SHAKESPEARE

Objectives

'Shakespeare' is a Group B Advanced Unit. The Unit is concerned with the drama of William Shakespeare as dramatic literature in the context of the theatrical milieu of his time, and with his poems. The subject guide has been designed:

i) to help you identify what is characteristic of Shakespeare's writing

ii) to develop your understanding of the early modern theatre industry for which Shakespeare's plays were written

iii) to help you locate the plays you study in their socio-cultural contexts

iv) to provide a context for the application of a range of critical approaches to Shakespeare

v) to develop your knowledge of dramatic forms and terminology (such as soliloquy, chorus, blank verse, couplet, stichomythia, feminine endings)

It is important that you refer to these objectives in the planning of your syllabus and when assessing your progress through the syllabus. (Self-assessment procedures are discussed in the Handbook.)

Subject Content

You should organize your course of study around individual plays and topics. The following ten plays are the ones from which six extracts will be drawn for Section A of the examination:

- Titus Andronicus (Roman History 1592)
- Richard 3 (English History 1592-3)
- King John (Tragedy 1596)
- King Lear (Tragedy 1605)
- Henry 5 (English History 1598-9)
- Troilus and Cressida (Problem Play 1602)
- Measure for Measure (Problem Play 1603)
- Antony and Cleopatra (Roman History 1606)
- Pericles (Romance 1607)
- The Winter's Tale (Romance 1610)

The generic categories in brackets are conventional and subject to dispute; the years given are the likely dates of first performance. You may refer to both the above list and Shakespeare's other plays and his poems in your examination answers for Sections B and C.

* However, no answers are allowed on the plays listed for study in Explorations 1 (namely Hamlet and The Tempest) and Renaissance Comedy (namely Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, The Merchant of Venice, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Taming of the Shrew, and Twelfth Night).

* Note also that candidates may NOT discuss the same text in more than one answer, in this examination or any other Advanced Level Unit examination. This means that if you have answered on Henry 5, for example, in Section A of the examination, you may not use Henry 5 again for an answer in Section B or in Section C.

The following is a list of the kind of topics which you might choose to investigate:

* the plays' engagement with contemporary debates about governance

* gender politics

* the formal structure of verse drama
* sexual 'deviance' and transvestite theatre
* Elizabethan ideas about history
* Shakespeare's use of his sources
* the original staging of Shakespeare's plays
* representations of racial and ethnic difference
* Shakespeare's non-dramatic verse
* the expanding world of Elizabethan England
* characterization through language
* the characteristics and boundaries of genre
* the relationship between politics and war
* rhetoric

You should not feel restricted by this list of topics and you are not expected to know all of them in depth. This list of topics includes some of the central themes and approaches to Shakespeare. It is, however, quite acceptable for you to include other topics not referred to here in your syllabus.

**Using This Subject Guide** This subject guide is not designed as an overview of the whole of Shakespeare. The content of the course of study you construct for yourself will consist of both the primary texts you choose and secondary material such as literary criticism, historical and cultural studies, biography and so on. The guide is intended as a model to show how you might decide to organize and develop your programme of study. The plays and topics which we consider here might not coincide with your own choices, but the critical procedures indicated should be of general application. **This guide does not constitute the syllabus itself, but a guide to how an appropriate course of study might be constructed by you and to appropriate ways of studying the material which you will choose. It also indicates the range of material which is the MINIMUM amount necessary for you to face the examination with confidence. Simple regurgitation in the examination of the illustrative material in this subject guide will be regarded as plagiarism and heavily penalized. You must adapt such material in ways appropriate to your own chosen syllabus of study. Examiners will always look unfavourably at examinations which are composed of answers which draw solely on the illustrative material provided in this subject guide.**

In this guide we will consider just one extract in detail as preparation for the Section A question (see Chapter One), but you will need to try your skills out on a number of passages in the course of preparation for the exam and we have identified two other extracts in the Suggested Study Syllabus below. If you prepare on four plays there is a one in 210 chance that none of them will be among those appearing in Section A. If you prepare five plays one of them is certain to appear. Attempting to cover more than six plays will probably prevent you achieving the necessary depth of knowledge. For Sections B and C we will use plays drawn from the above list of ten, but you are free to answer on any of Shakespeare's works upon which you have not already answered in Section A, other than those on the foundation units specified above.

**Methods of Assessment** You will be assessed by one 3-hour examination. The examination paper will be in three parts. You will have to answer one question from each section.

**Section A** will consist of a series of short extracts from six of the plays on the above list of ten. You will be asked to comment on one of these extracts, putting it "in the contexts of the play from which it is drawn and of Shakespeare's other writing, and commenting on the language, dramatic interaction, and themes".

**Section B** will contain questions inviting discussion of a single work by Shakespeare (a sequence of about twenty sonnets, or a single narrative poem such as Venus and Adonis, may be considered a work) allowing you to demonstrate detailed knowledge of the language, style, and themes of that work. The questions will not name particular works: you are free to choose from the entire Shakespeare canon (but note restriction in rubric below).

**Section C** will contain questions inviting comparison between at least two works by Shakespeare in terms of specific themes, forms or critical approaches. The questions will not name particular works: you are free to choose from the entire Shakespeare canon (but note restriction in rubric below).
Please note the rubric of the exam appended to this booklet. As well as instructing you to answer three questions, one from each section, it says: 'Candidates may NOT discuss the same text in more than one answer, in this examination or any other Advanced Level Unit examination.' This means that in the examination you will be answering on at least four plays (one in Section A, one in Section B, and at least two in Section C). Note also that no answers are allowed on the plays listed for study in Explorations 1 (namely Hamlet and The Tempest) and Renaissance Comedy (namely Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, The Merchant of Venice, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Taming of the Shrew, and Twelfth Night).

This subject guide will be organized around the structure of the examination paper. You will find examples of the kinds of question you can expect in the exam as you work through the guide and a sample examination paper at the end.

Examination technique

If you have followed the instructions offered in the subject guide, read as much of the suggested syllabus as possible and engaged with the topics under consideration, you should be well-prepared for the examination. However, in order to do justice to yourself and the subject on the day of the examination, it is useful to think about your examination technique. Certain basic procedures should be followed:

* if possible, read a sample examination paper from a previous year so that you are familiar with the range and type of questions you might expect to encounter. (See the sample paper at the end of this guide)

* use the sample paper to practise writing timed examination answers

* in the examination, always read the rubric carefully twice and follow the instructions given

* read the whole paper through before choosing which questions to attempt

* leave yourself sufficient time to answer all the questions you are asked to complete. If you do run out of time, write down in note form all the points you would have included. (You may be given credit for an outline of an answer which you have not had time to write in full.)

* proof it! At the end of the exam, read through what you have written, correcting spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc. and checking titles and the names of authors for inaccuracies. Simple errors or slips can detract even from a good answer.

These rules may seem obvious but are essential for a good examination performance in any subject. To further develop and improve your examination technique in relation to the 'Shakespeare' paper, you should read the Examiners’ report from the previous year(s) and consider the following additional points.

Choosing the question

One of the most important examination techniques is the ability to choose the kind of question that you are well-equipped to answer, that will enable you to demonstrate the particular knowledge and skills you have acquired during your course of study. For instance, if a question asks you to discuss plays in which young women cross-dress as young men (as frequently occurs in Shakespeare), you will need a framework of historical knowledge to answer this question adequately. (You should know, for instance, something about the anxiety regarding Elizabeth 1's successor as she grew older, and the Sumptuary Laws that controlled who could wear what kinds of clothing.) Avoid making generalizations about the entire period if you wish to relate literary works to known historical events.

Reading the question

In order to answer questions effectively, it is important to understand what you are being asked to do, so look at the terms of the question (i.e. to consider, compare, contrast, define, evaluate or discuss) and make sure you do what the question asks you to do. If you are asked, for example, to "consider the dramatist's treatment of old age", it is not sufficient to list plays in which old people appear. To describe or list is not to 'consider'. With this question, you might need to start by considering how we know characters' ages: do they make explicit reference to being old? (King Lear, for example, say he is very old, whereas Richard 3 could be any age from 20 to 60.) Think about the things that usually go with old age such as worldly experience, wisdom, disease, and often a concern to secure the futures of children. You might want to take a pair of contrasting characters such as the sick old king in All's Well that Ends Well and see how he differs from the dying Edward in Richard 3. Alternatively, you can look for moments where commonplace sayings about old age are implicitly refuted by the ensuing action, as with Jaques' Seven Ages of Man speech in As You Like It which ends grimly with "Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything". This is immediately followed by the stage direction "Enter Orlando bearing Adam" and Duke's Senior's "Set down your venerable burden" (2.7.166-7), which action provides a much more positive view
of old age: a young man acknowledges his debt to one who has served him and returns the labour. Be aware that Shakespeare's works contain many beautifully constructed aphorisms which we should not take at face value: action can speak louder than these words and must be factored into the equation. There are many ways of answering a question, depending on the texts you choose and the argument you wish to construct, but the important thing is to engage with the question asked and to develop an answer which is clearly and consistently relevant to the question.

General matters: essays

In selecting topics on which to write practice essays, remember that your essays will be preparing you to answer examination questions, and therefore you should select essay topics that relate to the three sections of the final examination.

Choosing texts for essay or examination purposes

Remember that you may decide to look at any of the works of Shakespeare except Hamlet, The Tempest, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, The Merchant of Venice, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Taming of the Shrew, and Twelfth Night. The examiners are particularly impressed by answers that explore the lesser-known works and ones not discussed in this study guide. The balance you draw between Shakespeare’s dramatic work and his poems is up to you, and you may well find that even if you do not answer directly on the poems they throw a useful light on the concerns of some of the plays. (For example, the homoeroticism that many people find in Coriolanus can be illuminated by a consideration of the homoeroticism in Shakespeare’s Sonnets.)

Reading List

The best way to read a Shakespeare play or poem is in a critical edition devoted to that particular work. The Arden Shakespeare (general editors Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thomson, and David Scott Kastan) is a series of such individual volumes available in paperback. Equally good is The Oxford Shakespeare series (general editor Stanley Wells) which is published in paperback in the Oxford World Classics series. As well as extensive explanatory notes, these single-work volumes give you introductory essays and suggested further readings.

A cheaper alternative is to buy a complete works of Shakespeare and good modern examples are these:


General Background Reading


A convenient way to get a range of critical opinions on a particular work is via the 'Casebook' and 'New Casebook' anthologies of essays (one anthology per play) published by Macmillan/Palgrave, the 'Critical Introduction' series from Harvester Wheatsheaf, and the 'Critical Reader' series from Longman. For the 10 plays considered in this subject introduction, the relevant books are:


**Monographs**


**Suggested Study Syllabus**

The following is a sample 20 week subject outline to give you an idea of how a syllabus could be constructed for this unit. You may adapt this outline in any appropriate way according to your own particular interests.

