

International Advanced Level English Literature

Unit 4: Shakespeare and Pre-1900 Poetry

Exemplar Scripts and Commentaries

June 2023 Series





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Introduction

- The purpose of this pack is to provide teachers and students with some examples of responses to International Advanced Level English Literature Unit 4: Shakespeare and Pre-1900 Poetry, Section A.
- The responses in this pack were taken from the June 2023 examination series. The question papers and mark schemes can be found on the Pearson website [here](#).
- In this pack you will find a sample of responses, examiner commentaries and marks.
- If you have any enquiries regarding these materials or have any other questions about the course, please contact our English subject advisor on teachingenglish@pearson.com



Section A: Shakespeare

In Section A, unit 4, learners' study one play by Shakespeare, from a choice of four. The plays are *Measure for Measure*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. Learners explore the use of literary and dramatic devices and the shaping of meaning in their chosen text. Teaching and wider reading should address the significance and influence of contextual factors and engage with different interpretations of the chosen text.

In this section learners must answer one essay question from a choice of two on their chosen text. The essay questions give a statement that learners must respond to, taking into consideration relevant contextual factors and different interpretations of their chosen text.

Script 1, Question 5

- Ghosts - diff interpretations, drives whole plot
- Power of the unnatural → Belsey AOB
 - microcosm, imagery of disease
 - madness - soliloquy
- Ambiguity of what is unnatural + unnatural in society
 - women - Smith AOB
 - incest, imagery of prostitution
 - impact of this - Ophelia AOB, suicide
 - link to religion

'Hamlet' almost inherently explores the idea of the unnatural, with much of the play centering around the presence of the Ghost of King Hamlet, and its



intentions. The ~~the~~ existence of the play as a tragedy thus highlights the destructive impact of the unnatural, almost acting as a direct warning to the audience. Furthermore, the play additionally explores ideas of the unnatural surrounding the behaviour of humans, ~~of~~ exploring deviations from societal norms and the 'shameful' impacts of this.

The entirety of the premise of 'Hamlet' ~~to~~ seems to revolve around the existence of the Ghost as a supernatural and unnatural being. The Ghost undeniably is seen to spur much of Hamlet's plot for revenge, including his feeling of an "antic disposition". However, the presence of the Ghost, and particularly its intentions, are arguably made purposefully ambiguous throughout the play. ~~Set fifty years~~ Being written fifty years after the Protestant Reformation,



The outlook of the audience towards the Ghost, ~~would~~ rely and thus the outlook of the audience towards the unnatural, would rely largely on their religious beliefs. The Catholic view of ghosts as spirits of the departed, suggesting that the ghost of

King Hamlet held good intentions in its apparition, would arguably create a greater degree of sympathy towards the presentation of the unnatural. Contrastingly, the Protestant view of ghosts as "unquiet walks of the devil", as outlined by critic Browne, would spur greater rejection of the unnatural. Thus, if the ambiguity of the presentation of the unnatural in the play is reinforced. This idea is further highlighted through the maintained ambiguity of Hamlet's own religious beliefs, ~~as~~ referring to the Ghost ~~but~~ both as "an honest ghost" and "Goblin damned". Arguably, this decision of interpretation is left purposefully up to the audience.



evolving thus evolving a varied reception of the unnatural. As a result, it is indeed suggested that 'the core of Hamlet's fascination lies in its exploration of the unnatural'.

Furthermore, the unnatural is presented as a force with great capability for destruction, reflected through the tragic ending of the play. Hamlet, a character described as holding a "most moral nature" by Goethe, and who ~~is~~ is presented as a thought-out and logical, ruled by reason rather than passion, shown through his hesitation in murdering Claudius when he is "fit and seasoned for the passage", despite having ample opportunity to do so. Hamlet is shown to differ from other Shakespearean tragic heroes in that he is aware of his fatal flaw of his inaction, shown through him holding 200 lines of soliloquy. However, nonetheless, in Hamlet's



plot for revenge for his father ~~and~~
~~it~~ through his "antic disposition";
the lines between Hamlet's true
nature and his feigned madness
blur. While it remains largely ambiguous
whether Hamlet truly succumbs to this
madness, his cruel actions in telling
Ophelia, whom he "once loved" to "get

thou to a nunnery" arguably suggests
that he does. ~~It~~ As a result, the
largely harmful and destructive
power ~~of~~ and influence of the
unnatural, with the Ghost influence,
Hamlet's plan for revenge, is reinforced.
Furthermore, ~~Hamlet~~ ~~for~~ the
unnatural can be said to link
directly to the corruption present
in the Court of Elsinore. The inter-
pretation of the Ghost as a deception
of the devil could arguably explain
the consistent atmosphere of betrayal
and mistrust surrounding the court.
The idea of microcosms and macrocosms
linked with this further emphasise
the destructive impact of the unnatural,
with the idea of "something is



often in the state of Denmark" inferring how this impact directly affects the entirety of Denmark.

