You're one of the most completely idiotic women I've ever met.

Sybil: And you're certainly the rudest man I've ever met!⁵

If Victor and Sybil are just, in Coward's words, 'a couple of extra puppets thrown in to assist the plot and provide contrast,'⁶ the other bit part, a 'frowsy' Parisian maid called Louise, who has just been dismissed for a persistent cold (sounding 'like a bison'), highlights the contemptible consumerist selfishness of all the English characters, how their incessant navel-gazing on the subject of love is sustained by an army of drudges. The meagreness of Louise's role (and lifestyle) confirms once again that this is Elyot and Amanda's play.

Although *Private Lives* has confirmed both its seriousness and zest (**its 'pessimism with pep' as Coward put it himself**)⁷ in many revivals since 1930, it retains, in spite of brutal potential (neither Victor nor Elyot seems averse to striking a woman), something of the understated propriety of the age which produced it, when actors and actresses tended to emit their most passionate statements with clipped vowels, through tight lips and clenched teeth, and even in the most disturbing circumstances, as Elyot puts it, behaved 'exquisitely'. The surreal association between Sybil and Norfolk gains comic force delivered in this way:

Elyot. You said Norfolk was flat.

Amanda That was no reflection on her unless she made it flatter.

Elyot. Your voice takes on an acid quality whenever you mention her name.

Coward had to bargain with the Lord Chamberlain's officer, then the effective censor of the stage, to allow some of the more unguarded references to 'copulation', or use of expletives, and these remain mild (though it is pretty clear how 'Sollocks!' functions as rhyming slang).⁸ Indeed the one subject of Amanda and Elyot's 'private lives' which remains relatively dark is what they do in bed. The closest the play comes to consummation is the kissing episode on the sofas in Act II, and there Amanda, with 'no sense of glamour', pleads 'it's too soon after dinner' and the action moves rapidly to a non-coital cigarette. **As a homosexual Coward may have been relieved not to present the heterosexual entanglements in *Private Lives* too explicitly,**⁹ quite apart from the theatrical mores of the time compelling him to explore the 'abnormality' of his characters' 'private lives' through words, not deeds.

5. The argument widens from the central relationship of the play to include Victor and Sybil too (AO1, AO2).

6. The playwright's own comments can be valuable source of AO5 material.

7. Again, Coward obliges with his own critical commentary (AO5).

8. Performance history provides useful context, showing how attitudes of audiences have changed over time (AO3).

9. Coward's biography is drawn on for contextual insight (AO3).



To conclude, the stylised dialogue, the unusually accessible subtext, the carefully orchestrated onstage violence and the swapping of lifestyles and to some extent attitudes between the mentor and junior couples make *Private Lives* a very funny play.¹⁰

As Coward pointed out after the complex exposition in the first act almost nothing happens; but being imprisoned with Elyot and Amanda in the Parisian flat while their relationship become increasingly entropic brings a confined, obsessive quality to the action, making it even funnier. Its stylised humour, even the bubbling wretchedness, are part of its design, and if it struggles to be serious, even using humour as a mask to hide the wrinkles in 'private lives', that is deliberate too:

Elyot You mustn't be serious, my dear one, it's just what they want.

Amanda Who's they?

Elyot All the futile moralists who try to make life unbearable. Laugh at them. Be flippant.

Examiner commentary

This is a fluent and thoughtful answer which does its best to get at the heart of Coward's play. Context and criticism are effectively sourced and smoothly incorporated into the argument. Quotation from a play such as this is not always easy to manage, and the candidate has successfully exemplified some of its qualities through apt selection of material.

10. Any answer on this play should be aware of the importance of its humour (AO1).



QUESTION 1(B)

PRIVATE LIVES

'The younger couple are more than just victims.'

In the light of this comment, discuss the roles of Victor and Sybil in *Private Lives*.

Noël Coward wrote the part of Elyot in *Private Lives* as a vehicle for his own sophisticated persona. He added the role of Amanda for the actress Gertie Lawrence, whom he had acted with since childhood.¹¹ On stage they were triumphant, a big box office draw. Amanda and Elyot carry most of the play's light plotting, one or other is almost always present on stage, and they expound almost all the piece's bleak yet artful philosophy. But if audiences come to see the classic starring roles, that doesn't leave much room for the two supporting parts, Sybil and Victor. **If Elyot and Amanda carry the 'reasonably well constructed dialogue for two experienced performers', Victor and Sybil, according to Coward, 'were little better than ninepins, lightly wooden, and only there at all in order to be repeatedly knocked down and stood up again.'**¹²

At first the audience wants the ninepins to be knocked over,¹³ and wills the balustrades on the honeymoon balcony to be knocked down, so that Elyot and Amanda can break free of their inconvenient second partners and get together again. They are the entertainment: witty, iconoclastic, and not having to worry about anything as vulgar as a job. In contrast the new spouses are folk who seem to have strayed in from the audience's world, with distinctly familiar personality traits, and a tendency to get much faster to the brass tacks of relationships. Elyot and Amanda make a good deal of their ordinariness. Victor is dismissed as 'normal', 'dumpy and fair, and very considerate, with glasses'. In contrast to Elyot he is a rather tough and stubborn he-man, though Eliot reserves the right to beat him in a fight. Sybil, in turn, is too vague to be anything in particular, except the perfect opposite of Amanda. **She lacks the latter's tomboyish appeal and is described as a 'completely feminine little creature', like 'a little, sharp-eyed, blonde kitten', promising one day 'to grow into a cat.'**¹⁴ Both Victor and Sybil are continual victims of the elder couple's witticisms. 'Don't quibble, Sybil' is a puerile but irresistible reproof from Elyot, while Amanda seems to refer to Norfolk as a way of disparaging her breast size ('Very flat, Norfolk'). Amanda thinks Victor is on the way to becoming 'a fat old gentleman in a club armchair.'

Perhaps the most memorable and shocking illusions for the audience are in the final scene when Stella chooses to believe Stanley when Blanche has accused him of raping her, 'I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley' thus deluding herself. Her lies to her sister, 'She's going on vacation' also portray her lying to herself. **This willing self-delusion was too challenging for censors in 1951 who forced Elia Kazan to change the ending of the film version of the play so that Stella leaves Stanley with their baby.**²⁵

11. The candidate starts by placing the play in the context of its original production (AO3).

12. The answer incorporates a critical comment from the playwright in support of the 'victim-thesis' in the question (AO5).

13. The candidate is helpfully aware of the effects of the play in the theatre (AO2).

14. The answer makes helpful use of the language of the play to develop its argument (AO2, AO1).

25. AO3/ AO5: excellent knowledge of context and impact on meaning.



Yet much as Victor and Sybil are condemned for their normality, the play starts to find them indispensable, both in terms of plot and theme.¹⁵ Amanda and Elyot spend the second act mostly alone in Amanda's flat in Paris, their long scuffle ending not in copulation, but in a no-hold-barred fight. **It is into this mayhem that Victor and Sybil 'advance apprehensively' at the end of Act II.**¹⁶ The stage direction says they look on in 'horror', possibly because they know the entropy that accompanies Elyot and Amanda will soon be transferred to them.

This is precisely what happens. The juvenile characters are trained in the sophisticated chaos that is Elyot and Amanda's love life, and soon start to feel the violence of thinking and struggling like them, 'smirched and unclean as though slimy things had been crawling all over me.'

Sybil and Victor in Act III are certainly not just foils. They are guided into the role of the warring couple, a mirror-image of Amanda and Elyot themselves, trapped in mutual insults and provocation, some directed at Elyot and Amanda, but much thrown at one another:

VICTOR: 'You're one of the most completely idiotic women I've ever met.'

SIBYL: 'And you're certainly the rudest man I've ever met.'

After time of this Elyot and Amanda realise the job has been done: they have cloned the darker half of their relationship in this chipper young couple. They pull out from the emotional bruising, leaving Victor shaking Sybil 'like a rat' and tiptoe away. And that, give or take some slaps landed by Sybil, is the end of the play. There are now two couples fascinated by how much they hate one another when at the start of the play there was only one. There are now two couples who cannot live with and cannot live without one another. **Oddly, but rightly, the stage belongs at curtain to the new initiates, not the habitués.**¹⁷ Victor and Sybil are more than just ninepins, endlessly knocked down and stood up again. They have learned the right human moves, in so far as there are any in Coward's game of life, and grown into a fully-fledged on-off relationship.

Examiner commentary

This answer is effectively keyed to the structure of the play itself, in which Victor and Sybil start out as victims – even stooges – but grow into more substantial presences. The argument is fluent and persuasive (AO1), and frequently supported by textual reference (AO2). Coward's own criticism is helpfully called into play at the start of the answer so that the candidate can work off it and arrive at a more fully nuanced view (AO5). Context is light but appropriate (AO3).

15. As the answer develops, the candidate starts to show how the second couple are indeed more than just victims (AO5).

16. An effective reference to the play's structure (AO2).

17. The answer's conclusion is once more in tune with the structure of the drama (AO1, AO2).



QUESTION 2(A)

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

'A Streetcar Named Desire shows how dangerous illusions can be.'

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

Tennessee Williams wrote in his essay in 1947, 'On a Streetcar Named Success', which reflects on popular success, that **'One does not escape that easily from the seductions of an effete life' and that 'the public Somebody you are when you "have a name" is a fiction created with mirrors... the only somebody worth being is the solitary and unseen you.'**¹⁸ Williams' personal life - his homosexuality, depression, promiscuity and addictions - are all presented in A Streetcar Named Desire, and the **illusions**¹⁹ he created are seen clearly in the characterization of the faded Southern belle, Blanche.

The illusion created by Blanche that she is innocent when **increasingly**²⁰ the audience realize she is in New Orleans escaping her sordid past, is a key theme in the play. The **irony of her name and her white clothing**²¹ is employed by Williams to suggest a façade behind which she is hiding, 'She is daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice'. However, when flirting with Stanley we see her wearing 'a red stain robe' which is her true colour in a play that employs colour symbolism throughout (Stanley is associated with 'gaudy' colours to suggest his virility).

Some believe Blanche is based upon the similarly promiscuous, alcoholic actress Tallulah Bankhead; Elia Kazan believed that Blanche was Tennessee Williams himself in character form.²² In her willingness to withdraw into an illusory, self-destructive world, through sexual relationships and alcohol, she reflects Williams' troubled personal life, 'I don't want realism. I want magic!' Like Blanche, Williams idealized the South. **The name of the ancestral home, Belle Reve, means 'beautiful dream' and a young Williams himself stated he 'lived like a gypsy.'**²³ Echoes of this are seen in Blanche's confession that 'I've run for protection, Stella, from one leaky roof to another.'

The most important dramatic conflict in the play is between Blanche and Stanley, each representing illusion and reality. Williams uses the language of each character to demonstrate the illusory and real worlds each largely inhabit. Stanley Kowalski, the immigrant blue collar worker who represents modern America, uses **blunt literal phrases, 'How 'bout cuttin' the re-bop, 'I'm the king round here' and 'Hoity-toity, describin' me like an ape. Blanche as the play progresses increasingly employs figurative language, 'a little bit of eternity dropped in your hands' and 'my Rosenkavalier'**²⁴ and this parallels her descent into madness. The symbol of the 'paper lantern' and her aversion to bright light are also employed to demonstrate Blanche's unwillingness to see herself for what she is.

18. AO3: apt biographical context relevant to the question set.

19. AO1: clear focus on terms of question.

20. AO1: informed understanding.

21. Clear understanding of techniques and effects, with apt supporting quotation.

22. AO3/ AO5: reference to Bankhead shows strong contextual understanding and the Kazan reference shows consideration of different interpretations.