Week 1. Background reading on Shakespeare's career and the London theatre world of 1580-1610

Week 2. Section A Context Question Study: *Titus Andronicus* 5.1.40-87 (Aaron's bargaining for his son's life). See Chapter One below

Week 3. Section B Single Play Study: *King Lear*

Weeks 4. Section C Topic Study: 'Contrasting models of kingship:*Richard 3* and *Henry 5*'

Weeks 5-6. Historical context: The theatrical milieu and staging

Week 7. Section A Context Question Study: *Troilus and Cressida* 4.6.18-64 (Cressida is kissed by the Greek soldiers)

Week 8. Section B Single Play Study: *Measure for Measure.* See Chapter Two below

Weeks 9-10. Section C Topic Study: 'Death and gender:*Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*'

Weeks 11-12. Section C Topic Study: 'Women in Shakespeare's plays:*King Lear, Richard 3, Antony and Cleopatra*.' See Chapter Three below
Week 13. Section B Single Play Study: *All's Well that Ends Well*

Week 14-15. Section C Topic Study: 'Sexual continence: *Troilus and Cressida* and *Antony and Cleopatra*'

Week 16-17. Section C Topic Study: 'Scenic form in Shakespeare's plays'. See Chapter Four below

Week 18. Section A Context Question Study: *Pericles* Sc. 19.1-40 (Lysimachus comes to the brothel)

Week 19. Section C Topic Study: *King John* and *Henry 8*

Week 20. Revision. Continue practice on examination paper sections A, B, and C

**Suggested Secondary Reading**

**Week 1**


Peter Hyland. 1996. *An Introduction to Shakespeare: The Dramatist in His Context*. Basingstoke. Macmillan. Chapter 1 "Life and Times" (pp. 7-54) ISBN 0333598806


**Week 2**

See Chapter One below

**Week 3**


**Week 4**


**Weeks 5-6**


Week 7. Suggested Secondary Reading


Week 8. Suggested Secondary Reading

See Chapter Two below

Weeks 9-10. Suggested Secondary Reading


Weeks 16-17. Suggested Secondary Reading

See Chapter 4 below

Week 18. Suggested Secondary Reading


Week 19. Suggested Secondary Reading


Week 20. Suggested Secondary Reading

None

Study Questions

Week 1. Study Questions

* What was Shakespeare's occupation in the 1590s? And from 1600 to 1610?

* What were the official titles of the social classes in Shakespeare's time? In particular make sure you know in outline how the guild system regulated trade in the cities and what it meant to be a 'citizen' (which is quite unlike the modern notion of citizenship).

* What different kinds of performance venues existed in Shakespeare's London?

* What are the main differences between performance in an open-air amphitheatre of Shakespeare's time and a modern indoor theatre? (Think in terms of lighting, actor/audience relationship, and scenery.)

* Why did playing companies need aristocratic patrons?

* Who were the enemies of the late sixteenth-century theatre industry and why?

* What kinds of people went to the theatres?

Week 2. Study Questions
See Chapter One below

**Week 3. Study Questions**

* “CORDELIA Why have my sisters husbands if they say / They love you all?” In what ways are father-daughter relationships in the play like or unlike husband-wife relationships? (Be sure to consider each pairing in turn.)

* How embarrassed should Edmund be in the opening scene when his bastardy is discussed?

* Are we to think of 100 knights as a reasonable size for Lear’s retinue? (Bear in mind the limitations of the Elizabethan stage and consider his daughters’ objections that the knights are riotous.)

* What reasons can you conjecture for Edgar's deception of his father on the imaginary Dover cliff? If he has a specific purpose, does he attain it?

* Compare the mad ravings of Edgar with those of Lear. The former require an actor to pretend to be a man pretending to be mad and the latter require an actor to pretend to be a man who *is* mad; are these different kinds of mimesis?

* Make a note of each act of aggression (verbal, mental, physical) in the play, what causes it and what consequences follow. Is this pattern simply a crescendo?

* Do any of the characters benefit from the philosophies they espouse in the play?

**Week 4. Study Questions**

* What can we make of Henry's most immediate reason for invading France, the tennis-balls insult? Are we to understand him to have already resolved to start the war?

* Although the chorus promises exciting action, *Henry 5* begins with a long conversation between two priests. What other disjunctions can you find between the promises of each interact chorus and that which follows it?

* Richard 3 tells the audience his thoughts and plans in his soliloquies; do soliloquies in *Henry 5* operate in the same way?

* Make a summary of Richard's arguments in his wooing of Lady Anne. Is he right to congratulate himself for his rhetorical power?

* In *Richard 3*, Clarence's dream of drowning prefigures the manner of his being murdered. Are the dreams of Richard and Richmond in the final act also to be taken as premonitions? (Consider the problem that the ghosts speak to Richard and Richmond in turn.)

* What personal attributes do Richard 3 and *Henry 5* share that enable them to led others into war?

**Weeks 5-6. Study Questions**

* Take a scene from one of the plays you have studied so far and plan how it would be staged in an open-air amphitheatre such as the Globe.

* Take three soliloquies from the plays you have studied so far and for each one answer these questions:

  i) Where should the actor stand to make this speech?

  ii) Does anything said in the speech suggest that the character is talking to him/herself, or should we imagine the character addressing the theatre audience?

  iii) Is there any suggestion in the speech that the character fears being overheard?

Repeat this for three asides from the plays you have studied so far.

* Look for stage business (actions) which are implied by what characters say but are not stated in stage directions. (Examples might be implied kneeling, holding of hands, or threatening gestures.) In each case, consider how you would instruct actors to carry out this business. To what extent does the script limit a director’s freedom to give such instructions?

* The world in which the action of a play takes place is usually larger than the dimensions of the stage. By what techniques does Shakespeare fit the fictional world into the theatre?
Which scenes of which plays demand use of an ‘above’ playing space? What do you notice about these scenes and the relationship between the main stage and the ‘above’?

Week 7. Study Questions

* Does the action of the play demonstrate the point made by Ulysses in his ‘degree’ speech in 1.3?
* How does Troilus respond to his grief at Cressida's betrayal? (You should be thinking about philosophic notions such as stoicism.)
* What happens to Thersites's satire when Patroclus dies?
* Why does Ulysses end up repeating Thersites's derogation of Patroclus?
* Consider the range of options for staging Cressida's behaviour with Diomed in 5.2. How might she be portrayed as a victim instead of a betrayer?
* What aspects of the play might cause difficulty in assigning it to one of the three genres of comedy, history, and tragedy?

Week 8. Study Questions

See Chapter Two below

Weeks 9-10. Study Questions

* What is the significance of the 16-year time spans of both plays?
* Is Leontes's sexual jealousy entirely unmotivated? (You may want to consider what a theatre director might do in the opening scene to create or remove causes for his suspicion.)
* Compare the brief moment of incestuous desire in The Winter's Tale (Leontes's "I'd beg your precious mistress, / Which he counts but a trifle" 5.1.222-3) with the extensive incest in Pericles. What difference does a father's knowledge of the sin make in the plays?
* What reasons can you imagine for the scene of recognition (anagnorisis), in which Perdita is found to be Leontes's daughter, being narrated rather than shown to the audience?
* What kinds of 'magic' accompany the coming-to-life of Thaisa's corpse in Pericles and the coming-to-life of Hermione's supposed statue in The Winter's Tale?
* Compare the role of disease, and fear of disease, in The Winter's Tale and Pericles.

Weeks 11-12. Study Questions

See Chapter Three below

Week 13. Study Questions

* Bertram is forced to marry a woman he does not love. Usually Shakespeare's plays invoke sympathy for those pressured into an unwanted marriage, such as Katherine in The Taming of the Shrew and Juliet in Romeo and Juliet. What is different about Bertram's case?
* The war in All's Well that Ends Well is entirely inconsequential, indeed some of the young French join one side and some the other, so they might find themselves fighting old friends. (Parolles's comment about Captain Spurio, 2.1.41, shows that this has happened before.) Are we encouraged to think it honourable that these young men fight merely "For breathing and exploit" (1.2.17)?
* How much importance should we attach to the fact that Bertram is a habitual liar? (Consider ideas about what constitutes a gentleman in this period.)
* The 'clown' Lavatch has a very small part in the play, and it has been entirely cut in more than one production. Are there thematic connections between what Lavatch says and the main plot?
* Look at the exchange between Helen and Parolles about virginity (1.1.108-61). Are the paradoxes in it (such as "there was never virgin got till virginity was first lost") related to the riddle of Bertram's letter?
* To what degree should we think that Bertram has reformed by the end of the play? If he has
sarcely changed, should we think him unworthy of Helen?

* "PAROLLES Who cannot be crushed with a plot?" (4.3.326). Shakespeare occasionally evokes audience sympathy for a character who has been humiliated, even if the treatment were deserved. Is this the case with Parolles?

**Weeks 14-15. Study Questions**

* The 'armed' prologue to *Troilus and Cressida* promises a play of war, but the opening scene shows Troilus refusing to fight. Is love an emasculating force in the play?

* THERSITES All the argument is a whore and a cuckold. *(Troilus and Cressida 2.3.71)*

Who is the whore and who the cuckold? Does the play invite us to agree with Thersites?

* THERSITES *(To Patroclus) Thou art thought to be Achilles' male varlet . . . . his masculine whore. *(Troilus and Cressida 5.1.14-7)*

What views of homosexual love does the play offer? Is it more debilitating to a warrior's prowess than heterosexual love?

* How is the difference between Rome and Egypt evoked in *Antony and Cleopatra*?

* The verb 'to die' could mean 'to experience a sexual orgasm' in Shakespeare's time. Does *Antony and Cleopatra* encourage us to consider the deaths of Charmian and Cleopatra as sexual consummation? You might want to consider the solitariness of the play's several suicides

* The hauling of Antony's body to the top of Cleopatra's monument is often an awkward moment in the theatre. Would it be inappropriate for the audience to laugh?

**Weeks 16-17. Study Questions**

See Chapter Four below

**Week 18. Study Questions**

* How does the verse of Gower's choruses differ from the Shakespearian norm?

* How does the theme of incest in the opening scene relate to the tree imagery throughout the play?

* Is Marina's abduction by pirates a 'creaky' device, or in keeping with the impossibilities of the rest of the play? (You may want to consider this in relation to the wider conventions of Romance literature.)