This idea of corruption in the court arguably introduces a separate definition of the unnatural in Hamlet, introducing ideas surrounding the

unnatural human behaviour in the context of societal norms. The marriage of Claudius and Queen Gertrude, the king Hamlet's wife, with such ~~des~~ "dexterity" would have been an act viewed as incest at the time, and the description of how "the funeral bawled meats and coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" highlights the unnatural nature of their behaviour. Furthermore, this act of incest introduces the idea of unnatural behaviours surrounding the actions of women. Critic Smith argues Gertrude to be a "sensual, deceitful woman", and



in marrying Claudius, Gertrude can be seen to reflect the Biblical idea of the faithless female – just as Eve allowed herself to be seduced by a smooth-talking serpent, Gertrude allowed herself to be seduced by Claudius. ~~This~~ ~~is~~ The impact of these actions on Hamlet, with them ~~arguably~~ leading

to ~~his losing~~ his losing faith in women altogether, and arguably acting as an explanation for his cruel behaviour towards Ophelia, once again emphasises the harmful capabilities of the unnatural. However, this further heightens the ambiguity surrounding the presentation of the unnatural. In taunting Ophelia and exclaiming "for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them", Hamlet's view of Ophelia acting unnaturally to the standard of a pure and ideal Renaissance woman is made clear, however it can be



show that much of the presentation of unnatural women in the play is due to tainted by Hamlet's own feelings of betrayal, thus contradicting Smith's view of Gertrude as entirely "sensual" and "deceitful." As a result, the ambiguity surrounding the unnatural is reinforced.

To conclude, the unnatural is presented as a largely destructive, though nonetheless ambiguous and open-for-interpretation, force in 'Hamlet'. The existence of the Ghost ties the theme of the unnatural inherently into the play, and the different interpretations of the Ghost's intentions reflect this ambiguity. Furthermore, the corruption of the Elsinore Court and Hamlet's descent into madness highlights the destructive capability of the unnatural. In addition, 'Hamlet' further explores the unnatural in



the context of human behaviour
and societal norms, ~~ceteri~~
centering largely on ideas of
female purity and sexuality.

Examiner comment and mark

The learner presents a critical and evaluative argument with sustained textual examples. They evaluate the effects of literary features employing a sophisticated use of concepts and terminology. The learner exhibits a critical evaluation of the ways meanings are shaped in texts, displaying a sophisticated understanding of the writer's craft.

Evaluation is sophisticated and sustained and there is an appreciation of the significance and influence of contextual factors with sophisticated links between texts and contexts. The learner applies a sustained evaluation of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts. Evaluation is supported by a sophisticated application of alternative interpretations to illuminate the learner's own critical position. One of the main strengths of this answer is its response to the question as being more than simply about the supernatural. The focus on societal unnaturalness adds an effective dimension to the answer, especially when it is resolved into a secure, personal conclusion in the final section.

Level 5, 24 marks



Script 2, Question 4

Selfishness

Historical context - political, economic and social gain in Elizabethan and comedy^{in theory} - laughing at expense of characters

↓
1973 - throwing fruit at Kate

↙
Meta-theatre - those that make
themselves dress up

Shy's own

Selfishness - willing to accept position
clothing in Elizabethan society

↓
Petruchio - wants a worthy wife
'wife it wealthily'

'downy greed on, will you, will you,
I will marry you'

money and being looked up to
for power over women

Why Shakespeare portraying this?
- 1978 and 2008



degradation of women selfishness
of men - final speech

how Kate is not selfish but
giving up to society

Or is she? feminism

- viewed as selfish for not
putting P first

issue of Bianca

Selfishness of other - marrying for
money

'like animals, bartered to the highest
bidder' - Michael Bugdenov

George B Shaw 'Lord of creation
nord!!
'extremely uncomfortable'

'Kate's final speech is a
statement of contemporary ~~theatre~~ doctrine,
not fantasy and almost wholly
David sustained irony

End of Plan



'The Taming of the Shrew' by William Shakespeare portrays numerous selfish characters. By considering contextual factors of the time period I will explore how Shakespeare presents selfishness in the 'Taming of the Shrew'.