23. AO3: integrated, relevant contextual knowledge.

24. AO2: some excellent selected quotations with a focus on Williams' language.



In conclusion, Williams demonstrates that illusions are dangerous. Blanche's need for liquor - **'she is drinking to escape'**²⁶ – suggest how hard she finds it to maintain a façade behind which the reality of her promiscuity can be hidden. Her 'moth-like' movements and inability to settle show how difficult it is to live a lie. In a time when homosexuality was illegal, Williams himself had to hide his true self in much the same manner as Blanche. The overwhelming tension created for the audience that her mask is gradually slipping during the course of the play is what makes it such a compelling dramatic text.

26. AO2: apposite quotation at this point.

Examiner commentary

This answer offers a firm grasp of the characterisation of Blanche as a woman who is living a lie and clinging to the faded grandeur of her past. It is contextualised by Williams' biography, offering a suggestion that the character of Blanche is based in part on his own personality and experiences (AO3). This possible reading of the play also feeds into AO5, since other interpretations are also seen to be possible; the film version also gives a valuable example of a particular interpretation of the text. There is helpful reference to the language of the play as it refers to illusion. For higher marks, the candidate could have done more with the idea that illusions are dangerous.



QUESTION 2(B)

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

'Stanley is macho, posturing and vulgar.'

In the light of this comment, discuss the role of Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

When the audience first sees Stanley, he is portrayed as an alpha male through Williams' stage directions and their pseudo-sexual connotations, 'Stanley carries ... a red-stained package from a butcher's. He heaves the package at her'. At once Stanley is associated with the world of flesh and **corporeality**,²⁷ rather than Blanche's ethereality. This also shows the traditional role of the man as provider, and hunter-gatherer in 1940s **America**.²⁸ There is much evidence to suggest he is vulgar, through Williams' repeated references to Stanley using animal imagery and primary **colours**;²⁹ however, he is perceptive and quick-witted which have led many to view him **sympathetically**.³⁰

Marlon Brando's iconic portrayal of Stanley in Elia Kazan's 1951 film accentuates the character's machismo and posturing through his tight T shirts and his characteristic drawling voice. One critic described his performance as 'lethally **powerful**'³¹ and Williams intends us to see him as self-confident and swaggering. Stage directions such as 'slams the bathroom door' and 'he throws back his head like a baying hound' suggest animal strength, but we also see him consoling Stella, 'takes her by the shoulder rather **gently**'³². Stanley employs imperative language 'Open your eyes' which lend him an air of authority. His use of vulgarity, and **shouting**³³, 'STELL-LAHHHHHH!' also show him to be a force of nature, emphasizing his role as alpha male. He is portrayed as childish in sections such as his '[mimicking] (of Blanche) "Soaking in a hot tub"'.

27. AO1: addressing terms of the question from outset, and establishing an argument, developed later, about the conflict between Stanley and Blanche.

28. AO3: understanding of context relevant to question.

29. AO2: discussion of effects.

30. AO1, AO5: terms of argument coherently established with some challenge to the quotation in the question.

31. AO5: different readings explored.

32. Apposite use of embedded quotation (AO2) with recognition of Stanley's complexity (AO5).

33. AO2: well-developed focus on how Williams presents Stanley.



Williams accentuates Stanley's vulgarity through colour **imagery**.³⁴ He is presented as 'the gaudy seed-bearer' who wears a 'gaudy' bowling shirt. On the Poker Night Williams presents Stanley and his friends through the stage directions, 'lurid nocturnal brilliance', who are wearing 'coloured shirts' and 'are men at the peak of their physical manhood'. Perhaps Williams is trying to suggest – through the primary colours and their physicality- that the likes of Pablo and Stanley as immigrants bring a vivacity to post-WWII America; they are the future of America in contrast to the faded Southern belle Blanche, who is characterized through her insubstantiality, 'moth-like'. Certainly, Williams himself was attracted to New Orleans by its liberal attitude to difference, whether nationality or sexual orientation. He moved there aged 28 to escape his unhappy childhood in **Mississippi**.³⁵

There is much evidence to suggest Stanley is macho and arrogant, but some, such as Patricia Hern see Stanley as having a 'code of morality [that] is clear-cut... ruthlessly so.' Whilst this does suggest Stanley is forthright, it views him as a character with a clear code of **ethics**,³⁶ in contrast to Blanche's feigned morality. Williams accentuates Stanley's lack of education through his ungrammatical speech, 'What's all the rest of them papers?', is in contrast to Blanche's haughty superiority, 'our improvident grandfathers .. epic fornications'. Indeed, Williams presents Stanley as keenly perceptive in seeing through Blanche's façade of respectability, 'You won't pick up nothing here you ain't heard before' and her attempted obfuscation, 'Now let's cut the re-bop.' Williams once stated 'I write out of love of the **South**'³⁷ and this tension between its old-world values embodied by Blanche and modern America is the central conflict of the play characterized by Blanche and Stanley respectively.

Perhaps the most difficult moment in the play for audiences is Blanche's rape at the hands of Stanley. In this barbaric act Williams characterises Stanley's machismo using sound effects ('roar of an approaching locomotive'), the actions of a predatory animal ('He springs towards her') and his dialogue ('Tiger – tiger! Drop the bottle top'). The fact that it is Stanley, immediately prior to the rape, who demands that Blanche 'Drop it! We've had this date with each other from the beginning!' is both shocking and **revelatory**.³⁸ It may suggest he has always seen through Blanche's illusory self-portrait, and is a climax for the audience of the increasing sexual tension between the two established in Scene II: 'If I didn't know you was my wife's sister I'd get ideas about you!'

In conclusion, Williams presents Stanley as a character who is puerile, macho and vulgar at times, but his perceptiveness and joie de vivre make him a someone who is complex and realistic. Perhaps Williams is suggesting that Stanley represents modern America, strident and forthright and Blanche, with her insubstantiality, is symbolic of the fading hierarchical Southern society of the nineteenth century. In the play's final scene, Stanley prevails and Blanche, unable to cope with modernity is incarcerated; modern America has no need for the Old World that Blanche **represents**.³⁹

34. AO2: detailed discussion of effects of Williams' stagecraft here.

35. AO3: the remainder of this paragraph looks at the influence of contexts, as relevant to the question, in reasonable detail.

36. AO5: judgement informed by different reading; contention of the quotation in question.

37. AO3: biographical detail which also assists AO5.

38. AO1: detailed understanding of key moment in play demonstrated with apposite quotation (AO2) and link to the deeper themes (AO1).

39. AO1: confident understanding with link to wider contexts (AO3) and symbolic significance of the characters (AO2).

Examiner commentary

This answer is lively and well written, offering a detailed analysis of Stanley's role, well supported by textual reference. The argument is contextualised by the idea that Blanche represents the Old World and in particular the decay of the Old South while Stanley represents the brashness and go-ahead qualities of the New World. There is some reference to criticism and to film and otherwise AOS is well integrated and mostly dealt with through the candidate's own argument.



QUESTION 3 (A)

THE HOMECOMING

'Whatever the characters seem to be saying or doing, they are really at each other's throats.'

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

Ruth, an academic's wife, arrives in the **gloomy North London house**⁴⁰ where her husband's father and brothers live. The family have gone to bed, but she is confronted, in the darkness, by Lenny, the most combative of them. He tells a tall story, or what at first seems to be a tall story, of how working in London Docks he killed an elderly woman who may or may not have been a prostitute, and who may or may not have been rotten with a sexually transmitted disease. It is the first real hint of how murky the subtexts of this play will get. The episode culminates in an exchange between Ruth and Lenny, suitably wadded with **'Pinter pauses'**⁴¹

RUTH: How did you know she was diseased?

LENNY: How did I know?

Pause.

LENNY: I decided she was.

Silence.

Ruth and Lenny⁴² square up during that silence. She asks him a direct question. He answers that he is the kind of man for whom making up his mind that a thing is so makes it so. In that reading Lenny wins, possibly twiggling already that Ruth may be connected with the 'game', professionally concerned with 'pox', already grooming her for her unexpected role as prostitute at the end of the play. **But another reading is possible**,⁴³ one more favourable to Ruth. Ruth's direct question may disconcert Lenny, and he is driven back on mere bluster, 'I did not know why, but I decided.' In that case it is Ruth who wins.

40. The candidate establishes the context for the play by characterising its setting in his introduction (AO3).

41. Reference to Pinter's wider style provides another kind of context (AO3).

42. The answer provides close textual analysis of a well-chosen quotation (AO2).

43. AO5 is demonstrated here offering alternatives reading of the text.



As Pinter suggested, 'a torrent of language' is being employed beneath such exchanges.

The characters are at one another's throats.⁴⁴ Pinter's director, Peter Hall, argues that the dramatist's great skill is the restraint or containment of emotion, but that under this 'bottling' of thought and feeling 'there is a violent emotional melodrama going on'.⁴⁵ In rehearsing Pinter he urges his actors play the melodrama, giving a violent over the top emotional rendering of the scene. That is the only way to discover the full emotional significance 'of what's going on underneath.'

Lenny and Ruth are not the only characters battling it out in sub-text. In the play's opening exchanges Max gets his teeth into his effete but apparently harmless brother Sam. Much of the dialogue concerns Sam's professional life as a chauffeur, but the comments often tend to jibes against or slurs upon his sexuality. Max may be outraged by Sam's impotence, asexuality or gayness ('It's funny you never got married, isn't it?'). But the bottom line is that brother Sam is not man enough for Max. **Sam is a 'tit', or a 'wet-wick', or a collector of 'toffee apples'.⁴⁶** He would also have lacked Max's skill as a master butcher, a serious charge where the latter is concerned, as he uses it on the rest of his family too. He has butcher-badges and they do not ('I learned to carve a carcass at my [father's] knee'), insults from the floor of the butcher's shop ('you're a maggot') and threats ('I'll chop your spine off'). Jessie, the gold heart of the family, is called its 'backbone'.

Sam, while absorbing a great deal of this kind of banter, ensures in his turn that the battle will not be one-sided, referring whenever he can to Jessie's coupling with Max's great friend (and alter ego?) Mac ('A bastard uncouth sodding runt') on the back seat of his Humber Super Snipe. The patriarch also comes in for more rough verbal treatment from his sons, who taunt his housekeeping skills ('a dog cook'), or recall the menacing 'cuddles' he gave them in childhood, or remind him of how he made them grovel before them ('Don't clout me with that stick, dad'), and so made them despise him now.

There is, then, an extraordinary mixture of love and violence beneath these insults and retorts, a metaphoric storm of sticks, stones, meat-cleavers and iron mangles.⁴⁷ Indeed, it would be true to say the action of the play is confined within its language and pauses, rather than carried by the events. Among all these linguistic blows at one another's mental throats, very little direct action is needed to back up the stream of specialised insults. It is a surprise when something drastic actually happens, as in the showdown at the end of the first act, when Joey, the simplest of the brothers, ends up worsted in Oedipal conflict, floored by his own dad; or, later on, when Teddy gains a measure of control over Lenny by stealing his cheese-roll. We are used in *The Homecoming* to more passive aggression, to brutality and resentment wrapped up in word and gesture.

Examiner commentary

This is a detailed and well illustrated answer, showing an excellent imaginative grasp of the play and an impressive sense of its impact in the theatre. Context is varied, offering both a sense of the play's North London setting and its place in theatrical tradition (AO3). Analysis of textual detail is a great strength (AO2), and enables the candidate to show how different views of the play can be developed (AO5).

44. The candidate has worked round to the question in elegant style (AO1).

45. This critical comment develops AO5, but also places the play in a wider theatrical context (AO3)..

46. Economical and effective quotation (AO1, AO2).

47. The helpful use of quotation is gathered up here into a well-expressed argument (AO1).



QUESTION 3(B)

THE HOMECOMING

'Ruth is at the centre of the play.'