* Does Lysimachus's pre-existing familiarity with the brothel suggest that the governor is, until meeting Marina, a dishonourable man?

* How is the use of dumbshow in this play like or unlike that in other Shakespeare plays? (You might usefully think about the dumbshow in the play-within-the-play in *Hamlet* or compare it to the elaborate stage direction describing silent rituals in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Henry 8.*

* Are the many geographical locations in which the action takes place distinctly different one from another? If not, what reasons might the dramatists have for Pericles's extended touring of the Mediterranean?

**Week 19. Study Questions**

* How is Philip Faulconbridge's biological legitimacy related to King John's monarchical legitimacy?

* Is King John's subornation of Hubert to the murder of Arthur like other scenes of its kind in Shakespeare? (You might consider the role of Tyrrell in *Richard 3.*

* To what extent are King John and Henry 8 concerned with the legitimacy of their power? (In both plays there is a break from the Church of Rome; how is this related to a king's authority?)

* Both plays have scenes in which the Roman church is described as corrupt. To what extent are the audience encouraged to agree that this is so?
* Is disobedience of monarchical authority shown to be always wrong in these plays?

* To what extent do the history plays you have studied (of which King John is the earliest, historically, and Henry 8 the latest) substantiate the Tudor myth?

* The baby who becomes Elizabeth 1 is brought on at the end of Henry 8, providing a focus for hopes for the future. Does the ending of King John serve a similar function?

**Week 20. Study Questions**

* To what extent do the plays you studied fall into 'periods' in Shakespeare's life?

* What trends, if any, can you discern in the formal characteristics of Shakespeare's writing across his career?

* Would it be fair to say that Shakespeare's women almost always exceed the social roles allotted to them?

* After 1660 women were allowed to act on the English stage. What might be lost in not having boys play female roles?

* Is it reasonable to infer from your readings of a number of plays the dramatist's opinion on, say, loyalty to masters or political rebellion?

* Does your reading of critics on Shakespeare offer hope that we may recover the original meanings of the works, or is each age merely using the works to explore its own concerns?

* Does your study of the plays suggest reasons why the less-studied, less-frequently performed works--Titus Andronicus, King John, Troilus and Cressida, and Pericles--are relatively neglected?

**Chapter One. Section A Context Question Study: Titus Andronicus 5.1.40-87 (Aaron's bargaining for his son's life)**

**Introduction** The compulsory Section A question will consist of one extract from each of six of the ten Shakespeare plays on the syllabus. You will be asked to discuss one of the extracts "in the contexts of the play from which it is drawn and of Shakespeare's other writing, and commenting on language, dramatic interaction, and themes". It should be clear that this part of the paper differs from the kind of 'practical criticism' exercise with which you may already be familiar. You will be applying the skills of close textual analysis, but in addition you are expected to place these passages in various related contexts. This means that your critical reading of 'the words on the page' should, ideally, be informed by some of the following contexts:

* knowledge of the dramatist's professional output

* knowledge of dramatic forms and terminology (such as soliloquy, chorus, blank verse, couplet, stichomythia, and feminine endings)

* conventions governing drama of the period (such as cross-dressing) and genres (such as the formal differences between comedy and tragedy)

* knowledge of the social and political history of the period

In addition, your critical reading may raise ideological and theoretical questions. These might be consciously and determinedly deployed, because of your own theoretical stance, or specific critical approaches might seem to be invited by the nature of the extract you are considering.

A significant percentage of the marks available can be awarded to your reading of the free-standing text, but an ability to bring in these wider contexts in relevant ways is equally important. Essentially we will be testing your ability to judge how far any passage is representative of Shakespeare's style and the concerns that recur in many of his works. To structure your responses you might choose to start with the words on the page and build out to these wider contexts. But there are no hard and fast rules about structuring, except that, however your answer is organized, the line of argument must be clear and relevant to the question. Consider the following extract:

LUCIUS O worthy Goth, this is the incarnate devil
That robbed Andronicus of his good hand.
This is the pearl that pleased your Empress' eye,
And here's the base fruit of her burning lust.
(To Aaron) Say, wall-eyed slave, whither wouldst thou convey
This growing image of thy fiendlike face?
Why dost not speak? What, deaf? What, not a word?
A halter, soldiers! Hang him on this tree,
And by his side his fruit of bastardy.
AARON Touch not the boy; he is of royal blood.
LUCIUS Too like the sire for ever being good.
First hang the child, that he may see it sprawl -
A sight to vex the father's soul withal.
Get me a ladder. [A Goth brings a ladder which Aaron climbs]
AARON Lucius, save the child,
And bear it from me to the Empress.
If thou do this, I'll show thee wondrous things
That highly may advantage thee to hear.
If thou wilt not, befall what may befall,
I'll speak no more but 'Vengeance rot you all!'
LUCIUS Say on, and if it please me which thou speak'st
Thy child shall live, and I will see it nourished.
AARON And if it please thee? Why, assure thee, Lucius,
'Twill vex thy soul to hear what I shall speak;
For I must talk of murders, rapes, and massacres,
Acts of black night, abominable deeds,
Complots of mischief, treason, villainies
Ruthful to hear yet piteously performed,
And this shall all be buried in my death
Unless thou swear to me my child shall live.
LUCIUS Tell on thy mind. I say thy child shall live.
AARON Swear that he shall, and then I will begin.
LUCIUS Who should I swear by? Thou believest no god.
That granted, how canst thou believe an oath?
AARON What if I do not?--as indeed I do not--
Yet for I know thou art religious
And hast a thing within thee called conscience,
With twenty popish tricks and ceremonies
Which I have seen thee careful to observe,
Therefore I urge thy oath; for that I know
An idiot holds his bauble for a god,
And keeps the oath which by that god he swears,
To that I'll urge him, therefore thou shalt vow
By that same god, what god so'er it be,
That thou adorest and hast in reverence,
To save my boy, to nurse and bring him up,
Or else I will discover naught to thee.
LUCIUS Even by my god I swear to thee I will.
AARON First know thou I begot him on the Empress.
(Titus Andronicus 5.1.40-87)

An extract in Section A of the examination will typically be between 30 and 50 lines long, as is the above quotation, and there will be six extracts to choose from; you will answer on one of them. Unlike the above quotation, the extracts will not name the play from which they are taken nor will they name the act, scene, and line numbers which indicate where in the play the extract occurs. The first part of your task in a context question is to identify the play and roughly where in the play the passage occurs; you do not need to identify the act and scene numbers of the extract--although this might be useful, especially if you wish to discuss how the dramatist uses scene-breaks and act-intervals--but you must at least say where it occurs in the action of the play. If you cannot identify the play or the approximate location in the play for a particular extract, you should not attempt an answer on it.

Aaron is one of the few black characters in Shakespeare's works (Othello being the most well-known), and his skin colour is made much of in the play. Here Lucius ironically calls him a 'pearl' (line 4)---ironic because his colour is precisely the opposite of a pearl's whiteness---and draws a parallel between his 'fiendlike face' (line 6) and his evil deeds. The association of whiteness with good and blackness with evil was common in Shakespeare's culture and persists in the varied meanings of the modern word 'fair' (light-skinned, just, equitable, reasonable, moderate). Lucius's language here is of a piece with that of Bassianus ("swart Cimmerian", 2.3.72) and Marcus ("a black ill-favoured fly, / Like to the Empress' Moor", 3.2.65-6) earlier in the play, and together these suggest that the play's Romans are bigots who judge by skin colour. Because the baby's mother is Tamora, Aaron claims that it is "of royal blood" (line 10) but for
Aaron is concerned to protect his child and strikes a bargain to which Lucius must swear. Lucius comments that since Aaron does not believe in the gods a religious oath should not impress him. The historical period of the play is ancient Rome before the Christian era, so although Aaron is a Moor he could not be a Muslim since that religion began with the teachings of the prophet Muhammad in the seventh century after Christ's birth. Moors in Shakespeare's plays are usually Muslims—Othello must have converted to Christianity before being allowed service the Venetian state—and Aaron has many of the characteristics (sexual appetite, appeal for non-moorish women, delight in pointless evil) of the Moorish/Muslim dramatic stereotype of the period. Aaron's catalogue of evils has parallels in the claims of the Moor Ithamore in Marlowe's The Jew of Malta, and indeed the names are linked in the bible: "Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest" (Numbers 4:28). Yet Lucius is sure that Aaron is not at all religious, which is not the same as being of a different sect ultimately derived from Judaism (as Christians and Muslims are). It is surprising, then, that Aaron anachronistically speaks of Lucius's religion as "popish tricks and ceremonies" (line 38). This comment would be appropriate for a Protestant of the sixteenth century, and arguably the force of this line is to liken Protestantism to evil non-belief and foreignness. A major strand of the schism which separated the Protestant movements of sixteenth-century Europe from the church of Rome was the worship of representations of divine figures, and Aaron's "An idiot holds his bauble for a god" (line 41) is squarely within the Protestant tradition of rejecting 'graven' (that is, carved) images. Yet Aaron's comment has a wider application and sounds rather like the things Christopher Marlowe was accused of saying about Christian religion (see Stephen Greenblatt. 1985. "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and Its Subversion, Henry IV and Henry V." Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism. Edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield. Manchester. Manchester University Press. 18-47.). It is also echoed in Karl Marx's comment on fetishism: the savage carves an idol of his god and then immediately falls to his knees to worship the object he has just made (see Karl Marx. 1954. Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production. Ed. by Frederick Engels. Vol. 1-3 vols. London. Lawrence and Wishart. pp. 70-80). Agreeing to Aaron's bargain, Lucius swears by a singular "god" (line 48) which, like the other religious material in the extract, makes sense only in the Christian era that began well after the events depicted. That Aaron does not know what god or gods Lucius holds in reverence is quite compatible with his being a Moor unfamiliar with the details of classical Roman religion which, although it had an entire pantheon of gods, permitted individuals to favour one god in particular. Lucius does not respond by naming his god, however, and his "my god" sounds monotheistic even though technically it could, perhaps, be interpreted simply as an odd reluctance to name his particular choice from the pantheon.

