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# A-level ENGLISH LITERATURE B 7717/1A

Paper 1A Literary genres: Aspects of tragedy

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Mark scheme

June 2025

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Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from [aqa.org.uk](https://www.aqa.org.uk)

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## Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

### Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly level 3 with a small amount of level 4 material it would be placed in level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the level 4 content.

### Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

## Information for examiners marking Aspects of tragedy: closed book

Welcome to this mark scheme which is designed to help you deliver fair and accurate assessment. Please read all sections carefully and ensure that you follow the requirements that they contain.

### The significance of closed book

Examiners must understand that in marking a closed book exam there are examining implications. Students do not have their texts in front of them, so while it is expected that they will use quotations, it is also legitimate to use close textual references. They will have had to memorise quotations so there may be some errors which should not be over penalised. Detailed discussions of particular sections of texts are less likely here than in open book exams. Instead, students may range broadly across their texts as they construct their arguments.

There are specific issues for AO2 – how meanings are shaped in texts. Students will not have their texts in front of them, so although they will be able to make specific references to structural and organisational issues, comments on other methods may be less specific.

### Arriving at Marks

1. All questions are framed to address all the Assessment Objectives (AOs). Answers are marked holistically. Examiners need to read the whole answer taking into account its strengths and weaknesses and then place it in the appropriate band.
2. Examiners should avoid making early snap judgements before the whole answer has been read. Some students begin tentatively but go on to make relevant points.
3. Examiners should be prepared to use the full mark range in order to discriminate and not 'bunch' scripts in the middle for safety.
4. Examiners should mark positively. Although the possible content of the mark scheme provides some indicators for what students are likely to write about, examiners should be willing to reward what is actually there – **provided of course, that it is relevant to the question being asked.**
5. Examiners should remember that there are no right answers. Students' views which are relevant, well-argued and supported by appropriate textual evidence must receive credit whether the examiner agrees with the views or not. It is important to remain open to a student's ideas which could be unusual or unorthodox.
6. Examiners should remember that length and quality are not synonymous. Some brief answers may be relevant and concise. Equally, long answers may be diffuse and repetitive.
7. If answers are short or incomplete, examiners can only reward what is there and assess accordingly. Some further credit can be given to answers finished in note form.

**Using the Mark Bands**

8. When placing answers in mark bands, examiners need to look closely at the descriptors and the detailed generic mark bands on pages 9–11. The key words for the bands are important and are printed below.

| MARK BAND DESCRIPTORS |                                                               |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Band 5 (21–25)        | perceptive/assured                                            |
| Band 4 (16–20)        | coherent/thorough                                             |
| Band 3 (11–15)        | straightforward/relevant                                      |
| Band 2 (6–10)         | simple/generalised                                            |
| Band 1 (1–5)          | largely irrelevant, largely misunderstood, largely inaccurate |

9. Answers placed at the top of the band will securely address the descriptors; answers at the lower end of the band will securely address the descriptors below and begin to show the qualities of the band into which you are placing them. Careful judgements need to be made about marks in the middle of the range; here it is likely that the key descriptors will be more intermittent but still clearly evident.
10. There will be occasions when an answer addresses descriptors in different bands; in such cases, the ‘best-fit’ model applies. Here examiners will need to exercise a different kind of judgement, looking to see where the answer can be most fairly and appropriately placed in terms of its quality against the descriptors.
11. Examiners must remember that the mark bands are not equivalent to grades: grades are decided by the awarding committee at the end of each session.

**Advice about marking each section****Section A**

12. Examiners need to bear in mind the following key points when marking extract based questions:
- does the student have an overview of the extract?
  - has the student written about dramatic method?
  - has the student seen the significance of the extract in relation to the overall tragedy?
  - has the student quoted from the extract to support ideas?
  - the student’s AO1 competence.

In the case of a significant omission to an answer the examiner should not give a mark higher than Band 4.

## **Section B**

13. Examiners need to bear in mind the following key points when marking questions based on single texts:

- has the student engaged in a debate or constructed an argument in line with the question?
- has the student referred to different parts of the play to support their views?
- has the student referred to Shakespeare's dramatic method?
- the student's AO1 competence.

In the case of a significant omission to an answer the examiner should not give a mark higher than Band 4.