In the light of this comment, discuss the role of Ruth in *The Homecoming*.

Max's dark **North London house**⁴⁸ is filled with testosterone, if the constant bickering between uncle, father and the two boys is anything to go by. There are, however, no women, and only intermittently references to one woman, Max's late wife Jessie. 'Their mother's image was so dear', says Max, that 'any other woman would have . . . tarnished it.' **It is the early 1960s, just before the sexual revolution, and the boys' knowledge of women seems to derive exclusively from mother figures and the looser kind of girl.**⁴⁹ There have been no efforts to replace Jessie, just a succession of violent and predatory jobs for the boys. Max has been an exemplary butcher; Sam seems to live off lonely businessmen; Lenny does brutal jobs for the council, and Joey moves from boxing to demolition and back, without having chosen finally between them. **The family's worst verbal abuse is to accuse someone of being a woman, or like one: demeaning use of female body parts ('you tit!'), routine summary of Sam's 'bitch' like qualities, or feminized words such as 'sensitive' applied disparagingly to Teddy.**⁵⁰

This third son, Teddy is the only one who has escaped this vicious sexist circle. When he returns to the family home on a transatlantic visit, it is a reasonable assumption that this is a play about his 'Homecoming'. This is a hard family to forget or ignore, and Teddy looks full of unfinished emotional business. **There is bound to be a 'Homecoming' for him sooner or later. But not in this play. It is not Teddy, but his wife Ruth the boys need to complete the family circle.**⁵¹ From her first appearance, in the darkness after the boys have gone to bed, it is clear she belongs in her new surroundings, and that her interactions with the inmates of the house are going more-or-less to be efforts to hit it off with them. There are, in truth, only half-hearted efforts to resist her. Max, the patriarch, subjects her to some verbal abuse, objecting to 'tarts', 'a smelly scrubber', 'a stinking pox-ridden slut' in the house. But her early conversations with Lenny look like battles by means of dialogue, and slowly but surely she overpowers him. She lays out her credentials by preparing a sort of emotional trap for him: 'If you take the glass . . . I'll take you'. Next she remembers the open spaces where she used to pose as a 'photographic model for the body', suggesting that she has plenty of **experience in the adult industry.**⁵² Lenny moves from threatening her with accounts of how he likes to abuse women to accepting her as a fellow professional (he seems to be a pimp). Soon after Joey, the youngest brother, discovers 'she's wide open!', and runs upstairs with her to gain some sexual experience himself. **It is possible that quite early in the play the boys recognise her as a successor to the legendary Jessie,**⁵³ who was certainly a powerful maternal figure, but who also seems to have betrayed Max with his terrible alter-ego, MacGregor, and who, Sam insinuates, may have been a prostitute herself.

48. The candidate shows an awareness of context by establishing the play's setting (AO3).

49. The answer characterises male views of women at this time (AO3).

50. The importance of Ruth as the play's one female character is introduced by a consideration of the play's language as it refers to women (AO2).

51. The candidate develops different views within his own argument (AO5).

52. The 'adult industry' is consistently offered as a context for Ruth's character and actions in this answer (AO3).

53. The argument persuasively includes the absent character Jessie as part of Ruth's feminine mystique for the male characters (AO1, AO5).



When Lenny explains to Max that Ruth is prepared to leave Teddy and her own three sons, and come to live with them, he sees at once how well it would suit them to have 'a working woman 'about the house', so long as she is, like Ruth, a woman of quality. **As Martin Esslin has written, 'in other words the sons, yearning for the mother, dream of turning her into a whore whose sexual favours would be available just for the asking.'**⁵⁴ The boys will dress her in the 'latest fashion'. They think up fanciful names for a working-girl ('Dolores', 'Spanish Jacky', 'Cynthia', 'Gillian'). And Ruth is quite happy to go along with their plans, proving herself quite the businesswoman. It is almost as though she has done this before. She insists on legal contracts and a roomy flat. Ruth will even supply Jessie's other old role as mother to the family, putting in some time cooking and bed-making

54. Apt critical reference (AO5).

It can be argued, therefore, that Pinter has written a play about male sexual needs, with Ruth settling down at the centre of the family to fulfil **the traditional sexual roles of Madonna and whore.**⁵⁵ The solution seems so neat we barely consider how Ruth will manage her demanding new role. It is her 'homecoming', and for the time being she will service her home, managing the boys and keeping things going as a high class prostitute. Meanwhile, apparently, her husband Teddy will 'not become a stranger'. **Ruth has installed herself at the centre of the life of every character in the play.**⁵⁶

55. Wider views women are referenced (AO3).

56. The answer is strongly concluded with a direct reference to the question (AO1).

Examiner commentary

This is an efficient and confident response which summarises Ruth's role in the play and links it to the absent character Jessie (AO1). There is effective reference to the sometimes disturbing language of the play as it applies to women (AO2). AO5 is covered by reference to a critic but also by the candidate's subtle awareness of the play's different possibilities in his own argument. Context is present in the writer's sense of the North London world of the play and also in the misogynist view of women which is characterised, culminating in the description of Ruth as a Madonna/whore figure.



QUESTION 4(A)

THE HISTORY BOYS

'The History Boys demonstrates the power and value of education.'

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

In *The History Boys*, the value of education is explored by Bennett through the differing approaches taken by the teaching staff of his fictional grammar school to prepare a group of boys for their Oxbridge entrance exams. At the very heart of his assessment of the value of education is his maverick educator, **Hector, a passionate, but flawed, exponent of the educative value of knowledge for its own sake.**⁵⁷

Bennett employs Hector to explore what education really is. His bemused delivery of a series of lessons nominally entitled General Studies, which he himself appears to belittle as 'Useless Knowledge', casts initial doubt on Hector's own value as an educator and indeed on the value of the education he offers. **Timms describes these sessions as "not meant for the exam" and Hector himself consigns the course to the "department of why bother?". However, the capitalisation of his description that these lessons are "A Waste of Time", signifies the importance, to Hector, that not everything should have "anything to do with getting on".**⁵⁸ It is the very purposelessness of these lessons and the fact that they appear to offer no formal connection to **curriculum-based learning**⁵⁹ that makes them so much more valuable - according to Bennett.

In this way, Bennett appears to critique the focus on results and measurability that encroaches on formal education from the 1980s onwards.⁶⁰ Hector works under a Headmaster who has been swept up in the drive for results and data-led learning, heralded during Thatcher's era. What most bothers the Headmaster, (until, that is, that he discovers Hector has been 'bothering' the boys), is not that he does not produce results, but that "they are unpredictable and unquantifiable". **The Headmaster, therefore, represents what some have called a postmodern approach to education.**⁶¹ He values what can be measured, analysed and known. The Headmaster complains to Lintott that he cannot "categorise" Hector's teaching - and as a result, therefore, he is unable to value it.

It is ironic that it is this unromantic school leader who correctly identifies that Hector has "an old-fashioned faith in the redemptive power of words". **Hector's own romantic and idealistic faith in cultural expression, whether it be poetry by Hardy or songs by Gracie Fields is in itself powerful.**⁶² Hector embodies the power of loving knowledge. His most unguarded moment is when he shares with Posner that 'The best moments in reading are when you come across something'. Hector recognises the emotional pull of "a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things - which you had thought special and particular to you", but that can be found in all popular and literary culture. Just as Hector reaches out to Posner, for Hector, his experience of Literature is "as if a hand has come out and taken yours".

57. AO1 Clear argument in response to the task.

58. AO2 Useful textual detail with consideration of the meaning generated through language .

59. AO3 Contextual understanding of the education system is implied and embedded within the response.

60. AO3 Explicit understanding of contextual influences inform the discussion.

61. AO5 Interpretation demonstrates strong understanding of a range of readings.

62. AO1 The response remains fully focused on the task and is lucid and personal.



For someone like Posner, struggling to find his place in the world, the loneliness of Drummer Hodge is poignant. It is tragic, too, that Posner - who has all the sensitivity to really take everything to heart, "the songs, the poems, the sayings, the endings" - **does not end up enriched by the education which he truly valued.**⁶³ Posner "has long since stopped asking himself where it went wrong". For the others of "Hector's boys", they appear all to have made successful lives for themselves. For Posner, perhaps constrained by an inability to express something true about himself, life has not allowed him to reap the rewards of an **Oxbridge education.**⁶⁴ He has felt the power of Hector's words, but perhaps Irwin's ruthless pragmatism would have served him better.

Where, for Hector, his literary knowledge validates existence, for Irwin, poetry is only "good up to a point". Irwin recognises that knowledge is functional and part of a system that you can manipulate and twist for your own purposes. Bennett employs Irwin to demonstrate that an era in the grip of television will care more about presentation than content. Irwin looks forward; he **presents the cynicism of an education system that will ultimately come to be data-led**⁶⁵ - indeed, it is Irwin who opens the play. Hector, on the other hand, refutes the march of progress by locking it out of his classroom.

In the end, Hector cannot identify Rudge's reference to a Pet Shop Boys song - finally popular culture, at least popular culture from the current moment, has won. He is undone and out of time. Hector's final injunction to "Pass it on. That's the game I wanted you to learn", suggests that it is the process of sharing - either of valuable knowledge or irrelevant cultural detail - that is the significant thing. **Knowledge itself is worthless but the educative process is connecting, humanising. Ultimately, Hector's education is seen as "the only education worth having".**⁶⁶

Hector's romantic view of education is appealing but it is also presented by Bennett as behind the times. Hector's own end, and Posner's failure to succeed, are not ringing endorsements of either the value or the power of education. Whilst both are moved by the power of literature, its ultimate value has to be weighed against real world practicality. **Irwin's move into "government" and Dakin's success "telling highly paid fibs" as a tax lawyer are reminders that in a world where education costs money, and headmasters are driven by accountability measures, learning has a price beyond its ability to touch individuals.**⁶⁷

63. AO1 Response to the task is sustained and developed.

64. AO3 Implied contextual understanding embedded within the response.

65. AO3 Explicit comment on the contextual influences informing the text.

66. AO1 Personal response, with strong focus on the task.

67. AO2 Telling textual details are exploited; AO3 context is embedded in discussion.

Examiner commentary

The response sustains focus on the task throughout, demonstrating a strong personal response to the prompts of value and power in the task. (AO1)

Contextual influences on the play inform the discussion - sometimes these are explicit in the commentary on the education system but often they are implied and embedded within textual discussion. (AO3)

Interpretations are well-informed and well-expressed (AO5) and the candidate utilises textual detail fully (AO2) without losing focus on the fact that this task rewards consideration of contextual influences above the ways language and form shape meaning.



QUESTION 4(B)

THE HISTORY BOYS

'A damaged individual who makes an inspiring leader.'

In the light of this comment, discuss the role of Hector in *The History Boys*.

Alan Bennett's protagonist, flawed teacher, Hector, is a challenging character for an audience. He is erudite, amusing and demonstrates a wicked sense of humour, providing Bennett's play with enormous comic appeal. **He is also, however, capable of unnerving those who would wish to be on his side because he crosses the boundaries of appropriate behaviour. Seen in a modern context, where sensitivities surrounding the abuse of the young are at an all time high, it is now hard for an audience to truly love Hector. His sad demise, therefore, on the motorcycle upon which the worst of his crimes are committed, can be seen as tragic, but perhaps a satisfying conclusion, given that an audience today would hardly be able to accept someone such as Hector being reinstated to continue in a position of trust with students.⁶⁸ What is most challenging to accept, perhaps, is that, despite his unacceptable behaviour, Hector remains truly inspiring to his students and also to the audience of Bennett's play.⁶⁹**

Hector's initial appeal stems from his enormous capacity for humour and the bon mot. His polite war with the Headmaster, an antagonist whom the audience cannot but help to despise, draws the audience to take his side. The hilarious set-up of the 'maison de passe' where for 10 francs Claudine 'peux vous montrer ma prodigieuse poitrine' and the gulling of the head to believe that this French farce is a field hospital full of shell-shocked soldiers practising the subjunctive tense, is **very funny situation comedy⁷⁰** and allows an audience 'in the know' to join Hector in laughing at the establishment.