'The Taming of the Shrew' was written in the 1500s at a time when selfish ambition arose from the desire of political, social and economic gain. The Elizabethan era put great value on social status to the extent that ~~the~~ Queen Elizabeth the First issued a proclamation on 'Excess of Apparel' that determined what clothes ~~even~~ and colours even person could wear depending on their social status. The Queen ~~valued the~~ knew the importance of dressing correctly to ensure others thought well of you. She went on numerous tours throughout England to keep up a good appearance which emphasises the importance of 'self' and the gain made through things like clothing. The ~~2014~~ 2014 showed how clothing is changeable and therefore not a representation of character by dressing all the women in modern clothing and all the men in period costumes.



Shakespeare uses clothing in 'The Taming of the Shrew' to promote how people can feel good about themselves through clothing but this can only be as deep as the clothing, not the character. This is particularly prominent because of how Christopher Sly is dressed as a nobleman and because of his clothes is brought to believe that he is one. Shakespeare emphasises that nobility is not always found in character but instead ~~is~~ it is something that can be put on. Therefore, he is arguably ~~emp~~ illustrating how pathetic the selfish ideals of the Elizabethan Society are. Furthermore, his use of a play within a play, or meta-theatre, enhances the disrespectful undertones of the comedy. In Sly ~~and~~ the players depicting the scene, the audience observes that they too are laughing at a play which ~~actually~~ has many uncomfortable undertones. ~~Particularly~~, the first audiences who saw the play, who lived in a time when women were treated as less, would have selfishly laughed instead of being compassionate. C. 19th Century critic George B. Shaw admits to the play making



him feel 'extremely uncomfortable.' Also, many productions of the play have kept Sly on the stage throughout, further enhancing his role.

~~This~~ The comedic element of the play which ~~is~~ title Katherine a 'shrew' and takes her through degradation and abuse could have been much more relevant at the time it was written than it is now. The feminist movement has grown to the extent that Michael Billington says the play is 'totally offensive to our age and society.' In the Elizabethan Era women were expected to marry and had no prospects other than the marriage that their father would arrange for them. Whereupon, they would then become their husband's property. ~~For example, in the~~ Baptista is incredibly selfish in his motives for marrying off his daughters. Not only does he insist that Kate be married before Bianca, totally ignoring Bianca's happiness but he cares for the money in the marriage, not the presence of love. ~~He~~ ~~He~~ He agrees on Kate's dowry



with Petruchio without her important which leads Petruchio to tell Kate 'Your dowry's greed on, will you, will you, I will marry you.' ~~the~~ Baptista is also more focused on whether Lucentio has a guarantee of money than anything else. Baptista is selfish with ~~marriage~~ his daughter's marriages which emphasises the lack of choice women had. It also illustrates the importance of social standing because they are two good families making an alliance. Arguably, Lucentio ~~and~~ is also selfish in love because he pays someone to pretend to be his father without thinking about the consequences.

Furthermore, the play emphasises that the role of women, once married, is to agree and be subservient to their husband in everything. Kate's character is seen as selfish when she is not happy to do this. ~~because she is not~~ ~~she~~ ~~is~~ Her transformation is then seen as unselfish as she becomes what society wants her to be. ~~Shakespeare particularly~~ The 1973 production emphasised the lack of sympathy for Kate ~~and~~ ~~enhanced the~~ by getting the audience



his attempt to mould Kate into a 'conformable Kate' as other 'household Kates' is purely from his own selfish desire to have an easy, manipulable wife. Arguably, he achieves this ~~is~~ through Kate's final speech when she says that he is her 'lord,' ~~my~~ ~~not~~ 'master' and 'governor.' Further saying that the love duty owed to a prince is owed to ~~the~~ ^a husband. David Daniell says that Kate's final speech is 'a statement of contemporary doctrine, more fantasy and almost unbelievable sustained irony.' Therefore, arguably Shakespeare did not mean for the speech to be a win for Petruchio but instead ~~a~~ ~~the~~ either a sarcastic and cynical speech from Kate, pointing to her witty character or a tragic breaking of spirit. The 1978 and 2008 productions particularly portrayed this speech as lifeless as the 2nd wave of feminism ~~sees~~ ^{was} such taking root in the 70s. Another production begins the speech sincere but then as Kate notices that it is for a bet, she becomes fed. In this one, Petruchio is left ~~idled~~ ^{idle} on the stage. Although, Petruchio's



actions may have been more respected in the Elizabethan era, Shakespeare could well be illustrating that Petruchio's selfish ambition ~~is~~ has lost him the love of Kate who, although not society's idea of a woman, is a strong character, compatible with Petruchio.

In conclusion, there is much selfish greed due to desire for money and status but ~~is~~ there is also a selfish attitude ~~is~~ in the depiction of the traditional gender roles and the audience's reaction to this.