We cannot be sure what Shakespeare's religious beliefs were, but a number of his plays seem concerned with the details of Christian faith such as the role of providence guiding human affairs and the nature of the afterlife. If a character has an identifiable religious conviction (say, a Calvinist belief in predestination), try to determine whether the ensuing events confirm or challenge the truth of that conviction.
here, of their regrets about not being able to perpetrate more crimes and exalting in the ones they have achieved. Barabbas in Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* dies with just such a speech of defiance, although his ‘execution’ is actually his own murderous device turned against himself. Aaron in the above extract remains manipulative despite being, so he believes, about to die and his bargaining position is based on knowledge of the reasons for the catastrophes that have befallen the Andronici. (If one re-reads this play attending entirely to the perspective of Titus and his relatives, it becomes apparent how little Shakespeare allows them to know of the machinations of Tamora and those close to her; the Andronici appear more cursed by fate than schemed against by people.) Aaron and Lucius are concerned with two kinds of posterity: the story of what happened to the Andronici which Lucius longs to hear and the continuation of Aaron’s lineage via the black child. To ensure that latter, Aaron gives up the former but he needs to secure an oath from Lucius that the deal will be honoured. It is an index of Aaron’s intellect and cunning—specifically his ability to imagine what is in another’s mind—that he can predict the hold of a religious oath over Lucius even while believing this to be a delusion.

*Reread the list of contexts, some of which the passage should have been placed in by the above comments. Which were not explored? Using the above comments as a model, consider how you would go about placing the extract in those contexts.*

**Section A: an exercise**

Write a response to one of the passages from Section A of the examination paper at the end of this subject guide. Evaluate your essay on the basis of the criteria and guidelines given at the beginning of this chapter.

**Chapter Two. Section B Single Play Study: Measure for Measure**

**Selected Reading**


Measure for Measure is sometimes referred to as one of Shakespeare's 'problem' plays. Some of the problems that critics have perceived in it are these:

* The character of the Duke is mysterious. We are not told if he left Vienna for a good reason. His return to spy on the citizens in the likeness of a holy man seems excessively intrusive. Some of his actions--such as hearing the confession of Mariana--are reprehensible to modern audiences.

* Angelo's conversion to goodness is unconvincing: he seems coerced (especially regarding his marriage to Mariana) rather than reformed.

* The play's main source of comedy, Lucio, is forced to marry a prostitute.

* The Duke unexpectedly proposes to the play's heroine, Isabella, in the play's closing moment. The script contains no lines for Isabella's answer, so we are left with no clue how Shakespeare wanted her to respond.

In short, the play concludes with marriage but the reader/spectator is not left with a comfortable sense of dramatic closure at the end: instead, there is a distinctly uneasy sense that these forced partnerships will not be happy. The problem seems one of genre, the play being technically a comedy but lacking the pleasurable sense of resolution we expect in comedy. The differences between comedies and tragedies can be many and varied, but the simplest distinction was the one identified by the poet George Gordon Byron:

All tragedies are finished by a death,
All comedies are ended by a marriage
(Byron, Don Juan, 3:65-66)

Typically a Shakespearian comedy ends with marriage and the reconcilement of people who had previously been in conflict, as when the young soldiers are reconciled to Leonato, governor of Messina, and his brother Antonio in Much Ado About Nothing and at the same time Beatrice marries Benedick and Hero marries Claudio. Often an 'outsider' figure also has to be cast out of the community, as with Shylock at the end of The Merchant of Venice or Don John at the end of Much Ado About Nothing, but the tone at the close of Shakespeare's comedies is nonetheless usually integrative: the community is 'healed' and its borders re-established by determination of who is within and who without. This sense of 'healing' is not entirely present, or if present then not entirely convincing, at the end of Measure for Measure. It is as though Shakespeare took the formal requirements of the genre 'comedy' and decided to see if he could conform to them yet produce something more troubling and complex than a romantic comedy.

The play's second scene begins with a discussion of a looming international crisis:

**Enter Lucio, and two other Gentlemen**

LUCIO If the Duke with the other dukes come not to composition with the King of Hungary, why then, all the dukes fall upon the King.

FIRST GENTLEMAN Heaven grant us its peace, but not the King of Hungary's!

SECOND GENTLEMAN Amen.

LUCIO Thou conceivest like the sanctimonious pirate, that went to sea with the Ten Commandments, but scraped one out of the table.

SECOND GENTLEMAN `Thou shalt not steal'?

LUCIO Ay, that he razed.

FIRST GENTLEMAN Why, `twas a commandment to command the captain and all the rest from their functions: they put forth to steal.

(Measure for Measure 1.2.1-14)

The detail of the conflict between Austria and Hungary is not important and it is hardly mentioned again in the play, but the way these men relate it to scripture is significant. The First Gentleman appears to think that war is preferable to reaching a peaceful settlement with Hungary, but Lucio claims it is hypocrisy to acknowledge the Christian injunction to find peace yet advocate war. Lucio thinks of this as being like editing one's own copy of the Ten Commandments, removing a commandment one does not like rather than treating the text as an integrated unit. The First Gentlemen admits that where religious text runs counter to one's entire purpose--as in the imagined example of a pirate erasing 'Thou shalt not steal' from the commandments--then the given text must be altered to suit the circumstances. Thus this scene raises the question of adherence to biblical injunctions that is explored throughout the play, and indeed in its title. The commandments are part of the Old Testament and thus are Old Law to be understood as later
modified by the Christian New Testament which softened some of the Old Law's harshness. In particular, Christ reversed the injunction to revenge:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:
But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (King James Bible, Matthew 5:38-39)

And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. (King James Bible, Luke 6:29)

He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach. (King James Bible, Lamentations of Jeremiah 3:30)

In the final scene of the play, the Duke pretends that Angelo must die to pay for the death of Claudio, and he invokes the Old Law to justify this:

The very mercy of the law cries out
Most audible, even from his proper tongue,
`An Angelo for Claudio, death for death'.
Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure;
Like doth quit like, and measure still for measure.
(Measure for Measure 5.1.404-8)

Of course, the audience knows that Claudio has not died, but even if he had the Duke’s interpretation of Biblical notions of justice is not right. Even in the Old Law (which he should not be using, since Christ overturned it), "An eye for an eye" was not supposed to indicate the minimum retributive penalty a wrongdoer must suffer (which would be 'no less than an eye') but the maximum (it must be 'no more than an eye'); this was a rule to limit retribution not promote it. In using the expression "measure for measure", the Duke becomes like Lucio's "sanctimonious pirate" who rewrites scripture for his own purpose, and where the pirate wants to make it more lenient, the Duke wants to make it more harsh.

In the event, Angelo is not killed to pay for Claudio’s death, but transactions of the kind "X for Y" are a recurrent theme in the play. As Kiernan Ryan observes in the essay cited at the beginning of this chapter, the play’s sequence of substitutions is long: Angelo for the Duke as ruler, Escalus for Angelo in the ‘trial’ of Elbow, Mariana for Isabella in bed with Angelo, Mariana’s virginity for Claudio’s head, Barnadine’s head for Claudio’s head, Ragozine’s head for Barnadine’s head, and Pompey’s old trade of prostitution for his new one of executioner. For Ryan this sequence is noticeable for it crossing of class boundaries (every social class of person is involved), so it is a universal principle in Vienna that is matched by symmetries in the play’s language such as closing chiasmus of "What’s mine is yours, and what is yours is mine".

Consider Ryan's sequence of substitutions. Although there are examples from different social classes, no example shows in itself a substitution across different classes. Does this invalidate Ryan's claim? Look for other examples of verbal symmetry in the play; how are they like or unlike the chiasmus of “What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine”?

One of the play’s (indeed the Shakespeare canon’s) most striking omissions occurs at the end of Measure for Measure when the Duke proposes to Isabella and the script gives her no lines with which to answer him. If Isabella wanted to be a nun she presumably would not welcome the idea of being a wife, and those involved in a performance often try to indicate Isabella’s response to the Duke’s surprising offer by silent action. In some productions she has smiled at the Duke as if to show that this is what she hoped for all along, but dared not show it, and in others she has appeared horrified but too frightened by the Duke’s power to resist. In the latter case, the Duke has achieved by manipulation the sexual access to Isabella that Angelo could not, and one is left with the impression that rather than being moral opposites, the Duke is simply the more expert manipulator. But what if Isabella did not want to be a nun? Even without consulting historical sources outside the canon we can tell that Shakespeare expected his audience to accept the idea that women might be forced into a nunnery by circumstance, for in the opening scene of A Midsummer Night’s Dream Hermia is told that if she rebels against her father Egeus by refusing to marry Demetrius, she must either die or for the rest of her life "endure the livery of a nun" (1.1.70). Likewise in his ranting against Ophelia, Hamlet repeatedly exhorts her to get "to a nunery" (3.1.123, 132, 142) as though this were a punishment for her sins. In her essay cited at the beginning of this chapter, Bernice Kliman makes an unusual but persuasive case for thinking that Isabella does not want to be a nun but is forced into the nunnery because her parents have died.

One of the most influential readings of the play in recent years has been that offered by Jonathan Dollimore (cited at the beginning of this chapter) which builds on the ideas about institutions of authority advanced by French philosopher Michel Foucault. Dollimore notes that critics have tended to believe the
claim made by the authority figures in the play that unrestrained sexuality threatens the state, and so they
tend to think that Angelo is an excessive man who is nonetheless doing what he does for essentially the
right reasons. This claim is one made by the powerful to justify authoritarian reaction to all sorts of threats
that it perceives might be emerging from amongst the oppressed, and the real subject of the play (from
which all the talk of sexual corruption is just a distraction) is the political corruption amongst the rulers;
sexual deviants become scapegoats for wider problems. Fears that society was disintegrating, and that
‘masterless’ deviants were to blame, were genuine in Shakespeare’s time—but, of course, wrong—yet this
was not the only reason for increasing persecution of deviants. There was also the desire by the
authorities to control the criminal underworld, with which deviance is associated, for their own practical
ends. The war, plague, trials and executions in the Vienna of the play are much like what was feared in
London around the time the play was first performed. In 2.1, Escalus asks whether are any officers more
competent that Elbow because those running the ‘state’ have anxieties about their abilities to operate
surveillance on its people, and the Duke’s use of a religious disguise engages with the contemporary
question of whether religion is a means of ideological control, operating on the inner man where other
forms of state control can only operate on the outer. Barnardine’s unrepentant recalcitrance shows the
state failing to reform the inner man, while Claudio’s spiritual renunciation shows its success. The
demand made by rulers for personal integrity in the play is a means of exerting authority, and what annoys
the Duke most is the subversive slandering that he is powerless to silence:

DUKE No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure scape; back-wounding calumny
The whitest virtue strikes. What king so strong
Can tie the gall up in the slanderous tongue?
(Measure for Measure 3.1.444-7)

The resolution of the play, according to Dollimore, is not the ending of authoritarianism, but rather the
victory of omniscient rule achieved through the Duke’s disguise and plotting. The transgressors in the play
are “exploited to legitimate an exercise in authoritarian repression”. The brothels, which publicly manifest
personal desire, were in fact in London very strictly controlled through bribery and were often owned by
the same people who operated theatre. Transgression is not a ‘good’ in the play--Angelo is as
transgressive as any denizen of brothels--but it is the occasion for revealing strategies of power. In itself,
transgression threatens to reproduce exploitation as it reveals it and noticeably the prostitutes, who are so
important to the themes of the play, are absent from it and thus voiceless.