Hector's anti-establishment stance is part of his appeal. His claim that he "didn't want to turn out boys who later in life had a deep love of literature, or who would talk in middle age of the lure of language and their love of words", sticks two fingers up to the ordinarily reverent way that teachers view education.⁷¹ He is a rebel and he inspires his students, and Bennett's audience, to question the purpose of education. But his claim to insert "tosh" into his teaching to ensure that students do not themselves develop reverence for what they are learning is disingenuous. Hector is too intelligent not to know how he influences his "boys".

68. AO3 Contextual influences on the audience are considered and inform the argument.

69. AO1 Strong response to the task.

70. AO3 Generic influences illuminate the discussion.

71. AO3 Understanding of contextual influences are implicit with the discussion.



The students' conversation with Irwin reveals that they do not, themselves, wish either to reveal Hector's teaching methods nor to break the magic spell he creates by analysing how he teaches.

Timms describes Hector's method as "the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake" and Posner adds that it is "Not useful sir". However, it is Akthar who comes closer to revealing the truth when he quotes Auden to suggest that what they are doing is "Breaking bread with the dead".⁷² Both Auden and Hector appear to reverence the process of passing knowledge on through art and artistry.⁷³ The flippant tone of the boys might imply that they do not necessarily care about Hector's intention, but their teasing of Irwin as "focused" and their suggestion that Hector's work is "noble" seems to reveal that, as a group, they wish to protect Hector from outside forces,⁷⁴ even if they don't themselves care much for his feelings. He clearly does act as some kind of leader to them.

However, it is hard to argue that a man who touches students inappropriately is 'damaged'.⁷⁵ It would appear to excuse his behaviour somewhat. However, Hector's outburst when he tries to connect with the boys in the opening of Act II is enormously moving and certainly demonstrates a man who clearly knows that his time, in every sense of the word, is up. His pained "Can't you see I'm not in the mood" and the joking response regarding the "subjunctive" which leads Hector to whine "Am I fun? Is that what I am?" is uncomfortable, largely because in watching the students' dismissal of Hector's feelings, we are party to the cruelty that their carelessness demonstrates.⁷⁶ Whilst his wit certainly inspires them, his revelation of despair only serves to distance them. Posner "pats Hector rather awkwardly on the back" as he weeps. Scripps' memory of the event recalls their cruelty: "I was the nearest.

I ought to have been the one to reach out and touch him. Dakin did nothing either." Their inability to hold eye contact at this revelation reveals their complicity in the rejection of Hector by his "boys". **They love his wit, they love his lessons and they are even prepared to accept his groping of their balls. But they are not prepared to love him.⁷⁷**

Ultimately, Hector is presented as an enormously lonely individual.⁷⁸ "I used to think I could warm myself on the vitality of the boys" he reveals, as he counsels Irwin against a lifetime of teaching. However, his teaching career has become mere function, "Boys have become work", and his knowledge that even his desire to touch the boys causes bemusement rather than horror is dispiriting to him. He may well be "lucky" as he says, "dodging the ignominy", but Hector knows he is a joke. A tired old joke.

At the outset, Hector's ability to inspire the boys is obvious but, just as Akthar cannot explain "what the contract was or what it involved", the alchemy between pupils and teacher is mystifying.⁷⁹ Crowther's assessment that "He was stained and shabby and did unforgivable things but he led you to expect the best" is a stark summary of whether Hector's teaching had any long-term effect on the boys as individuals. Scripps' final word that, "Love apart, it is the only education worth having", is ultimately tragic. Whilst Hector's teaching is valuable to them, Scripps reveals that love is worth more. So the tragedy for Hector is that whilst he offered the boys much, he was not able to offer, or indeed receive, what might have been even more dignifying or ennobling. He inspired them to get on in life, but the flaws in his nature inspired no love from them.

Examiner commentary

A well-informed discussion which uses strong textual understanding to build a personal and developed interpretation of the character, fully responding to the prompts in the task. (AO1, AO2, AO5). The response demonstrates embedded contextual understanding and makes clear that consideration of contextual influences can be very powerful when used sparingly. The candidate avoids a 'History' lesson, but a sound understanding of the text in its time emerges, (AO3).

72. AO2 Textual details inform the discussion.

73. AO3 Literary context within the play and its significance to meaning is considered.

74. AO2 Close attention to the meaning generated by the language of the play.

75. AO1 Task focus is clear and response is well-argued and personal.

76. AO5 Interpretation considers audience response.

77. AO1 Focus on the task prompts of Hector as 'inspiration' informs the discussion implicitly.

78. AO1, AO5 Personal interpretation of character.

79. AO1 Well-argued response to the task prompts.



QUESTION 5 (A)

THAT FACE

'That Face shows the dark side of privilege.'

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

When *That Face* was first staged at the Royal Court eyebrows were raised. **A venue so long associated with radical politics and kitchen sink realism was staging a drama about family tensions not just in a middle class family,**⁸⁰ but in a very well-heeled middle class family, where the father was a financial broker in Hong Kong, and where school fees were the top item on the budget. The play seemed a mirror image of Shelagh Delaney's, *A Taste of Honey* (1959), a landmark kitchen-sink play about a dysfunctional family. Delaney's play, however, was set in the working class locale of Salford, Lancashire; Stenham's in an upmarket flat in London.

When interviewed Polly Stenham argued that it was just as possible to become depressed with a privileged lifestyle as with a proletarian one, and that her play reflected the Royal Court audience better than more conventional plays about alcoholics and junkies, and in any case there was something artificial about privileged 'people in pearls watching characters jack up for the seventeenth time'. Stenham wished to write about 'a class of people I hadn't often seen represented in the theatre,' her own class.

Despite the pots of money that prop it up, what is notable about the main set of *That Face*, the rumpled bedroom, is that it doesn't seem particularly affluent or salubrious. **This is privilege not just dark, but sordidly dingy.**⁸¹ The two children, neglected by their father who left them long ago, are signed up at private schools, but neither is spending much time there. Henry dropped out of his a year and a half ago to serve as his mother's squire (and possibly lover). The play's sub-plot concerns the way the other child, Mia, tortures a vulnerable class-mate and nearly kills her with an overdose of valium. Neither child has a clear sense of what is expected of them, except that you shouldn't black mark your UCAS form, as both of them are doing. The flat is dirty, without routine; laundry arrangements seem chaotic and alcohol flows freely. **It could be argued that the mother, Martha, is the strongest class rebel,**⁸² her incorrigible sluttishness and shameless 'stroking' of her son, seeming to react against middle-class norms of both hygiene and sexuality. She recalls the things that set her, and her class, apart at an earlier time: 'You can always tell the quality of a person by their shoes. Their shoes and their haircut . . . and perhaps their jewellery.' If these things matter at all to her now it is to degrade her son by getting him to wear them. Her definition of the husband who betrayed, and possibly defeated her is tidiness, 'a tidy man. Used to fold his own underwear. He's a tidy man trying to tidy me away and tidy you both up.'

80. The answer establishes both social and theatrical context (AO3).

81. The answer is well focused on the question (AO1).

82. The candidate offers a possible reading of one character (AO5).



Stenham's play opens with another effort to 'tidy up' someone who doesn't quite fit, a kind of botched initiation, or 'hazing' rite in an upmarket school. The scene provides a powerful negative view of the system of private education. Characters in this play routinely think of their time at school both as a privilege but also an ordeal. **Hugh, the exiled and redundant patriarch, explains the significance of boarding school as clearly as anyone: 'I didn't like my boarding school much. You're not meant to like it much. It's a passport really. For your future.' Whether it is a 'passport' for Mia's victim, who ends up hospitalised, is a moot point. Her torturers, Mia and the blander but probably crueller Izzy, are confident that Alice's sufferings are justified because she is a victim-type.**⁸³ The school has made its judgment, and the girls back it up:

Izzy: 'She was just crap.'

Henry: 'That's a terrible thing to say.'

Izzy, 'Lots of true things are.'

Stenham's presentation of Boarding School, as half concentration camp and half grim obstacle course, reminds of the way it is presented by **Orwell in his essay 'Such Were the Joys'; or C.S. Lewis, who called his Belsen.**⁸⁴ The dark side of privilege is often a school of very hard knocks.

At the heart of the play, then, is a harrowing drama of a privileged woman who has reneged on lifestyle, cares nothing for the kids' schooling, and who has retained just enough energy and cunning to take her family, or at least her son, with her. That is a drama that can happen anywhere, with or without privilege. Stenham also satirises the inventive cruelty of public schools, and convinces us that those who have second flats in Docklands or a Waitrose on every corner still live in a complex bitter world of oppressors and victims. Privilege can have a very dark side.

Examiner commentary

This answer is strongly contextualised in the privileged world of boarding schools and the families who make use of them (AO3). The playwright's own views and background form part of the discussion (AO3, AO5) and the answer is well illustrated with references to the text which demonstrate the wealth and social advantages of the characters (AO2). The question is kept firmly in view throughout (AO1).

83. The answer characterises the range of views the play offers of boarding school (AO5).

84. There is a literary context for Stenham's presentation of school life (AO3).



QUESTION 5(B)

THAT FACE

'There is no escape from the family.'

In the light of this comment, consider Stenham's presentation of the family in *That Face*.

Polly Stenham's 'family play' *That Face* involves a number of domestic or pseudo-domestic settings. **There is, in addition to the 'fetid' family flat, a boarding school dorm, a private hospital room, even Hugh's 'minimalist and impersonal' pad at Canary Wharf, scattered with party-toys.**⁸⁵ All these locations look more like prisons than retreats, and none, not even the luxury flat, is easy to escape from. Apartments, schools and hospitals represent family expeditions: it is Martha's bedroom which represents the heart of family life. Making up more than half the playing time, it is where Martha, without moving very much, or saying anything particularly remarkable, alienates one child (Mia), as she struggles to repossess the other (Henry). Her husband is an ineffectual figure, now returned from brokering in Hong Kong to sign a few cheques. Her son Henry, who by rights should still be a schoolboy, has dropped out of higher education to look after his mother. It is a world in which children are forced, long before their time, to do the parenting, and parents happily or complacently dump their responsibilities on the next generation. **This is a theme Dickens often returns to, as with William and Amy Dorrit in *Little Dorrit*. It also drives Noël Coward's play about drug-use among the *Bright Young Things*, *The Vortex*, which features an irresponsible and (like Martha) over-influential mother.**⁸⁶

Almost certainly Stenham chose Martha's name as a homage to Edward Albee's sixties play about a creatively dysfunctional family, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, a drama that, like Stenham's, depends on the claustrophobic intensity of its set. As in *That Face* Albee makes much use of contorted fantasies of parenting, though George and Martha's children are merely inventions, whereas Stenham's Martha fires live emotional bullets at a real son. **In both plays suffering is fuelled by alcoholism. In both plays the fall-out from the family drama is impossible to escape.**⁸⁷

85. The settings of the play, both on and offstage, are called on to provide AO3 Insight.

86. The essay provides a literary context for this study of growing up (AO3).

87. The answer remains consistently focused on the question (AO1).



The logical goal of unhealthy entrapment in the family is the incest theme, a very old motif in the theatre.⁸⁸ It is the foundation of Sophocles' Theban plays, and it was judged by Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'like many other incorrect things, a very poetical circumstance.' Stenham's play takes up this 'poetical incorrectness' as Martha reduces her son to dependency and impotence, eventually stealing and destroying all his clothes. **The play seems to argue that what Martha is after is less sexual congress, more a recapturing of her earliest (and therefore sanative) experiences with her son.**⁸⁹ She wishes to disable him, and keep him, frozen in the stillness of early memories, 'that face. Her baby's face, radiant with joy and love.' At times Martha wants to move even further back, to the days when she was calmly carrying her boy foetus about the world: 'I felt clear. Everything felt clear. With you inside me. Everything fell away.' Then, as the play ends, Martha's selfish (or 'poetical'?) desire to use her family to come to terms with her past is snatched away from her. It becomes clear that in this play the only escape from the suffocating family is madness. Martha exits (to an 'NHS looney bin') with the stumbling dignity of Blanche Dubois at the end of another great American play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. From henceforward the nuclear family is broken up, and she must depend on the kindness of strangers.