Examiner comment and mark

The learner constructs a controlled argument with fluently embedded examples, using concepts and terminology in a discriminating manner. They largely control structures with precise, cohesive transitions and carefully chosen language. There is a discriminating understanding of how meanings are shaped in texts. The analysis is controlled, with some grasp of the nuances and subtleties of the writer's craft.

The learner provides a discriminating analysis of the significance and influence of contextual factors though the first part of the response. Interesting though it is, the analysis is not always relevant. Nonetheless, detailed links between texts and contexts are evident. A developed exploration of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts is presented. The discussion is controlled and offers an integrated exploration of different interpretations in development of the learner's own critical position. This answer has a number of strengths. The detail of its planning signals engagement and thought and though there are some diffuse strands, it improves as it goes along, ultimately resolving itself into a sustained, coherent and credible piece of work.

Level 4, 20 marks



Script 3, Question 7

"King Lear" is widely regarded as Shakespeare's most intense, profound and powerful tragedy. Indeed, it raises questions about human nature, suffering, morality and life's significance. It can be noticed from the ending alone that it might be the most violent tragedy as well, as everyone ends up passing away. Although the violence does not have to be physical.

The first act of violence that we, the readers can observe in the play, is Lear's behaviour towards Cordelia in the very first act of the text; "Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see that face of hers again. Therefore be gone without our grace, our love, our pension." Despite being the only one of his children that truly loved him, Lear was too blinded by his madness to see what he was doing. The exile of Cordelia may be the very thing that had started his downfall, not only as King but simply as Lear. Acts of emotional violence recur very often throughout the play, which also shows us readers the true feelings of the characters, towards each other. Regan and Goneril present their true selves only after they had received their part of the land from the king. They begin to manipulate, lie and abuse Lear, as he served no purpose for them anymore. "You should be ruled and led" "She hath abated me of half my train, looked black upon me, struck me with her tongue most serpent-like upon the very heart". By comparing Goneril to a serpent the readers can see that Lear realizes that she lies and abuses him and turns to Regan for help. However,



Regan is no better than the symbol of manipulation, cunningness and violence.

Yet another character to experience violence in the play would be Gloucester. A character that remained loyal no matter the circumstances, no matter the suffering he had to endure. First he had to carry the ~~extra~~ embarrassment of being exiled, simply for speaking up for justice. Later, ~~he~~ he was blinded by the Duke of Cornwall for false accusations. He attempted to commit suicide, however, his eldest son Edgar saved him by tricking him that he survived a really ^{big} ~~tight~~ fall, when really he fell off a ledge. In this case we, the readers, know that the cause of most of his suffering is Edmund, his illegitimate son that he decided to trust instead of his eldest. By doing this he sent himself on this path of pain and suffering, which was ended by Edgar. Through his soliloquies, we know that Edmund was deeply wounded by the fact that he was illegitimate, and hated the fact that he felt that he was "less" because of it. Therefore Edmund became the reason for many of the characters' pain; killing Cordelia and Lear, ~~as~~ being the cause of Gloucester's and Regan's death, etc. ~~unwillingly Edgar~~ The only way he was stopped was with another act of violence from ~~to~~ Edgar.

"He ~~at~~ took vengeance from my wife and me to hang Cordelia in the prison, and to lay the blame upon her own despair, that ~~as~~ he laid himself". Violence is ~~as~~ a recurring theme in this play, happening wherever you look, and by killing off even the "good" characters, Shakespeare presents Hamartia, ~~not~~



which proved to be too grim for some of the audience in the 19th century, causing them to change the ending. The deaths of "good" and "bad" characters cause the readers to be confused with the message presented in the play. Since no matter what they did, they ended up dying. Even Cordelia, a character often compared to an angel, who had never done anything wrong. Furthermore, much of the violence in the play can be connected to the ~~good~~ characters being gullible and trusting the wrong person, however, the blood was still shed.

Examiner comment and mark

The learner offers a clear response using relevant textual examples. They make relevant use of terminology and concepts. There is a logical, clear structure with few errors and lapses in expression. The answer demonstrates some knowledge of how meanings are shaped in texts, with consistent analysis but this is often at a surface level and the answer is ultimately quite narrative. There is some understanding of the writer's craft but it does not often become particularly technical or insightful. There is little real sense of the significance and influence of contextual factors and very few relevant links between texts and contexts are offered. By responding to the terms of the task, the learner offers a clear understanding of different interpretations and alternative readings of texts but this is not supported by either critical reference or any meaningful sense of the play's performance history.

Level 3, 12 marks

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