Dollimore’s reading is explicitly political. What aspects of the play cannot be accounted for by
politics? Consider, for example, the meetings of Isabella and Claudio in prison, and especially
his pleading for her to give up her virginity. Is the emotional force of these encounters less
important than the matters of governance attended to in Dollimore’s reading? Is it in fact
outside of the reach of Dollimore’s approach?

Study Questions

* Isabella is often performed as a novice nun (as Lucio calls her, 1.4.19) although her
questions to the Francesca suggests she is only about to enter the convent. Is it clear from
Isabella’s speech in this scene, and indeed elsewhere in the play, that she wants to be a nun?

* The Duke’s disguise as a friar allows him to hear the confessions of Angelo (3.1.168-9) and
Mariana (5.1.526), although since he is merely pretending he has no power to absolve sin.
Should we be concerned that his meddling places the souls of his subjects in danger?

* Consider the ‘trial’ of Pompey in 2.1. Is it merely a mockery of the larger trials of the play (of
Claudio, and later of Angelo)? Are the differences merely ones of degree (the crimes and
punishments being less severe) or are there fundamental differences in the quality of the
justice?

* Consider the disguised Duke’s responses to Lucio’s claims about him, such as “his use was
to put a ducat in her clack-dish” (3.1.390). What evidence, apart from Lucio’s opinion, can you
find for the Duke’s behaviour before he left Angelo in charge?

* Claudio’s speech on death beginning “To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot” (3.1.118-32)
focuses on the physical and omits the spiritual. What kinds of beliefs about the afterlife are
evident in the play?

* The ‘bed-trick’ by which Angelo consummates his marriage to Mariana while thinking he is
having sex with Isabella is entirely implausible. Should we be concerned with the play’s lack of
realism, or is it appropriate that the messy problems of reality are solved by a pseudo-magical
event?
Lucio says that by his flight the Duke "usurp[s] the beggary he was never born to" (3.1.359). What can we tell about the economic situation in Vienna, and what might it tell us about people's motives? (Consider, for example, the representation of prostitution in the play; does it seem a last resort of desperate women?)

Chapter Three. Section C Topic Study: 'Women in Shakespeare's plays: King Lear, Richard 3, Antony and Cleopatra

Selected Reading:


There are about 1400 speaking men in all Shakespeare's plays, and only about 150 women, which is such a difference from real life that we have to consider its causes. Shakespeare's plays are almost entirely concerned with powerful people, monarchs, emperors, and aristocrats, and they feature ordinary working people only in minor roles. One might argue that things that happen in the plays could only happen to 'superior' people, so that the social class of Shakespeare's characters was determined by the kinds of stories he wanted to tell, or as George Bernard Shaw put it, "Hamlet's experiences simply could not have happened to a plumber. A poor man is useful on the stage only as a blind man is: to excite sympathy" (Preface to The Dark Lady of the Sonnets). If this is true, the relative absence of women in Shakespeare's plays can be explained as a corollary of it, since until recently women were almost entirely absent from the institutions and the social circles that rule societies. In other words, if Shakespeare wanted to write about the powerful he had to write mostly about men. There is a at least one other explanation for the absence of women in Shakespeare's plays, and that is that the conventions of performance limited the number of female roles in any one play. Although women were not quite forbidden to act on the stage, in Shakespeare's time female roles were played by teenage boys, each of whom was apprenticed to one of the adult actors in the company and would continue playing women until his voice broke at around 18 or 19 years of age. Most companies of actors had only between 1 and 3 of these boys actors so they could not perform plays with many women's parts. That this explanation alone is sufficient to account for the absence of women in many plays is indicated by the plays performed by specialized companies consisting only of boy actors: they do indeed have many female characters.

Many of Shakespeare's plays feature fathers but not mothers, and a notable example is King Lear. No explanation is offered in the play for the absence of Lear's wife, but it serves to simplify the familial relationship that the play dramatizes: male parent versus female offspring. The relation of parent to child is, here as elsewhere, compared to the relationship of husband to wife, especially at the moment when a daughter breaks from a parent to form a new relationship with a husband. Shakespeare had dramatized...
this in his previous play Othello as Brabantio asks his daughter to name, of all the people present in the Senate, the one she thinks she most owes her duty to. Desdemona replies

DESDEMONA My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided duty.
To you I am bound for life and education.
My life and education both do learn me
How to respect you. You are the lord of duty,
I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my husband,
And so much duty as my mother showed
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor my lord.
(Othello 1.3.179-88)

Part of the persuasive power of this speech (its rhetoric) is Desdemona's turning the question back upon the questioner: as Brabantio necessarily took his wife from her father, so Othello has taken Desdemona from Brabantio. The cyclical pattern of marriage and parenthood visits upon the father the same treatment he visited upon his father-in-law. At the start of King Lear Goneril and Regan are married but Cordelia is not, so Lear has gone through the process of having his child taken away by another man twice. This fact might well condition our view of Lear's response to the impending betrothal of Cordelia, who for her part observes a contradiction in her sisters' proclamations of absolute love for their father:

CORDELIA Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me.
I return those duties back as are right fit -
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands if they say
They love you all? Haply when I shall wed
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty.
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters.
(King Lear 1.1.95-103)

Cordelia begins this speech like Desdemona speaking to Brabantio, asserting a reasonable limit to her duty, but her phrasing "Obey you, love you, and most honour you" is surprising for these are virtually the same as the words of the Christian marriage ritual prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. If Cordelia intended to state the limit of her love, reserving some for her future husband, in this moment she appears to redirect that portion back to her father by imagining him as her husband. The contradiction Cordelia observes--that her sisters swear absolute love for their father and reserve none for their husbands--is first 'solved' by this impossible marriage that undermines her emulation of Desdemona's argument.

To understand the women in Shakespeare's plays it is necessary to have some sense of the social position of women in Renaissance England, for even if the play you are studying is set elsewhere it is likely that the women in it will behave much as contemporary women did in England. It is a common exaggeration to say that women had no right to own property, were entirely dominated by their husbands and fathers, and could be treated as little better than property. (A useful corrective that considers just what property rights a middle-class woman had is Natasha Korda. 2001. "'Judicious Oeillades': Supervising Marital Property in The Merry Wives of Windsor." Marxist Shakespeares. Edited by Jean Howard and Scott Cutler Shershow. Accents on Shakespeare. London. Routledge. 82-103.) It is true that woman had far fewer freedoms than we are used to, and that ideas of feminine behaviour have changed considerably. When Lear enters carrying the body of Cordelia in the final scene, his lament that "Her voice was ever soft, / Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman" (5.3.247-8) is apt to raise a laugh in modern performance that almost certainly did not happen in Shakespeare's time. Cordelia is, of course, a queen and throughout Shakespeare's life until about 2 years before King Lear was first performed, England was ruled by a queen. (The contradictions that this created, especially in relation to ideals of feminine passivity and deference, are explored in Louis Montrose. 1996. "'Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture." Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream. Edited by Richard Dutton. New Casebooks. Basingstoke. Macmillan. 101-38.) Necessarily, the political situation at the beginning of King Lear is tense, being the kind of succession crisis that England itself had recently undergone, although the politics is shot through with familial concerns. In demanding protestations of love, Lear seems concerned with his family relationships, but the play begins with two courtiers discussing how the king feels about his daughters' husbands, not the daughters themselves:

KENT I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.
GLOUCESTER It did always seem so to us, but now in the
division of the kingdom it appears not which of the
Dukes he values most; for qualities are so weighed that
curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.

( _King Lear_ 1.1.1-6)

Notice that Kent does not say "I thought the king more affected Goneril than Regan". For some, never-
explained, reason, Cordelia is sought in marriage only by two French rulers, Burgundy and France. In a
three-way split of the kingdom between the daughters, Cordelia's marriage to either suitor is going to give
a third of the kingdom to France. When considering Shakespeare's women there is often the need to
keep such a focus in mind, for they often are senior aristocrats married to powerful rulers of other
countries for reasons of politics, not love.

It is possible to read Shakespeare's history plays in the chronological order of the events they depict
( _King John, Richard 2, 1 Henry 4, 2 Henry 4, Henry 5, 1 Henry 6, 2 Henry 6, 3 Henry 6, Richard 3, Henry 8_ )
rather than the order in which he wrote them. If one does this, the Queen Margaret who appears in
 _Richard 3_ is first encountered at the end of _1 Henry 6_ as the Earl of Suffolk's French prisoner with whom
he is falling in love:

SUFFOLK (aside) She's beautiful, and therefore to be wooed;
She is a woman, therefore to be won.

( _1 Henry 6_ 5.5.34-5)

Remembering that he is already married, Suffolk decides to woo her on behalf of the English king, to have
"peace established between these realms" (5.5.48), much as Cordelia is in _King Lear_ is used. The striking
repetition of "wooed . . . woman . . . won" Shakespeare had used before in a much darker context. In _Titus
Andronicus_ Demetrius says almost the same thing of Lavinia, but is persuaded by Aaron to rape her
instead:

[DEMETRIUS] She is a woman, therefore may be wooed;
She is a woman, therefore may be won;

[ AARON] . . . strike her home by force, if not by words,

( _Titus Andronicus_ 2.1.82-119)

Queen Margaret appears in all three of the _Henry 6_ plays and in _Richard 3_ where she lingers as a
reminder of the Lancastrian dynasty that Richard's family, the Yorkists, have displaced. A remarkable set-
piece of dramatic writing is the second scene of _Richard 3_ in which the body of Margaret's husband, the
murdered Henry 6, is brought in by daughter-in-law Anne. Richard is one of Henry 6's murderers, and he
also murdered Anne's husband, Henry's son Edward, yet in this scene Richard attempts to woo Anne.
The moment seems unpropitious and the presence of the bleeding corpse makes it highly distasteful, but
these impediments only heighten the intensity of Richard's pleasure at his own audacity, and as soon as
she leaves he comments

Was ever woman in this humour wooed?
Was ever woman in this humour won?
I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.
What, I that killed her husband and his father,
To take her in her heart's extremest hate,
With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
The bleeding witness of my hatred by,
Having God, her conscience, and these bars against me,
But the plain devil and dissembling looks--
And yet to win her, all the world to nothing? Ha!