Whether Henry will get over the astonishing scene in which his mother has forced him to wear her own nightdress is not clear. She goads him to an emotional climax in which he effectively 'wets the bed' in broad daylight, the climax of a string of Freudian prompts by the mother: she has given him a love-bite to cancel one given by a girl his own age, makes it uncompromisingly clear she expects him to turn out gay, and is glad 'he hasn't any friends.'⁹⁰ His sister Mia isn't as brutal as mum, but wonders if she ought to have hung on to the valium tablets used to dope Alice, 'and flogged them round exam time when everyone's stressed.'

There are no neat closures to the family relationships in this play. Only Hugh, the father, can fly in and out of family life. At the end of the play Martha may have let her comely Russian soldier (her son, Henry) go, despatched Mia to boarding school, and accepted belated treatment, but such is Stenham's skill that this rather eventful conclusion seems at the same time inconclusive. As the lights fade the young people are counting the damage of belonging to this particular family, Henry's troubled breaths audible in the darkness. There is no obvious escape.

Examiner commentary

This answer is at times powerfully written and consistently well focused on the task (AO1). The candidate has chosen to use a range of literary material as context, but equally effective is the more conventional social context (AO3). AO5 is fulfilled largely by analysing the possible readings of Stenham's presentation of the mother figure, traditionally the centre of the family; this part of the discussion is also strongly supported by aptly chosen textual reference (AO2).

88. The candidate provides a particular way of reading the play (AO5).

89. The answer explores different ways of seeing this character (AO5)..

90. This list of damaging behaviour from the mother is well selected from the text to consider dramatic effects (AO2).



QUESTION 6 (A)

JERUSALEM

'Johnny "Rooster" Byron is full of faults and lies, and that is why the audience warms to him.'

How far do you agree with this comment on the role of Johnny "Rooster" Byron in *Jerusalem*?

It is true that the character of Johnny 'Rooster' Byron is hard to actually like: his dealings with young women, his involvement with drugs and his vile excesses make his lifestyle chaotic and dangerous. Byron is not a character we are likely to approve of and, as such, he is an uncomfortable antihero for the audience to engage with. **However, there is also something enormously appealing about his character - only a very cold-hearted audience could fail to be amused by his wit and not be drawn in sympathy to his tragedy.**⁹¹ Byron presents the audience with both wild excesses but also a wild capacity for life. His huge vitality, the stature of his dreams and the mythical qualities that he brings to the forest, therefore, allow his spirit to rise above the filthy junk and lewd behaviour of the wooded glade that he lives in and enables him to reach out and connect with the audience.

The first way Byron is able to get the audience on his side is through his rage against the system. Byron is waging his own 'Waterloo', a fight for England, this time not against the French but against the forces of government, personified here in the play, Jerusalem, by Kennett and Avon Council.⁹² Many of the audience might sympathise with the residents of the new estate and understand why they've had a "powwow in the village hall" to explore ways of getting rid of the "ogre", Byron, living in their midst. **Nimbyism and planning laws are, these days, some of the most contentious issues that town councils face, given the difficulty of providing suitable affordable accommodation.**⁹³ Flintock, in that respect, represents Everytown. But the dramatic tension caused by the presentation of one man's fight against an endless list of laws and contraventions – Public Health Acts, Pollution Control, Encampment Policy, Local Government Orders and Public Order Acts – also serves to accentuate just **how controlled twenty-first century living has become.**⁹⁴ Byron may well be a disgusting individual. He may well not be the kind of person that we might like at the end of our garden, or for our daughters to visit at night. **But he makes a remarkable David, in confronting the 'Puritan' Goliath, the forces of law and order and the homogenised, sterilised world that they protect.**⁹⁵ The humour generated by his impersonation of Shep to deal with Fawcett and Parsons and the idea that he, Byron, might be unable to deal with the eviction notice in person because he is elsewhere engaged with Kate Moss in Barbados is fabulous. **How many of the audience might have wanted, just once, to tell authoritarian power to "kiss my beggar arse"**⁹⁶

91. AO1 Personal response to the task which outlines a coherent argument.

92. AO5 Interpretation is lucid.

93. AO3 Social context is embedded within the argument.

94. AO3 Argument is woven with a sophisticated understanding of social contextual influences.

95. AO1, AO5 Interpretation is lucid and well-argued.

96. AO2, AO5 The meaning generated in the text is explored with a view to audience response.



Byron's faults, therefore, are clear for all to see. Wesley's tentative questioning in Act I, about Phaedra Cox and the girls who are staying overnight at Rooster's caravan inevitably leaves the audience uncomfortable. **Rooster argues that teenage behaviour has always been wayward. "Everyone knows what they're up to", because – according to Rooster – drinking, staying out late and losing their virginity is part of the job description and is also part of the ritual of growing up.**⁹⁷ Their parents did it: surely they should too. In one sense, his logic is sound and the juxtaposition of Byron's reminiscences about him and Wesley losing "their pip" with Wesley's concern for Phaedra and Tanya Crawley merely highlights that this is as much a tradition as the Flintock fair is. **However, an audience today will find it impossible to ignore the inappropriate nature of his friendships and our responses to such relationships will have been heightened even further since Jerusalem's first performance in 2009.**⁹⁸

Just as Byron's faults are clear to see, so too are his lies, which he trumpets from the roof of his caravan.⁹⁹ These range from the merely fantastical sexual fantasy of Girls Aloud to his hilarious conception and birth, complete "With a bullet clenched between his teeth". Byron lies about his life, about his past, his liaisons with giants, his sexual partners. Byron's lies help to construct the myth of the man. **Whilst on the one hand he is a repellent philandering drug-user, he also has connections to a world beyond reality. Byron despises the reality of Kennett and Avon, the new estate and everything they stand for. In rejecting real life, in rejecting the reality of laws, of birth and conception and in pushing the boundaries of belief, Byron is rejecting what he perceives as falsehood. Byron's myth-making, his fantastical conversation with the giant at Potterne, who apparently knows "bollocks" about predicting the weather, is his way of constructing the kind of world he would prefer to live in.**¹⁰⁰

Byron's lies, arguably, harm no one. The connection that they offer between reality and fantasy allow us to see Byron as having a connection to a more natural power, an ancient tradition. Byron's vision of the woods is, on the one hand a nightmare – "there's always pairs of eyes out there in the dark" – but it is clear that he is much more comfortable in the company of elves and fairies, foxes ghosts and badgers than with the "cunts on the New Estate". Byron's made-up world is a world of mythic fantasy rather than lies.¹⁰¹ Not only can the audience warm to a man who plays fast and loose with the truth, quite often to very entertaining conclusions, but they are drawn in by the magic of the visions that he shares. The lies he tells and the faults he shares contribute to the sense of 'otherness' that Byron represents. **But he is less an outsider because of the drink, drugs and sex than he is an outsider because he appears to connect to a stream of consciousness that modern day living has all but obliterated in the majority of the population. Through Byron, the audience can connect to a past that has all but disappeared.**¹⁰²

Examiner commentary

This response is informed throughout by a subtle understanding of the contextual influences that have impacted upon the text's creation and its performance and reception (AO3). Comments regarding society's degradation and an awareness of the changing world around the reality within which fictional characters operate, illuminate the arguments and allow the candidate to consider audience response within the brief historical timeframe of the life of the text. Argument is coherent throughout, (AO1), informed by apt textual detail to explore the meaning generated within the text, (AO2) and interpretations are personal whilst demonstrating sound awareness of a range of interpretative possibilities (AO5).

97. Contextual understanding informs the discussion.

98. AO3 Context is considered with an exploration of differing audience reactions both at first performance and more recently.

99. AO1 Focus on the task is sustained.

100. AO5 Developed interpretation; AO1 coherent and fluent written expression.

101. Sound awareness of possible interpretations.

102. AO3 Contextual influences on the text inform the interpretation.



QUESTION 6(B)

JERUSALEM

'A play about what modern England means to us.'

In the light of this comment, discuss your response to *Jerusalem*.

Whilst Butterworth has claimed in interview that he did not intend to write either a political play or a play that examines the state of the nation, **it is impossible for any audience of Jerusalem to see it as anything other than a forensic exploration of what it means to be English today.**¹⁰³ **What is controversial about his vision, is that the author offers up such an irresponsible and dangerous character to embody his nightmare vision of an England that is being swallowed up by our commercial and self-serving interests and in so doing, he manages both to mourn for – and celebrate – the glorious, pastoral England of the past.**¹⁰⁴

Jerusalem first signals that it has something to say about the nation through the explicit reference to Blake's poem with Phaedra's rendition in the Prologue. The scene is set with the 'faded' cross of St. George. **This is England, but it has lost some of its former shine. However, the contrast between the sweet tones of the young performer playing Phaedra, singing Blake's iconic words and the blast of the rave music that sends her scurrying off stage, demonstrates that Butterworth has something new to say about the 'dark satanic' forces underlying the idyll that was once 'England's pastures green.'**¹⁰⁵ **The pleasant pastures have been ripped up by new housing, and the satanic forces of industry have been superseded in the twenty-first century by the ascendant global market, which drives independent shops from England's high streets and expects bland, placeless similarity rather than a world on a human scale.**¹⁰⁶

Butterworth's setting of the Flintock fair on St George's Day is highly significant. Such country fairs would formally have played a pivotal role in the calendar of a rural, agricultural market town and **the seasonality and fertility rites that belong to the tradition of May celebrations**¹⁰⁷ are a nostalgic reminder of 'olde Englande', a place that belongs to a timeless pre-industrial past. However, modern England's ancient ceremonies have been bastardised by commercialism. **The Professor may dream of "Woden's Wild Hunt"; "the blossom and the May-come" but Ginger's reports of Whirler-swirlers alongside floats with "the birds from the gym as St. Trinian's" and "the lads from the rugby club all turned out as golliwogs" show how crass modern England has become.**¹⁰⁸ These modern takes on ancient traditions may well be a "bit offensive" but are also completely disconnected from any of the rites upon which the celebration may be based. At the Flintock fair, spirituality is now represented by Pat Cannon in a polytunnel, "on a foldy chair, smoking a Lambert and Butler".

103. AO1, AO5 Lucid and personal interpretations of the text inform the argument.

104. AO1 Discussion is clearly focused on the key prompts of the task.

105. AO3 The intertextuality within the text is explored with consideration of Blake's poem.

106. AO3 Sophisticated contextual understanding underpins the discussion.

107. AO3 Contextual influences inform the discussion.

108. AO2 The impact of language on the creation of meaning is considered.



Interestingly, there is much nostalgia amongst the fair-goers about how good the fair used to be, represented by the daredevil career of Johnny Rooster Byron. "Twenty year back", Ginger reminisces, "Johnny Byron was the Flintock Fair". **Nostalgia for a former, glorious 'golden period' has always shaped England's consciousness as a country and Byron's career jumping buses, tanks, horseboxes and even an aqueduct is a memory from a past era within living memory when Ginger remembers things as more glorious.**¹⁰⁹ **Like Byron at the Flintock Fair in 1981, these past glories have died and become a metaphorical "trail of blood across the field... into the beer tent".**¹¹⁰ **The 1970s are a period now much discredited as an age of sexism and racism and yet the representation of Byron's jumping career presents him as some kind of Christ figure, resurrected from the dead in order to share God's grace.**¹¹¹ Today's modern Flintock Fair may well be "shit on toast", but the structural connection to the seasonal and cyclical nature of human existence dictates that some other waster will be mourning its former glories thirty years into the future. The golden age of England is always just out of reach.

The commercialism of modern England is further explored through the Flintock Men, Wesley's portrayal of the Barley Sword Bearer and the drive by the brewery to see the Fair as a money-making exercise. **In the modern era of pub companies, local hostelries no longer form a pivotal role at the heart of a community, run as they are by executives.**¹¹² It is not Wesley's desire to perform the Morris dance, "It's a Swindon-level decision" and Wesley must bow to the forces of commercialism and globalisation. Further signals of what this modern England means to us are to be found in the Flintock Men, a bunch of Wesley's regulars "roped in" to perform. Devoid of tradition, these dancers have only been together for six weeks and are merely part of the brewery company's promotional strategy alongside the t-shirts and special ale. Like the fair itself, "It's bollocks, really".

At the heart of this updated, revised, commercialised and chaotic vision of England is Johnny Rooster Byron, the original Green Man of Flintock. Byron symbolises both the indomitable English spirit of the forest and the Lord of Misrule.¹¹³ His rallying cry as head of the "outcasts", "leeches" and "undesirables" to overturn authority in Flintock and to "behead the mayor" and "Imprison the Rotary Club" is both engaging and tragic. He may well wish to "rise up and ride on Salisbury" until the "whole plain of Wiltshire dances to the tune of misrule", but his time has come. Johnny's primal connection to the land, the 'feral bellow' that connects him to the pastoral idyll of the England of a former age is a reminder that Johnny has failed to keep up with the times. As he dances with Phaedra in her final moments as Queen of the May it is not just her crown that is about to be lost.

Jerusalem ends with a Spitfire flying above Byron's head, a symbol both of destruction and of England's glorious past. In the destruction of ancient rituals and traditions, modern England will always be seen to be able to renew itself. Like the forest, of which Byron is ruler, the seasons will always bring a new Spring and a new Mayday celebration.¹¹⁴

Examiner commentary

The response exploits context well, with a very broad range of contextual references acting as a foundation for the argument that demonstrates sophisticated engagement with the ideas of Englishness (AO3). Textual details are embedded and there is brief, but telling, close attention to language (AO2).

109. AO1 Sustained and personal focus on the task.

110. AO2 Textual detail and its significance informs the argument.

111. AO3 Explicit reference to historical context is embedded within the discussion.

112. AO3 Discussion is supported and developed through detailed understanding of contextual influences.

113. AO3, AO5 Contextual concepts such as the Green Man and Lord of Misrule inform the interpretation of the text.

114. Articulate, personal and creative response to text and task.



SECTION 2

QUESTION 7

THE GREAT GATSBY

Discuss ways in which Fitzgerald presents the rewards and disappointments of pleasure-seeking in *The Great Gatsby*.

In your answer you should make connections and comparisons with the following passage, in which a New York lady's lifestyle is described.

To read the passage, please go to page 5 of the OCR sample assessment material: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/images/171434-unit-h072-2-drama-and-prose-post-1900-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

The Great Gatsby' and this passage were written in the early 20th century and set in America during the prohibition period, which influences the way pleasure seeking in both texts is linked to the illicit consumption of alcohol at wild parties.¹¹⁵ Both texts feature characters who restlessly seek pleasure and excitement as a distraction¹¹⁶ from what they perceive to be the banality of the every day. However the writers suggest that the rewards of pleasure seeking are fleeting and transient and a life lived in this way leads to loneliness and despair. In the end both writers are critical of the restless pursuit of pleasure and suggest it ultimately leads to disappointment.¹¹⁷

The pursuit of pleasure is presented through differing narrative perspectives. Fitzgerald uses Nick as a narrator both inside and outside the hedonistic world of wealth as a kind of moral commentator on the action. The opening pages of the novel establish Nick as someone who is confided in by others, 'I was privy to the secret griefs of wild unknown men.' but also as someone of ordinary respectable stock aware of 'fundamental decencies'. Although he argues he has been taught to 'reserve all judgements', using this phrase implies that judgements can be made and as such we are led by Fitzgerald to see Nick as a moral voice in a world that restlessly pursues fleeting pleasure.

This moral position will be questioned at several points in the novel as we see Nick drawn in to an increasingly corrupt world. He colludes with Daisy and Gatsby in an adulterous liaison and he is also drawn into Tom's affair with Myrtle. When one afternoon he is taken by Tom to see his 'girl', Nick suggests that he was unwilling. 'He literally forced me off the car.' Later he tries to get away, 'but each time I tried to go I became entangled in some wild strident argument which pulled me back'. Some readers have seen Nick's position to be akin to the writer or reader. 'I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life.' **However, some critics have seen a moral ambiguity in his narrative voice. Some readers find his morality weak or even hypocritical. He is shocked by Tom's behaviour and the way he has lied to Myrtle. 'Daisy was not a Catholic and I was a little shocked at the elaborateness of the lie', (only a 'little' shocked!)**¹¹⁸

115. Sets the context (AO3)

116. Comparison between the texts is outlined (AO4)

117. Comparative, personal summation which indicates the intended direction of the essay (AO1)

118. AO2 textual detail informs how meaning in the texts are shaped.



However we view him, moral or otherwise, as an observer he becomes complicit in this corrupt world. He gets drunk with all the others; something he tries to suggest is out of character. 'I have been drunk just twice in my life, and the second time was that afternoon.' This episode ends in drunken violence with Myrtle's nose bleeding, possibly broken. If this is Tom's pursuit of pleasure the way this episode is portrayed gives a strong sense of disappointment. Earlier in the novel Nick had described him as 'one of those men who reach such an acute limited excellence at twenty-one that everything afterwards savours of anti-climax.' He 'felt Tom would drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game.' When at the end of the novel he shakes Tom's hand, 'it seemed silly not to,' readers are divided in their response to him. Some feel this is hypocritical; knowing Tom's life has been built on a lie, he says nothing. 'There was nothing I could say, except the one unutterable fact that it wasn't true.' Others feel Nick's response is the only one he could have. He has withdrawn from this empty, wealthy world and there is no point fighting against its values.

In contrast the narrative voice of the passage is someone more obviously caught up in the restless pursuit of pleasure. The 'New York Lady' is in a sense an outsider like Nick but unlike him she is driven by a more overt desire to be part of the social scene. The narrative has a restless quality with the elliptical style characteristic of a diary. 'Couldn't have been more furious. Started to fight, but too dead.'¹¹⁹ The use of italics for emphasis gives the sense of a spoken style as does the use of intensifiers like 'absolutely', 'too' and 'really'. The constant referencing of fashionable places and people suggest a character who is trying to impress. 'Took Ollie up to the Barlow's party.' 'Ollie and I dined at thirty eight East. She wants to go to' the opening of *Never say Good Morning*. This seems all the more pathetic as presumably the diary is for herself.

In contrast Nick's narrative voice is more reflective and poetic in style suggesting a more thoughtful reaction to society. 'There was music from my neighbour's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars.' **Critics have noted a Keats-like quality to the writing with similar emphasis both on beauty and its transience.**¹²⁰ The description in the passage of the party has similarities to Fitzgerald's descriptions of Gatsby's parties. Both writers suggest entertainment is a key part of their effect. The 'New York Lady' describes the way, 'they had those Hungarians in green coats, and Stewie Hunter was leading them with a fork'. Nick describes the orchestra as 'no thin five piece affair, but a whole pitiful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and coronets and piccolos and low and high drums'. **Fitzgerald's style is lush and rich, seen here in the syndetic listing which is a real contrast to the abrupt and frenetic style of the diary. However although Nick's perspective suggests enchantment, wonder and excitement revealing the glamour of such an occasion, there is always a constant undermining of this glamour. 'Spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs'. The word 'crowded' suggests too much ostentation.**¹²¹ Phrases like: 'The bar is in full swing', 'introductions are forgotten on the spot' and 'the earth lurches away from the sun' suggest a wild drunken mood. Nick notes 'people were not invited they went there'. There is a strong sense of criticism in the way no one really knows anyone. The hedonism is showy; the guests frivolous and uncaring. However, unlike the New York Lady, Nick sees himself as different to the hangers on who only come to take advantage of Gatsby's hospitality. 'I had actually been invited.' Fitzgerald suggests that Gatsby himself has no need of all this revelry. He never drinks, he is never seen with a woman. He is only hoping his reward will be Daisy. Some critics see this as ennobling him and setting him apart from the others. As Nick says; 'You're worth the whole damn bunch put together.' However, others have seen in the collapse of his dream an ironic comment on the empty nature of the capitalist American Dream. After all the charm in Daisy's siren like voice comes down to 'money'.

119. AO1, AO2

120. AO5 is not assessed in this question but this is useful for AO1

121. The candidate is clearly familiar with the text and confident ranging across the text to offer rich textual detail (AO2) in support of their discussion



If Fitzgerald criticises this society through Nick's voice describing the way Tom and Daisy destroy Gatsby's innocence, take his and Myrtle's lives and retreat 'back into their money', Parker also criticises it through irony. In much the same way that dramatic monologues work in poetry, allowing the speaker to reveal their darker side as if unconsciously, this New York Lady in spite of her efforts to create the impression that she has a rich and fulfilling life gives away her loneliness and even despair in her manic efforts to sound busy.

Her domestic life is empty. She describes Joe as 'barging into my room at practically nine o' clock'. Through the fog of her hangover she hears he won't 'be home to dinner' suggesting this family is not close. Her friendship with Ollie seems to be one sided. She took him to the party and comes home alone. 'Ollie passed out stiff'. She tries to strike up a friendship with 'a really new number' who we sense is not very impressed with her. When she tries to impress him with her creative spirit he rather sarcastically replies why doesn't she 'write or paint'. She tries rather desperately 'three times' to get him to come to a new show with her but he makes excuses. 'He was out and then he was all tied up with his mother'. There is something rather pathetic in; 'Finally got Ollie Martin'. Her restless, 'tried to read a book but couldn't sit still' sounds manic and desperate.

In this passage there is a sense of the way the pursuit of pleasure takes a physical toll on the body 'too dead' 'too exhausted' but also an emotional toll, although, perhaps the narrator is as yet unconscious of her inner emptiness. Fitzgerald also suggests the loneliness of the human condition. **Just as the New York Lady ends up alone after the parties, ultimately Gatsby is alone. Nick tries for the sake of his father to get people to come to the funeral. 'But it wasn't any use. Nobody came.' When finally Owl -eyes does arrive it only emphasises the misery of the funeral more. 'Why my God! They used to go there by the hundreds'. The tone of Fitzgerald's novel is tragic; Parker's story is superficially comic but both writers present the self-destructive side of the pursuit of pleasure.**¹²²

122. Candidate manages to keep both texts in play (AO4) and supports with relevant textual references (AO2)

Examiner commentary

The candidate has shown a clear understanding of the American context with perceptive references to the prohibition era and the capitalist American dream but has used this knowledge to inform rather than dominate the argument (AO3). The argument is well structured and uses terminology with ease, (AO1). The candidate has also made some detailed references to the style of both texts by discussing narrative perspective and language exploring how language and form shape meaning with references to narrative voice and the diary style for example, (AO2). The candidate has made some interesting connections and comparisons across the texts, (AO4). The candidate has also shown knowledge of different readings. This AO (5) is not a requirement for this essay but it has been used effectively to inform the discussion of narrative voice.