( _Richard 3_ 1.2.215-25)

There is undeniable theatrical pleasure in seeing Richard's achievement, even though the idea of his
wooing a woman who is trying to bury the man he killed is, on the face of it, distasteful. To our modern
sensibilities the problem to be addressed is what goes through Anne's mind as she succumbs to Richard's
rhetorical force. For most of the scene Richard and Anne engage in emotionally charged exchanges in
which each returns the other's phrases back in a new form to reverse the intended meaning, a rhetorical
device known as stichomythia:

RICHARD GLOUCESTER Fairer than tongue can name thee, let me have
Some patient leisure to excuse myself.
LADY ANNE Fouler than heart can think thee, thou canst make
No excuse current but to hang thyself.
RICHARD GLOUCESTER By such despair I should accuse myself.
LADY ANNE And by despairing shalt thou stand excused, 
For doing worthy vengeance on thyself 
That didst unworthy slaughter upon others. 
RICHARD GLOUCESTER Say that I slew them not. LADY ANNE Then say they were not slain. 
(Richard 3 1.2.81-9)

This kind of back-and-forth exchange occurs throughout the scene, and Richard calls it a “keen encounter of our wits” (1.2.115). Indeed, in her rhetoric Anne is Richard's equal, and that is quite an achievement since Richard's persuasive power is central to his rise to power in the first half of the play; he is not merely a deceiver but a manipulator. That Anne finally succumbs to him is, perhaps, not as important as the fact that she sees through his lies, refuses to accept his version of reality, and she fights back with rhetoric as powerful as his own.

The play is full of men who do not perceive what Richard is up to, and women who do see it. Queen Margaret performs a prophetic function in warning others about him, and also curses Richard directly. Take a look at Margaret's curses in 1.3 and see if, like Anne's language, they constitute a form of resistance that the play encourages us to admire.

In Renaissance drama, women's sexual desire barely figures at all, although they frequently are the object of men's sexual desire; a significant exception, however, is Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. As observed above, women are marginal in the Shakespeare canon generally but three of them do make it into play titles: Cleopatra, Juliet, and Cressida. Of course, they achieve titular mention only in partnership with men and whatever power they have is always mediated through their relationships with men. Juliet and Cressida are young women embarking on their first serious love relationships, but Cleopatra is markedly older and already sexually experienced, and there is plenty of evidence of disgust at her sexual appetite. Yet even this is measured primarily by its effect on a man, Antony:

PHILO Nay, but this dotage of our General's 
O'erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes, 
That o'er the files and musters of the war 
Have glowed like plated Mars, now bend, now turn 
The office and devotion of their view 
Upon a tawny front. His captain's heart, 
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst 
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper, 
And is become the bellows and the fan 
To cool a gipsy's lust. 
Flourish. Enter Antony, Cleopatra, her ladies, the train, with eunuchs fanning her 
(Antony and Cleopatra 1.1.1-10)

Cleopatra is figured as alien to these Roman men, dark-skinned (“tawny”) and lustful, and, most peculiarly, hard to satisfy: a “fan” cools what it blows upon but a “bellows” blows air upon a fire to heat it, so Philo’s language begins the play’s representation of Cleopatra’s paradoxical inversions. Enobarbus also says that what cools Cleopatra heats her:

[ENOBARBUS] On each side her 
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids, 
With divers-coloured fans whose wind did seem 
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool, 
And what they undid did. 
(Antony and Cleopatra 2.2.208-12)

Asked if Antony will leave Cleopatra, Enobarbus gives the opinion that he will not because this more-is-less principle she somehow bestows on her lover: "Other women cloy / The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry / Where most she satisfies” (2.2.242-44).

How might you relate this more-is-less principle to male and female sexuality? Look for the play's imagery of infinitude versus finitude (such as "There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned" 1.1.15) and see whether it has a discernible pattern regarding gender.

Cleopatra's lust may be infinite, but other warriors in Antony's peer-group think that his cannot be, and indeed they think that she is wearing him out sexually. Hearing that Antony is come to fight, Pompey is surprised that so small a matter "Can from the lap of Egypt's widow pluck / The ne'er lust-wearied Antony" (2.1.37-38). 'To die' was a common euphemism for orgasm in Shakespeare's time and it in noticeable that although both Antony and Cleopatra commit suicide, his attempt is bungled and messy while hers is efficient and relatively peaceful.
The representation of female lust in Antony and Cleopatra has been seen by feminist critics as revealing male sexual anxiety. Does the differing manners of their death support or undermine this view?

Finally for this section, we would like to suggest an alternative line of enquiry. Octavia finds that being used as the ‘cement’ to bind a political allegiance places her in an decidedly uncomfortable position once Antony and Caesar's alliance breaks down: as wife to one and sister to the other Octavia’s loyalty is entirely divided. You might want to contrast this disorderly division with the divided loyalty (to father and to husband) with which we began this chapter.

**Study Questions**

* *Othello* is usually seen as a tragedy of a great man made to commit a sin, but one might equally see it from Desdemona’s point of view as the tragedy of a woman who inadvertently marries a violent abuser. In what ways does the play encourage us to see the events from the murderer’s perspective rather than the victim's?

* Catherine Belsey argued that at the end of *Twelfth Night* Viola “dwindles into a wife”. What other women in Shakespeare seem to lose at the end the power they had around the middle of the play? Is it essential that they do?

* Carrying the body of Cordelia, Lear says “my poor fool is hanged” (*King Lear* 5.3.281). It is possible for the same actor to play Cordelia and the Fool (although it did not happen in Shakespeare’s time); what thematic advantages does such a doubling offer?

* Imagining what would happen if she were brought to Rome to be humiliated in defeat, Cleopatra says “I shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I’ th’ posture of a whore” (Antony and Cleopatra 5.2.215-7). Since these lines must have been said by a boy playing Cleopatra in the original performances of the play, should we think this undermined his own performance?

* “CATHERINE De foot et de cown? O Seigneur Dieu! Is sont les mots de son mauvais, corruptible, gros, et impudique, et non pour les dames d'honneur d'user” (Henry 5 3.4.48-50). Consider the use of bawdy language by women in Shakespeare’s plays. It it confined to a particular kind of character (say, a social class)?

* “LYSIMACHUS "A curse upon him . . . / That robs thee of thy honour. Hold, here's more gold" (Pericles 19.140-1). Consider the moments when men give women money, or speak of doing so, in Shakespeare's plays. (Another example would be Romeo's complaint that Rosaline would not "ope her lap to saint-seducing gold", Romeo and Juliet 1.1.211). Are we to think less of these men because they offer to pay for sex?

* Are there any good old women in Shakespeare? What are we to make of the language of men such as Theseus who likens waiting for sexual gratification at his marriage to “a stepdame or a dowager / Long withering out a young man's revenue” (A Midsummer Night's Dream 1.1.4-6)

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**Chapter Four. Section C Topic Study: 'Scenic form in Shakespeare's plays'**

**Suggested reading:**


W. J. Lawrence. 1937. *Speeding Up Shakespeare: Studies of the Bygone Theatre and Drama* London. Argonaut. Chapter 1 "Speeding up Shakespeare" pp. 1-16 (No ISBN; this book predates the ISBN system and is out of print. If you have access to a good library you might still find it.)
When watching a modern television situational comedy or drama on a channel that does not have breaks for advertisements, you might have noticed that at a moment of heightened tension in a scene the screen will fade to black only for the image to return again (sometimes to a point in the story slightly earlier than the one before the fade) and the scene to continue. These blank moments are, of course, where the television programme's makers expected the commercial television companies to insert their advertisements, and the heightening of anticipation just before the fade-out is intended to retain the audience through the break. In the theatre the equivalent heightening of tension before an interval is called a 'strong curtain', for the fade-out is traditionally produced by closing a curtain to conceal the stage. Modern performances of Shakespeare are usually punctuated with a single central interval, dividing the play into two acts, but you will have noticed from your reading that Shakespeare's play are usually printed as having five acts which would imply four intervals.

It cannot be ascertained with certainty how plays were performed in Shakespeare's time, but the likeliest hypothesis is as follows. At the indoor theatres (such as the Blackfriars theatre, which Shakespeare had access to from about 1609) plays were always performed in five acts separated by four short intervals during which music was played. At the open-air amphitheatres (such as the Rose where Shakespeare started, and the Globe of which he was a part-owner) performances were continuous, no intervals being observed, until about 1609 when the open-air theatres (starting with the Globe) began to copy the indoor theatres and separate their plays into five acts with four intervals. Almost all of Shakespeare's plays were written before 1609 and for open-air amphitheatres, so except for the last few (possibly The Winter's Tale, and certainly The Tempest, The Two Noble Kinsmen, and Henry 8) we can be tolerably certain that Shakespeare expected his work to be performed without intervals. Thus, the primary unit of performance for Shakespeare would have been not the act but the scene. (Because many of Shakespeare's plays were first published posthumously, their division into acts might reflect post-1609 adaptation or else the editorial imposition of intervals not used in performance.) A scene starts with the entrance onto the stage of one or more actors and it continues until they all leave; a scene is whatever happens between two clearings of the stage. David Bradley, in the work cited at the beginning of this chapter, used a biological metaphor for this: "The doors are thus the systole and diastole of the great heart-beat of the Elizabethan stage... that assures us of the structural primacy of the scene". But what is this "structural primacy" and what kind of form does the scene-unit impose on the drama?