QUESTION 8

THE BLOODY CHAMBER AND OTHER STORIES

Discuss ways in which Carter explores links between the past and the present in *The Bloody Chamber* and *Other Stories*.

In your answer you should select material from the whole text and make connections and comparisons with the following passage, in which the speaker encounters some ghosts.

To read the passage, please go to page 6 of the OCR sample assessment material: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/images/171434-unit-h072-2-drama-and-prose-post-1900-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

The link between past and present is made clear in both of these works. In the extract from *The Ghosts*, it is clear that his past is haunting the narrator, an inescapable horror of past deeds that resurface to appal. **Carter's work *The Bloody Chamber* uses the past in a much more complex way**¹²³ to explore how women have been presented through **archetypal narratives**¹²⁴ over time. Traditional narratives have resided in the human conscience for hundreds of years, embedding a **patriarchal ideology**¹²⁵ in morality tales which have rooted under the surface of much writing since. The credence given to such narratives by this long historical perspective, therefore, has ensured that the ideology underpinning them has rarely been challenged. **Carter's manipulation of such tales from the past, therefore, is a radical challenge to the past and is also an attempt to shape thinking in the present.**¹²⁶ **For Dunsany's protagonist the past is something to be feared because it brings back memories of ancestral sins. On the other hand, for Carter, the past haunts women today in ways that are barely perceptible, but which are just as difficult to escape from.**¹²⁷

Past and present collide in a tale such as *The Werewolf in The Bloody Chamber*. Here, Red Riding Hood becomes a child equipped as **"any mountaineer's child" to "swipe"**¹²⁸ at the wolf's attempted attack and slash off its right forepaw. In Carter's modern version of the tale, there is no traditional competition with the wolf to get to the grandmother's house first. Instead, the child, part-disguised in a "scabby coat of sheepskin to keep out the cold", is able to go on the offensive, to take on the dangers of the metaphorical wood, representative in the traditional fairy tale of both wider patriarchal society, but also representative of the dreams and desires of the female mind. **The past is dismissed by the younger generation.**¹²⁹ When the child discovers her grandmother with a "bloody stump where her right hand had been", she discovers too the lies that the older generation have passed on to her through traditional story-telling. In Carter's tale, the child is able to 'prosper' - her challenge to the myths of "these upland woodsmen" is a challenge in the present to the myths by which young women have had to live. Women are able to thrive: they can take on the myths that have previously restricted them to the path of good behaviour. **Carter's child dares not only to dream, but to make her dreams a reality in the present.**¹³⁰

123. AO4 Comparison between the texts is outlined.

124. AO3 Useful reference to generic conventions of fairy tale genre.

125. AO3 Context is soundly established in order to explain Carter's process of 'writing back' against conventions.

126. AO1 personal response to the text that remains task-focused.

127. AO4 Comparative approach to the task.

128. AO2 textual detail informs how meaning in the texts are shaped.

129. AO1 Well-argued personal response that remains fully focused on the task.

130. AO1 Personal response to task.



The collision of past with present is further explored by both Carter and Dunsany, in the extract from *The Ghosts*, as **both writers present the past as inescapable.**¹³¹ In the extract by Dunsany, the courtly men and women are haunted by the “filthy immortal sins” of their ancestors, represented here as “a herd of black creatures”. Human sin is presented as the animalistic side of nature. **It is significant that these ‘creatures’ are non-specific - the crimes are either too horrific or too damaging to name.**¹³² In *The Bloody Chamber*, too, there is also something unspoken. Men are presented as being very close to their primal ancestors, as Carter explores their **atavistic tendencies.**¹³³ The Marquis may well be the most cultivated male figure in the collection, but his “dark mane” and animalistic appetite for pornographic sex reveal his true nature. Elsewhere, the Beast is a scarcely concealed lion and wolves are either externally explicit or, merely, fur within.

For Dunsany, it is the sins of the past rather than the ghosts themselves that generate fear. The nightmare only truly comes alive when the narrator sees the “horribly bright” eyes of the past stare him in the face. **The Marquise in the title story of *The Bloody Chamber* collection is also to be haunted by her past.**¹³⁴ Like the ‘arum lilies’, the Marquise is stained with her sin, the sin of sexual curiosity. Her “branded forehead” tells of the crime she has committed in disobeying the orders her husband gave. In awakening her sexually, he has awoken desires within her which will forever mark her as though she belongs to a caste: “the mark of Cain” is to be upon her. This inescapability is underpinned in *The Lady of the House of Love*, where the Lady herself becomes **the Gothic castle**¹³⁵: “She herself is a haunted house”. In this world, the ancestors actually possess the lady from within and peer out from the windows of her eyes.

Ancestry is presented as troublesome in both texts. In *The Lady of the House of Love* in *The Bloody Chamber* collection, Carter describes the “demented and atrocious ancestors” who haunt the Lady of the House of Love, “each one of whom projects a baleful posthumous existence”. **For both Dunsany and Carter, the Gothic genre allows them to place horror at the heart of their stories but historically position them in the past.**¹³⁶ The horrors are thus removed from us in time, and can therefore be rationalised, examined - like the virginal visitor to the Lady, we are allowed no imagination to horrify us and, as the narrator in *The Ghosts*, we are “neither frightened nor convinced that ghosts existed”. The more disturbing message of the Gothic, therefore, is that it is reality itself that should be feared.

131. AO4 Convincing links are established and explored.

132. AO2 Response effectively explores how language shapes meaning.

133. AO3 Gothic context is understood and embedded within the response.

134. AO4 Links are sustained.

135. AO3 Response is informed by embedded contextual details.

136. AO4 Strong links are drawn again through the conclusion.

Examiner commentary

*This response makes clear links between the unseen extract and *The Bloody Chamber* (AO4) and successfully contrasts how each relate to their generic context. Gothic codes and conventions are understood and applied to the texts (AO3) as is Carter’s use of other conventions such as the fairy tale. The response is personal and detailed and employs technical vocabulary where relevant (AO1). The candidate selects useful textual detail to inform the discussion (AO2).*



QUESTION 9

NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR

Discuss ways in which Orwell presents a culture of fear in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

In your answer you should make connections and comparisons with the following passage, which describes the arrest of Rubashov, a former member of the ruling party elite.

To read the passage, please go to page 7 of the OCR sample assessment material: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/171434-unit-h072-2-drama-and-prose-post-1900-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

Arrest by secret forces seems to be a link between Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.¹³⁷ In Orwell's novel a 'culture of fear' is present just as strongly as in the Koestler extract, Winston Smith dreading being picked up by the Thought Police. Rubashov has clearly become so used to the nightmare of fear he isn't clear whether the arrest described is happening to him in dream or reality, and Winston and Julia's arrest has a fantastic quality too. They take refuge in their love-nest in Mr Charrington's shop, a metaphor for retreating into the past, as Rubashov retreats into the 'clockwork' of his dreams. Those who arrest Winston and Julia hide behind a clock, behind time itself, underlining that for the lovers there is no past left to run to, indeed no time or space at all.

Orwell's book is based loosely on his study of Stalin's tyranny in the 1930s.¹³⁸ **It is possible that Koestler is writing about a similar regime. The date (1940), the Russian name 'Rubashov', and the departmental police belonging to the 'People's Commissariat of the Interior', suggest the Soviet regime around the time of Stalin's show-trials. However the guards' uniform, with its insignia of the 'aggressively barbed cross,' could suggest the Gestapo in Nazi Germany.**¹³⁹ Koestler's title, *Darkness at Noon* is another suggestion he is dealing with the same kind of 'culture of fear' we read of in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell likes to show how totalitarian institutions, such as the Ministry of Truth, suppress rebellious thoughts using paradox. **We think of 'War is Peace', 'Freedom is Slavery', 'Ignorance is Strength'. The same effect may follow if a culture is taught to think it may be dark at noon, as suggested in Koestler's title.**¹⁴⁰ O'Brien tortures Winston into admitting that if, say Black is White, a man apparently holding up four fingers may actually be holding up five or three. This is 'doublethink', when history is continually re-written according to the needs of the party.

If there is no such thing as objective truth, it follows that dreams may be as good as reality, and certainly provide a refuge from reality. Rubashov has found this. Winston frequently sees his dead mother in dreams, while another of his escapist dreams is of such a 'Golden Country' as England might have been long ago, containing a place of cultural euphoria he calls 'Shakespeare'. All of these, like Rubashov's dream, seem to be a means of avoiding the totalitarian present.

137. A link is established immediately between the set text and the unseen passage (AO4).

138. The set text is placed into historical context (AO3).

139. The candidate speculates intelligently about the context of the unseen passage; there is no need to contextualise the unseen, but credit can be given for this discussion (AO3).

140. The texts are linked through use of language (AO2, AO4).



Koestler shows that Rubashov is aware of exaggerated sense impressions as the guards take over his room: 'the grotesquely big pistols; their straps and trappings' smelling 'of fresh leather.'¹⁴¹ Much of Orwell's writing also explores evocative sense-impressions, especially smells. **'One of the essential experiences of war is never being able to escape from disgusting smells of human origin' he writes in 'Looking Back on the Spanish War.'**¹⁴² In the austere world of Nineteen Eighty-Four, where soap is hard to come by and razor-blades must last several weeks, the thick smell of oppression, the 'overpowering smell of sweat', imparts a rancid odour to almost every page.

Rubashov clearly finds the ordinariness of the men who arrest him uncomfortable, or insulting, or both. In Nineteen Eighty-Four there is a corresponding resentment at the youthfulness of one's oppressors,¹⁴³ with young tough guys of nine preparing for careers in the Thought Police by denouncing their parents to the authorities: 'It was almost normal for people over thirty to be frightened of their own children.' Uniform, the only real distinction between oppressor and oppressed, is also significant in both pieces. **Both stress the unthinking qualities of the recruits, empowered only by the clothes they wear: Orwell's 'gorilla-faced guards' and Koestler's more close-up 'thick lips and fish eyes.'**¹⁴⁴ Nondescript appearances fit in well with the cruel, conformist regime. One of Koestler's guards is a short fat man, and Winston argues that undersized men often prove the party's best recruits, doing the bulk of its dirty work: 'little dumpy men, growing stout very early in life, with short legs, swift scuttling movements, and fat inscrutable faces with very small eyes'. In the culture of these texts everyone fears the tramp of boots on the stairs, culminating in forced entry by the notorious 'ruffians in black uniforms'.

The extract and the passage illustrate how the moment of arrest, both feared and expected, dominates life in a 'culture of fear'; and also how such cultures, often deliberately, destabilise the sense of one's inner life.¹⁴⁵

Examiner commentary

This answer neatly dovetails the unseen extract and the set text, finding evidence of a culture of fear in both (AO4). The answer is structured by finding features in the extract which have corresponding qualities in the set text; this is an effective approach, but other methods could equally be employed (AO1, AO4). Details of language from both texts are analysed in the answer (AO2), and the writer offers well-informed context of the set text partnered by a reasonable suggestion that the unseen extract probably has a similar context (AO3); there is of course no need for candidates to contextualise the unseen extract.

141. The candidate offers AO2 analysis of the unseen passage; AO2 discussion can be based on either of the texts, or both.

142. Orwell's own writing is offered as context (AO3).

143. The answer is simply but effectively structured, with features of the unseen passage triggering comparative discussion (AO1, AO4).

144. Textual detail is effectively used to make a comparison between texts (AO2, AO4).

145. The conclusion neatly incorporates comment on both texts in relation to the question (AO1).



QUESTION 10

MRS DALLOWAY

Discuss the link between death and party-going in *Mrs Dalloway*.

In your answer you should make connections and comparisons with the following passage, in which preparations for a garden party are interrupted by the news of the sudden death of a local workman.

To read the passage, please go to page 8 of the OCR sample assessment material:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/images/171434-unit-h072-2-drama-and-prose-post-1900-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

Both of these texts include a link between death and party-going. **The link seems straightforward in *The Garden Party*, where Laura is upset by the news that a man has died when she is preparing for a party. It is more complex in *Mrs Dalloway*, a modernist text which requires the reader to make links for herself.¹⁴⁵ The novel was written in the years after the World War One, when Virginia Woolf amongst other writers, such as James Joyce, was searching for new ways to write novels. In the traditional novel, an organising narrative voice explains and makes links for the reader; in *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf abandons this method and instead writes a story where the viewpoint shifts from character to character¹⁴⁶ and the reader pieces out the story by making links between its different elements. The link between death and party-going is one of the more extreme links which the reader is called on to make.**

The theme of death in *Mrs Dalloway* is chiefly represented by Septimus Warren-Smith, the soldier suffering from shell-shock who commits suicide in the closing stages of the novel; his suffering is powerfully presented in the novel, as are the struggles to support him of his wife Rezia.¹⁴⁷ The critic Winifred Holtby claimed that Woolf introduced World War One into almost everything she wrote 'as though its memory were the scar of an old wound she could not hide'.¹⁴⁸ Although *Mrs Dalloway* is set five years after the Armistice, the War is still vividly and horrifically present for Septimus, who cannot escape his traumatised past. Woolf's own problems with mental illness helped to inform her depiction of Septimus: the experience he has of hearing the sparrows singing in Greek in Regent's Park is based on one of Woolf's own, and the lack of sympathy and support she received from the medical profession is also reflected in her depiction of Sir William Bradshaw.¹⁴⁹ The reader is offered detailed insight into Septimus, unlike the character of the workman who dies in the extract from *The Garden Party*; his death seems more like an accident which is introduced into the story to shock Laura than a deliberate act.¹⁵⁰

145. The candidate introduces comparison early in the answer (AO4).

146. A Modernist context is supplied for the novel (AO3).

147. The answer suggests how the theme of death is presented in the novel (AO2).

148. The importance of the WWI context is emphasised (AO3).

149. The candidate supplies relevant context from Woolf's biography (AO3).

150. A point of comparison with the Mansfield extract is introduced (AO4).



If Septimus is the chief representative of death in the novel, then Clarissa Dalloway is the character who is chiefly concerned with party-going.¹⁵¹ Her main preoccupation at the beginning of the novel is that she should 'buy the flowers herself', and her anxiety that things should be perfectly arranged contrasts unsympathetically with Septimus's larger concerns. If Clarissa were no more than a society lady who only thought about the arrangements for her party she would be a very unsympathetic character; **however, through Woolf's narrative method of free indirect discourse we are enabled to share much more of what is in her mind,**¹⁵² chiefly her memories of her youth at Bourton, but also her reflections throughout the day on her life and what it amounts to. In the midst of organising the party, she feels vulnerable and disquieted on a deep level: **she 'had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxi-cabs, of being out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day'**¹⁵³ Her sense of fear chimes convincingly with the vulnerability of Septimus, whom she never meets. **It also matches well with the emotional responses of Laura in The Garden Party, who is sensitive to others in a way which makes her question her family's behaviour: 'she felt it was all wrong.'**¹⁵⁴

The link between Septimus and Clarissa is essential to the novel's success, but at times can be hard to appreciate. Septimus is young and has lived through appalling experiences on the battlefield; Clarissa is middle-aged and very sheltered, having made safe choices in her life and lived a privileged existence. **Woolf planned her novel carefully to ensure that the two main characters would never meet, but developed last minute worries when it came to publication that 'the reviewers will say that [the novel] is disjointed because of the mad scenes not connecting with the Dalloway scenes'. Woolf depends on the reader to find a link between the two characters – between death and party-going – despite their apparent remoteness from each other.**¹⁵⁵ The ending of the novel, where Clarissa hears of Septimus's death at her party, is therefore a very important passage in the novel. The link made between death and party-going seems to focus on the idea of being alone. **Clarissa apparently feels lonely even in the midst of all her lively company, and Septimus's suicidal act seems to express something important for her: 'The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him... She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living'**¹⁵⁶

The extract from The Garden Party has a number of similarities with Mrs Dalloway. Laura's family seem quite privileged, and her mother comes over as unsympathetic and heartless: when she hears of the workman's death, she tells Laura 'If someone had died there normally – and I can't understand how they keep alive in those poky little holes – we should still be having our party, shouldn't we?' Laura's distress and her empathy for the man and his family seem much more palatable than Mrs Sheridan's indifference, perhaps reminding us of Clarissa Dalloway's sensitivity: Laura pleads, 'Of course, we can't have our party, can we?' In the end, it looks as if life will carry on regardless of the tragedy, as Laura is encouraged to move on and admire her own appearance in a new hat. In the extract, death seems to have relatively little impact on the party, and maybe Laura is gaining a lesson in cultivating indifference like her mother's. The extract is inclined to be humorous, unlike Virginia Woolf, especially in the moment where Mrs Sheridan believes the man has died in her own garden – she can't think otherwise why she should care. Both texts show how life and death can clash uncomfortably when they meet, although Mrs Dalloway seems to treat this theme in a more complex and profound way.¹⁵⁷

Examiner commentary

This is a consistently detailed and well-focused answer, providing a strong sense of context for the novel and exploring connections and comparisons with the passage effectively. There is apt use of quotation from both texts demonstrating insights into the writers' methods.

151. The answer is clearly structured and well-focused on the question (AO1).

152. The candidate is aware of narrative method (AO1, AO2).

153. The quotation is a helpful way of providing insight into the character (AO2).

154. Another effective and brief point of comparison (AO4).

155. A well-informed comment on the novel's structure (AO2).

156. The argument is well-supported by quotation (AO2).

157. The candidate offers more substantial comparative discussion between the novel and the unseen extract; she includes some appropriate quotation (AO4, AO2).



QUESTION 11

THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST

Discuss how difficult it is for love to cross cultural divides in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

In your answer you should make connections and comparisons with the following passage, in which an Eastern European immigrant proposes to a young woman in Kent.

To read the passage, please go to page 9 of the OCR sample assessment material: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/171434-unit-h072-2-drama-and-prose-post-1900-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>

The Reluctant Fundamentalist is in part a love story, but the cultural barriers between Changez and Erica are ultimately insurmountable despite all Changez can do. Much as he makes himself into the ideal partner for Erica – a successful product of the American education system, prosperous, socially adept – there always seems to be distance between them which defeats their love. In Amy Foster, by contrast, although Yanko is shunned by the community, there seem to be no barriers between him and Amy as she ‘runs out to his call’.¹⁵⁸

Amy Foster is apparently narrated by a disinterested observer and the cultural divide in this case is seen from the perspective of the villagers of Darnford who perceive Yanko to be a threat. They seem to be an insular crowd, unsurprisingly **for rural folk in (presumably) the nineteenth century**¹⁵⁹; they might well distrust someone who came from the next village, so they are horrified at the prospect that a foreigner wants to marry one of their own. They seem to find Yanko quite frightening with his ‘bellicose air’ and ‘big, black fierce eyes’. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the ‘wooer’ is also a man who has come to live in another community, but **here the story is told from the point of view of the foreigner**.¹⁶⁰ Changez is intelligent and observant, and always aware of himself as something of an outsider. He is very successful at fitting in to his new country on the surface, but as his life in America continues he finds it harder and harder to deny his roots, and in the end rejects his American life to return to Pakistan. **Whereas love wins out and seems to allow Yanko and Amy to cross the cultural divide, in the case of Changez and Erica it is partly the failure of their relationship which triggers his rejection of his chosen country.**¹⁶¹

The barriers between Amy and Yanko seem to be entirely about ignorance. The villagers fear and despise him; Amy presumably is rather excited and drawn to his difference. Familiarity is likely to normalise their relationship and increase the chance of acceptance for them as a couple. For Changez and Erica their chances of closeness and his chances of integration start off looking very positive, but are reduced during the novel **as a result of the 9/11 attacks**.¹⁶² Changez questions his own identity and doubts that he will be able to fit in any longer in America, or even that he wants to. Whereas Yanko seems to have turned his back on his country of origin and is trying his luck somewhere new, Changez is consistently presented with a choice; when he is young and inexperienced, he is prepared to aim for the same goals as his peers in university, but as he matures and gathers experience his roots become more important.

158. The introduction addresses both the set text and the unseen extract in the light of the question (AO1, AO4).

159. The candidate offers an intelligent speculation about the context of the unseen passage; this is not required, but can receive credit (AO3).

160. The answer makes a valuable comparison between the narrative methods of the two texts (AO2, AO4).

161. Throughout the answer, connections are made between the two texts (AO4).

162. A historical context is offered for the set text (AO3).



The gift of the green ribbon in Amy Foster is a significant moment;¹⁶³ in Yanko's eyes, it makes his honourable intentions unmistakable. Although this is a foreign custom from the point of view of Amy and the villagers, the message is simple enough and seems to do the trick. Changez' courtship of Erica is far more subtle and tortured. From the beginning, she seems to find his remoteness and caution attractive; **she says to him 'You give people their space', which seems a double-edged compliment since she is saying something admiring but also reminding him not to get too close to her.**¹⁶⁴ Despite Changez' daydreams of a life as Erica's husband' he is inhibited by the fact that 'she seemed too brittle to be touched'.

Throughout his romantic pursuit of Erica, Changez consistently tries to be what she wants, prepared to deny his own identity to satisfy her. His original attraction to Erica seemed to be tied up with his excitement about his new life in America – **her topless sunbathing, for example, was fascinating to someone from a culture which demands that females dress modestly.**¹⁶⁵ Perhaps he was trying to create a completely new relationship in the New World – **some readers have suggested that Erica represents the USA (AmErica), and that Changez fails in his attempts to get really close to either the country or the woman.**¹⁶⁶ His self-suppression reaches its greatest extreme during their most successful sexual encounter where he pretends to be Chris, the love of her life who died and for whom she still mourns. Throughout, although there is a sexual tension between them, there is no real chemistry. This is in marked contrast to the extract from Amy Foster, where although the writing is no way explicit **there seems to be a real affinity between the two when she runs to answer 'the weird and mournful tune' he whistles.**¹⁶⁷ **Here, it does seem that love can cross a cultural divide; in The Reluctant Fundamentalist, it fails to do so.**¹⁶⁸

163. The answer references a significant textual detail in the unseen passage (AO2).

164. A quotation from the set text is analysed (AO2).

165. The answer provides some cultural context for the set text (AO3).

166. Erica's name can be found to have symbolic value (AO2).

167. The candidate responds to the atmosphere of the unseen extract (AO2).

168. A final point of contrast is drawn between the two texts (AO4).

Examiner commentary

This answer takes the theme of love across cultural divides and relates it to both the set text and the unseen extract, making a series of comparisons and contrasts (AO4). AO2 is considered in both texts, and includes a comparison of narrative method in the two pieces.

Content for the set text is supplied in the form of a reference to the 9/11 attacks and to the cultural values of Changez' home; the candidate also suggests a likely socio-historical context for the unseen passage, although this not a requirement (AO3). The answer is clearly structured and expressed and consistently focused on the question (AO1).



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