Usually, a scene takes place in one imagined location, although it is possible for characters to leave somewhere and arrive somewhere else, all within a single scene. The Shakespearian stage is not naturalistic and an audience member is expected to exercise a considerable degree of imagination so that a group of perhaps 10 actors entering en masse will be allowed to represent an entire army, but nonetheless the ratio of stage-space to fictional-world-space is usually about 1:1, and indeed in The Defence of Poetry Philip Sidney mocked an earlier kind of drama in which the stage had "Asia on the one side and Africa on the other, and so many other under-kingsdoms, that the player when he comes in must ever begin with telling where he is". By the time that Shakespeare began writing such compression of space was not usually employed, so that if a dramatist wanted to set a play in a number of locations he had to divide it into scenes, with clearings of the stage indicating the shift of location. (This convention is so deeply embedded that it is easy to forget its operation while reading drama, but a glance at plays from the middle of the sixteenth-century will soon show how rapidly the medium changed as the theatre industry developed in the second half of the century; the essay by Gabriel Egan cited at the beginning of this chapter outlines that development.) Occasionally, however, Shakespeare did put distantly-spaced locations on the stage together, as in the final scenes of Richard 3 when, prior to the battle of Bosworth...
field, Richmond sets up his tent on one side of the stage and Richard sets up his on the other. Although in the imagined world of the play these tents must be separated by at least several hundred metres (because they are the centres of opposed armed camps), Shakespeare has them represented simultaneously on a single stage. This strange dramatic device, which on Sidney’s evidence we might think an archaism, enables the ghosts of Richard's victims (young prince Edward, Henry 6, George Duke of Clarence, Rivers, Gray, Vaughan, the two young princes, Hastings, Lady Anne, and Buckingham) to appear above the two armed camps and to address speeches to the sleeping bodies of Richmond and Richard. Without the simultaneous staging of the two tents this would have been impossible, and you should note that the way the ghosts speak, heaping curses on Richard and wishing Richmond well, forces us to consider what kind of beings these ghosts are. The ghost of Banquo in Macbeth 3.4 might simply be a guilty projection of his unconscious, just as the dagger that hovers in the air before him is “A dagger of the mind” (2.1.38), but the ghosts in Richard 3 appear to two unconscious minds, apparently ruling out this possibility. We might think that perhaps the visions of the ghost experienced by Richmond and Richard are just dreams, but again it would have to be a shared dream, and in any case when Richard awakes he appears to have been having a different dream, one about the forthcoming battle itself: “Give me another horse! Bind up my wounds!” (5.5.131).

Consider the other ghosts in Shakespeare’s plays (you might like to start with the ones in Julius Caesar, The Winter's Tale, and Cymbeline). Is it entirely clear what Shakespeare’s audience would understand they were, whether an evil supernatural being, a dead person’s spirit, or a dream-vision? How do practical matters of staging affect our understanding of the ghost's nature? (Consider, for example, who is able to see a ghost and who cannot.)

Scenes, as we have said, are begun and ended with a clearing of the stage, but frequently there is a signal just before the clearing that the scene is about to end: the speaking of a rhyming couplet. Most of Shakespeare’s verse writing is blank (unrhymed) verse, but scenes often end with two lines that rhyme, as with Hamlet’s “Foul deeds will rise, / Though all the earth o’erwhelm them, to men’s eyes. Exit” (1.2.256-7) or Macbeth’s “Away, and mock the time with fairest show. / False face must hide what the false heart doth know. Exeunt” (1.7.81-2). This convention is not used consistently, but nonetheless it might have functioned to remind the actors that they should start leaving the stage, or perhaps to signal to the audience that the scene is ending. Shakespeare sometimes seems to misuse the convention for special purposes. Just before the battle of Bosworth field, Richard rallies his troops:

[KING RICHARD] Go, gentlemen, each man unto his charge.
Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls.
Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
Devised at first to keep the strong in awe.
Our strong arms be our conscience; swords, our law.
March on, join bravely! Let us to 't, pell mell -
If not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell.
What shall I say, more than I have inferred?
Remember whom you are to cope withal:
A sort of vagabonds...
(Richard 3 5.6.37-46)

In the middle of this extract, Richard uses a rhyming couple (“pell mell . . . to hell”) and it is worth considering what would happen if this were a deliberately false exit. The preceding speech is 6 lines of encouragement to his men, and performed in an open-air amphitheatre of the time this might be addressed directly to the audience standing in the yard, literally at Richard's feet if he puts himself at the downstage edge of the stage. This staging would avoid the need to fill the stage with actors pretending to be soldiers by casting the theatre audience in this role. When Richard begins to exit, perhaps running offstage as though towards the enemy, he would expect his men to follow him, and of course the theatre audience cannot do so. Dejectedly, Richard could return to his downstage position, as though he realized that he had not roused them sufficiently, and hence he begins again with “What shall I say, more than I have inferred?” This kind of staging would indicate that, after a series of scenes in which he persuades, cajoles, and manipulates his way to supreme power, Richard’s rhetoric finally fails him, foreshadowing his defeat in the battle.

Be sensitive to such violations of dramatic conventions, for they seldom are gratuitous and often relate to the themes of the play. Consider the following moment in King Lear:

[KENT] All weary and o’erwatched,
Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold
This shameful lodging. Fortune, good night;
Smile once more; turn thy wheel. He sleeps
Enter Edgar EDGAR I heard myself proclaimed,
And by the happy hollow of a tree
While Kent sleeps in the stocks, Edgar enters and delivers a 21-line speech about his flight from his father and his decision to disguise himself as a Bedlam beggar, and then exits. Edgar seems not to notice Kent asleep on the stage, and indeed his speech is characteristically a soliloquy, an example of a character speaking alone and revealing to the audience his mind. Some editors of the play have indeed made this a soliloquy by ending the scene at Kent's falling asleep and starting a new scene for Edgar's speech, and then another new scene again for Lear' entrance to discover Kent in the stocks. Some kinds of theatre can put this editorial decision into practice: a curtain can close on Kent (which is the same as his exiting), Edgar can appear in front of it for his short scene, and the curtain can re-open to show Kent again (a kind of entrance). But the open-air Globe amphitheatre in which King Lear was first performed could not do this because the stage projected into the audience and there was no way to close a curtain on Kent in the stocks. (It would, presumably, be too comic for Kent to stand up and try to exit while still locked in the stocks, for their very purpose is to impede movement.) It seems rather that the audience were to understand that Edgar does not see Kent, or indeed that they are not to be thought to be occupying the same part of the fictional world. But by having Edgar and Kent onstage together in this way, the dramatist focusses our attention on what they have in common: both are honest men in forced exile, both disguise themselves as socially-inferior men to avoid having to go away, both have a close relationship with a father figure who is being misled, and in both cases this father figure will discover the truth about them and then promptly die. With so much in common, one cannot help wondering what they would say to one another were they to realize all this, but one of the play's central themes is its characters' failure to understand what is happening around them, their blindness to all sorts of human connection. For example, Lear begins to see the world clearly once he is left out in the storm:

[LEAR] O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this. Take physic, pomp,
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just.
(King Lear 3.4.32-6)

Lear comes to think about his poorest subjects as he is exposed to the elements, and takes off his clothes in order to imitate Edgar-as-Tom. This is ironic since nakedness is part of the disguise that Edgar adopts. In order to strip away his kingly identity and become "the thing itself", "Unaccommodated man . . . a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art" (3.4.100-2), Lear imitates an aristocrat who is disguising himself as a beggar, so that even Lear's coming to know 'reality' is mediated through his courtiers.

As well as deliberate violations of spatial reality, Shakespeare constructs scenes that violate temporal reality. The famous 'doubled' time scheme of Othello produces the effect that we feel as if there has been time for Desdemona to have slept with Cassio many times (as Othello believes) even though we know that the entire plot takes place over a couple of days. Sometimes compression of time takes place within a scene, as with the opening scene of Hamlet beginning with a change of guard at midnight and ending after a cock crows to signal dawn. Consider the night that Iachimo spends in Innogen's bedchamber, Cymbeline 2.2; how does this scene's compression relate to the wider themes of the play (think about the sexual connotations of the knowledge that Iachimo gains in that room). Contrast this technique with the use of figures such as Time in The Winter's Tale and Gower in Pericles who tell the audience that many years have passed between successive scenes.

Study Questions

* The second chorus of Henry 5 says that "all the youth of England are on fire" (2.0.1) but the next scene begins with the far from youthful Nim and Bardolph. Compare the promises of each of the play's choruses with the beginnings of the scenes that follow them; is there a general pattern of deflated expectations?

* Apart from one brief scene in Delphos, the first two acts of The Winter's Tale take place in Sicilia, the whole of the fourth act in Bohemia 16 years later, and the fifth act back in Sicilia. Would it be fair to say that this play is structured by acts as much as by scenes? (Compare it with The Comedy of Errors in this regard.)
The crucial battle between France and England in *King John* takes place off stage between the first and second act. Compare this with the attempts to show battles on the stage in other history plays (the Henry 4 and Henry 6 plays are especially valuable for this). When a series of scenes is set in different parts of the same battlefield, what formal devices are used to help the audience understand the action?

Consider ‘tableaux’ scenes in Shakespeare, where the action forms a kind of stage picture, often observed by others on the stage. Examples are Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking (*Macbeth* 5.1), the ‘show of eight kings’ (*Macbeth* 4.1.127), and Cressida’s kissing of the Greek soldiers (*Troilus and Cressida* 4.6.18-64). Do such scenes occur in a particular times and/or places in the structures of the stories?

In many of Shakespeare’s plays the male protagonist is absent from the stage for a long section just after the middle. (Examples are Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, Othello, and Romeo.) What purposes might this absence serve in relation to the structure of a play and the creation of tension?

Four of Shakespeare’s last plays, *Pericles, The Winter's Tale, Cymbeline,* and *The Tempest* are often grouped together as the Romances. What formal characteristics do they have in common? (Think in terms of location, time-span, and the connectedness of scenes.)

The character of Faulconbridge the Bastard is a primary concern of the first three acts of *King John*, but then he is somewhat marginalized as the focus shifts to other matters. Compare this structure with that of *Romeo and Juliet* and the character of Mercutio. Is there a structural need to remove these attractive young men from the second half of a play?

Endnote

We hope that you have enjoyed studying Shakespeare’s plays for this course. Even with the exclusions listed in the section ‘Subject Content’ above (the prohibition on answering on *Hamlet, The Tempest, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, The Merchant of Venice, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Taming of the Shrew,* and *Twelfth Night*) there are 28 Shakespeare plays to choose from and this study guide is intended only as a model of how you might arrange your own investigations of them. You are advised that reading widely across the plays will be of great benefit not only in the examination for this course but also for your general appreciation of English literature, for of all the works that come under that category, Shakespeare’s play and poems are considered by many to be central, canonical, texts. Because more has been written about Shakespeare than any other literary artist, you will find that whatever methodological approach you wish to take (whether political, historical, biographical, theatrical, or formal) there is a wealth of secondary reading material to support and encourage your own explorations.

Sample Examination Paper

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON BA EXAMINATION for External Students

ENGLISH

Group B Advanced Unit : Shakespeare

THREE HOURS

Date: xxxx/xxxx

Answer ONE question in EACH section. Do NOT present substantially the same material in any two answers, whether on this paper or in any other parts of your examination.

SECTION A

1. Place one of the passages below in the contexts of the play from which it is drawn and of Shakespeare’s other writing, and commenting on the language, dramatic interaction, and themes.

a) 

*Alarum. Enter King Harry [and the English army, with] scaling ladders*

*KING HARRY* Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,
Or close the wall up with our English dead.
In peace there’s nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness and humility,
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tiger.
Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard-favoured rage.
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect,
Let it pry through the portage of the head
Like the brass cannon, let the brow o'erwhelm it
As fearfully as doth a galled rock
O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
Swilled with the wild and wasteful ocean.
Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,
Hold hard the breath, and bend up every spirit
To his full height. On, on, you noblest English,
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof,
Fathers that like so many Alexanders
Have in these parts from morn till even fought,
And sheathed their swords for lack of argument.
Dishonour not your mothers; now attest
That those whom you called fathers did beget you.
Be copy now to men of grosser blood,
And teach them how to war. And you, good yeomen,
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
The mettle of your pasture; let us swear
That you are worth your breeding - which I doubt not,
For there is none of you so mean and base
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot.
Follow your spirit, and upon this charge
Cry, `God for Harry! England and Saint George!' Alarum, and chambers go off. Exeunt Enter Nim, Bardolph, Ensign Pistol, and Boy
BARDOLPH On, on, on, on, on! To the breach, to the breach!
NIM Pray thee corporal, stay. The knocks are too hot, and for mine own part I have not a case of lives.

b)

LEPIDUS What manner o' thing is your crocodile?
ANTONY It is shaped, sir, like itself, and it is as broad as it hath breadth. It is just so high as it is, and moves with its own organs. It lives by what nourisheth it, and the elements once out of it, it transmigrates.
LEPIDUS What colour is it of?
ANTONY Of it own colour, too.
LEPIDUS 'Tis a strange serpent.
ANTONY 'Tis so, and the tears of it are wet.
CAESAR (to Antony) Will this description satisfy him?
ANTONY With the health that Pompey gives him; else he is a very epicure.
POMPEY (aside to Menas) Go hang, sir, hang! Tell me of that? Away, Do as I bid you. (Aloud) Where's this cup I called for?
MENAS (aside to Pompey) If for the sake of merit thou wilt hear me, Rise from thy stool.
POMPEY [rising] I think thou'rt mad. The matter?
[Menas and Pompey stand apart]
MENAS I have ever held my cap off to thy fortunes.
POMPEY Thou hast served me with much faith. What's else to say? Be jolly, lords.
ANTONY These quicksands, Lepidus,
Keep off them, for you sink.
MENAS Wilt thou be lord of all the world?
POMPEY What sayst thou?
MENAS Wilt thou be lord of the whole world? That's twice.
POMPEY How should that be?
MENAS But entertain it
And, though thou think me poor, I am the man
Will give thee all the world.

POMPEY Hast thou drunk well?
MENAS No, Pompey, I have kept me from the cup.
Thou art, if thou dar'st be, the earthly Jove.
Whate'er the ocean pales or sky inclips
Is thine, if thou wilt ha 't.

POMPEY Show me which way!
MENAS These three world-sharers, these competitors,
Are in thy vessel. Let me cut the cable;
And when we are put off, fall to their throats.
All there is thine.

POMPEY Ah, this thou shouldst have done
And not have spoke on 't. In me 'tis villainy,
In thee 't had been good service. Thou must know
'Tis not my profit that does lead mine honour;
Mine honour, it. Repent that e'er thy tongue
Hath so betrayed thine act. Being done unknown,
I should have found it afterwards well done,
But must condemn it now. Desist, and drink.

He returns to the others
(c)

Enter the Prologue armed
PROLOGUE In Troy there lies the scene. From isles of Greece
The princes orgulous, their high blood chafed,
Have to the port of Athens sent their ships,
Fraught with the ministers and instruments
Of cruel war. Sixty-and-nine, that wore
Their crownets regal, from th' Athenian bay
Put forth toward Phrygia, and their vow is made
To ransack Troy, within whose strong immures
The ravished Helen, Menelaus' queen,
With wanton Paris sleeps - and that's the quarrel.
To Tenedos they come,
And the deep-drawing barques do there disgorge
Their warlike freightage; now on Dardan plains
The fresh and yet unbruised Greeks do pitch
Their brave pavilions. Priam's six-gated city -
Dardan and Timbria, Helias, Chetas, Troien,
And Antenorides - with massy staples
And corresponsive and full-filling bolts
Spar up the sons of Troy.
Now expectation, tickling skittish spirits
On one and other side, Trojan and Greek,
Sets all on hazard. And hither am I come,
A Prologue armed - but not in confidence
Of author's pen or actor's voice, but suited
In like conditions as our argument -
To tell you, fair beholders, that our play
Leaps o'er the vaunt and firstlings of those broils,
Beginning in the middle, starting thence away
To what may be digested in a play.
Like or find fault; do as your pleasures are;
Now, good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war. Exit

[Flourish.] Enter King John, the Earls of Pembroke and Salisbury,
and other lords. King John ascends the throne
KING JOHN Here once again we sit, once again crowned,
And looked upon, I hope, with cheerful eyes.
PEMBROKE This 'once again', but that your highness pleased,
Was once superfluous. You were crowned before,
And that high royalty was ne'er plucked off,
The faiths of men ne'er stained with revolt;
Fresh expectation troubled not the land
With any longed-for change or better state.

SALISBURY Therefore to be possessed with double pomp,
To guard a title that was rich before,
To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.

PEMBROKE But that your royal pleasure must be done,
This act is as an ancient tale new-told,
And in the last repeating troublesome,
Being urged at a time unseasonable.

SALISBURY In this the antique and well-noted face
Of plain old form is much disfigured,
And like a shifted wind unto a sail,
It makes the course of thoughts to fetch about,
Startles and frights consideration,
Makes sound opinion sick, and truth suspected
For putting on so new a fashioned robe.

PEMBROKE When workmen strive to do better than well,
They do confound their skill in covetousness;
And oftentimes excusing of a fault
Doth make the fault the worser by th' excuse;
As patches set upon a little breach
Discredit more in hiding of the fault
Than did the fault before it was so patched.

SALISBURY To this effect: before you were new-crowned
We breathed our counsel, but it pleased your highness
To overbear it; and we are all well pleased,
Since all and every part of what we would
Doth make a stand at what your highness will.

KING JOHN Some reasons of this double coronation
I have possessed you with, and think them strong.

--

[RICHARD GLOUCESTER] Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams
To set my brother Clarence and the King
In deadly hate the one against the other.
And if King Edward be as true and just
As I am subtle false and treacherous,
This day should Clarence closely be mewed up
About a prophecy which says that `G'
Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be. Enter George Duke of
Clarence, guarded, and Sir Robert Brackenbury
Dive, thoughts, down to my soul: here Clarence comes.
Brother, good day. What means this armed guard
That waits upon your grace? CLARENCE His majesty,
Tend'ring my person's safety, hath appointed
This conduct to convey me to the Tower.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER Upon what cause? CLARENCE Because my name is George.
RICHARD GLOUCESTER Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours.
He should for that commit your godfathers.
Belike his majesty hath some intent
That you should be new-christened in the Tower.
But what's the matter, Clarence? May I know?
CLARENCE Yea, Richard, when I know - for I protest
As yet I do not. But as I can learn
He hearkens after prophecies and dreams,
And from the cross-row plucks the letter `G'
And says a wizard told him that by `G'
His issue disinherited should be.
And for my name of George begins with ´G´,
It follows in his thought that I am he.
These, as I learn, and suchlike toys as these,
Hath moved his highness to commit me now.

LEAR Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds
about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that
makes these hard-hearts? (To Edgar) You, sir, I entertain
for one of my hundred, only I do not like the fashion
of your garments. You will say they are Persian; but
let them be changed.
KENT Now, good my lord, lie here and rest a while.
LEAR Make no noise, make no noise. Draw the curtains.
So, so. We'll go to supper i' th' morning. [He sleeps]
FOOL And I'll go to bed at noon. Enter the Duke of Gloucester
GLOUCESTER (To Kent) Come hither, friend. Where is the King my master?
KENT Here, sir, but trouble him not; his wits are gone.
GLOUCESTER Good friend, I prithee take him in thy arms.
I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him.
There is a litter ready. Lay him in 't
And drive toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet
Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master.
If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,
With thine and all that offer to defend him,
Stand in assured loss. Take up, take up,
And follow me, that will to some provision
Give thee quick conduct. Come, come away.
Exeunt, [Kent carrying Lear in his arms]

SECTION B

Answer ONE question.

2. 'Renaissance societies were much more sharply divided into distinct social roles and functions than modern societies. Money, dress, education, the entire pattern of living enforced a rigid social identity from which there was little chance of escape' (ANDREW GURR). To what extent are money, dress, and education related in one of Shakespeare's plays?

3. Evaluate the significance of self-fashioning in one of Shakespeare's plays.

4. How much attention should we pay to characters' names in Shakespeare?

5. Consider an occasion when a character refers to the events occurring around him or her as being like a stage play. What effects(s) might this self-referentiality have for a theatre audience?

6. Consider the theme of the disguised ruler in one of Shakespeare plays.

7. 'Shakespeare's sonnets show his mockery as well as his mastery of this poetic form'. Discuss in relation to a sequence of at least twenty sonnets.

8. Using either one play or one narrative poem, discuss Shakespeare's representation of sexual violence against women.

SECTION C

Answer ONE question

9. Consider the importance of silent action with detailed reference to at least two scenes from different plays by Shakespeare.

10. Are Shakespeare's plays primarily verbal works of art? Answer in relation to two or more plays.

11. Discuss the theme of loneliness in two or more Shakespeare works. (You may use a sonnet
12. To what extent are Shakespeare's poems concerned with the dangers of desire? Answer in relation to two or more works (You may use a sonnet sequence as one of the works.)

13. Do those executed in Shakespeare's plays deserve their fate? You should refer to at least two plays.

14. Compare the use of prologues and/or epilogues in two or more Shakespeare plays.

15. Is civil disturbance always represented as a social ill in Shakespeare's plays? You should refer to at least two plays.

Examination Technique This presentation shows you how to approach your GCSE examination in Humanities: what to expect, what the examiner wants from you, what you need to do, and how to make sure you get the best possible marks. Technique. Approach Considerations. Digital Examination of Rectum. Complications. Show All. Technique. Approach Considerations. According to current recommendations, digital rectal examinations should be performed yearly; however, they may be performed more frequently, depending on individual patients' conditions and needs. No special materials are required, other than a finger (with nails trimmed appropriately and any jewelry removed), a rectum, personal protective equipment (gloves), and generous lubrication.