## **Section C**

14. Examiners need to bear in mind the following key points when marking questions connecting two texts:

- has the student focused on the aspect of tragedy set up in the question and referred to two texts?
- has the student engaged in a debate or constructed an argument around the two texts in line with the question?
- has the student commented on the writers' authorial methods in the two texts?
- has the student adhered to the rubric – one drama text and one other, with one of the texts being pre-1900?
- has the student given substantial coverage of two texts?
- the student's AO1 competence.

In the case of a significant omission to an answer the examiner should not give a mark higher than Band 4.

## **Annotation**

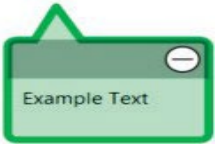
15. Examiners should remember that annotation is directed solely to senior examiners.

16. In addition to giving a mark, examiners should write a brief summative comment indicating how the mark has been arrived at. These comments are likely to mirror the appropriate mark band descriptors but comments must not be mechanical. Examiners need to describe student performance.

17. The most important annotation you will use elsewhere is the tick. This will signal positive achievement in relation to the question. Ticks should be placed in the body of an answer where apt points are made. Further ticks should be given for development of points and support. Strong answers will have more ticks than weaker responses. If points are partially made the bracketed tick can be used.

18. Apart from making a summative comment in a comment box, you could use the comment box elsewhere in your marking if you need to explain your thinking to a senior marker. However, in most cases the annotation stamps will be sufficient to explain your ticks or the absence of them.

The following annotation is available for use on e-Marker 2:

| Annotation Name               | Toolbar Image                                                                       | Details                                                                                                           | Examples of Use on Script                                                             | Y/N |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Annotation Type: Stamp</b> |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                       |     |
| Correct                       |    | Toolbar Tooltip: Correct                                                                                          |    | Y   |
| Seen                          |    | Toolbar Tooltip: Seen                                                                                             |    | Y   |
| NotRelevant                   |    | Toolbar Tooltip: Not Relevant                                                                                     |    | Y   |
| Red Line                      |    | <br>Toolbar Tooltip: Red Line    |    | Y   |
| Green Empty Comment           |    | Toolbar Tooltip: Green Empty Comment No Default Text - text shown in screenshot was typed into annotation by user |    | Y   |
| AssessObjective1              |  | Toolbar Tooltip: Assessment Objective 1                                                                           |  | Y   |
| Repetition                    |  | Toolbar Tooltip: Repetition                                                                                       |   | Y   |
| Vague                         |  | Toolbar Tooltip: Vague                                                                                            |   | Y   |
| Development                   |  | Toolbar Tooltip: Development                                                                                      |   | Y   |
| SomethingHere                 |  | Toolbar Tooltip: Something here                                                                                   |   | Y   |
| Unfocused                     |  | Toolbar Tooltip: Unfocused                                                                                        |   | Y   |
| UnclearExpression             |  | Toolbar Tooltip: Unclear expression                                                                               |   | Y   |
| LackOfClarity                 |  | Toolbar Tooltip: Lack of Clarity                                                                                  |  | Y   |
| FactualInaccuracy             |  | Toolbar Tooltip: Factual Inaccuracy                                                                               |  | Y   |
| PartiallyMadePoint            |  | Toolbar Tooltip: Partially made point                                                                             |  | Y   |
| Text                          |  | Toolbar Tooltip: Needing textual support                                                                          |  | Y   |

19. Please remember that scripts can go back to students, so although your audience is a senior examiner, you must express yourself temperately when writing in the comment boxes.

### **The assessment objectives and their significance**

20. All questions are framed to test AOs 5, 4, 3 and 2, so if students answer the question, then they will be addressing the AOs. In marking questions, however, examiners must also take account of AO1.

Reminder: The AOs are as follows:

**AO5** Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

**AO4** Explore connections across literary texts.

**AO3** Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.

**AO2** Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts.

**AO1** Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression.

| Mark                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | AO  | Typical features                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | How to arrive at mark                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Band 5<br/><b>Perceptive/Assured 21–25 marks</b></p> <p>‘<b>Perception</b>’ is demonstrated when students are showing the depth of their understanding and responding sensitively to the texts and task.</p> <p>‘<b>Assuredness</b>’ is shown when students write with confidence and conviction.</p>                                    | AO5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>perceptive and confident engagement with the debate set up in the task</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                   | <p>This band is characterised by <b>perceptive</b> and <b>assured</b> work which shows confidence, sharpness of mind and sophistication in relation to the task.</p> <p>At the top of the band students are consistently <b>assured</b> and will demonstrate sensitivity and <b>perception</b> across all five assessment objectives in the course of their response.</p> <p>At the bottom of the band there will be coherence and accuracy with some <b>perception</b> but with less consistency and evenness.</p>                                    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | AO4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>perceptive exploration of connections across literary texts arising out of generic study</li> </ul>                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | AO3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>perceptive understanding of the significance of relevant contexts in relation to the task</li> <li>assuredness in the connection between those contexts and the genre studied</li> </ul>                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | AO2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>perceptive understanding of authorial methods in relation to the task</li> <li>assured engagement with how meanings are shaped by the methods used</li> </ul>                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | AO1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>perceptive, assured and sophisticated argument in relation to the task</li> <li>assured use of literary critical concepts and terminology; mature and impressive expression</li> </ul>                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>Band 4<br/><b>Coherent/Thorough 16–20 marks</b></p> <p>‘<b>Coherence</b>’ is shown when students are logical and consistent in their arguments in relation to the task.</p> <p>They hold their ideas together in an intelligible way.</p> <p>‘<b>Thoroughness</b>’ is shown when students write carefully, precisely and accurately.</p> | AO5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>thorough engagement with the debate set up in the task</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                   | <p>This band is characterised by <b>coherent</b> and <b>thorough</b> work where ideas are linked together in a focused and purposeful way in relation to the task.</p> <p>At the top of the band students will demonstrate a fully <b>coherent</b> and <b>thorough</b> argument across all five assessment objectives in the course of their response.</p> <p>At the bottom of the band ideas will be discussed in a shaped, relevant and purposeful way with a clear sense of direction, with one or two lapses in <b>coherence</b> and accuracy.</p> |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | AO4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>logical and consistent exploration of connections across literary texts arising out of generic study</li> </ul>                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | AO3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>thorough understanding of the significance of relevant contexts in relation to the task</li> <li>coherence in the connection between those contexts and the genre studied</li> </ul>                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | AO2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>thorough understanding of authorial methods in relation to the task</li> <li>thorough engagement with how meanings are shaped by the methods used</li> </ul>                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | AO1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>logical, thorough and coherent argument in relation to the task where ideas are debated in depth</li> <li>appropriate use of literary critical concepts and terminology; precise and accurate expression</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Band 3<br/><b>Straightforward/ Relevant</b><br/><b>11–15 marks</b></p> <p><b>‘Straightforward’</b> work is shown when students make their ideas in relation to the task clearly known.</p> <p><b>‘Relevant’</b> work is shown when students are focused on the task and use detail in an appropriate and supportive way.</p> | AO5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>straightforward engagement with the debate set up in the task</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                            | <p>This band is characterised by <b>straightforward</b> and <b>relevant</b> work where the student’s response to the task is clear and intelligible.</p> <p>At the top of the band students will demonstrate consistent <b>straightforward</b> understanding in the course of their argument. Ideas will be developed <b>relevantly</b>.</p> <p>At the bottom of the band there will be flashes of <b>relevant</b> understanding with evidence of <b>straightforward</b> thinking.</p> |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | AO4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explores connections across literary texts arising out of generic study in a straightforward way</li> </ul>                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | AO3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>straightforward understanding of the significance of relevant contexts in relation to the task</li> <li>relevant connections between those contexts and the genre studied</li> </ul>                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | AO2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>straightforward understanding of authorial methods in relation to the task</li> <li>relevant engagement with how meanings are shaped by the methods used</li> </ul>                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | AO1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sensibly ordered ideas in a relevant argument in relation to the task</li> <li>some use of literary critical concepts and terminology which are mainly appropriate; straightforward and clear expression</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>Band 2<br/><b>Simple/Generalised 6–10 marks</b></p> <p><b>‘Simple’</b> work is shown when students write in an unelaborated and basic way in relation to the task.</p> <p><b>‘Generalised’</b> work is shown when students write without regard to particular details.</p>                                                   | AO5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>simple and generalised response to the debate set up in the task</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                         | <p>This band is characterised by <b>simple</b> and <b>generalised</b> work which is mainly linked to the task.</p> <p>At the top of the band students will demonstrate a basic <b>generalised</b> understanding in the course of their answer. Ideas will be developed in a <b>simple</b> way.</p> <p>At the bottom of the band there will be inconsistency, but the beginnings of a <b>simple</b> and <b>generalised</b> understanding.</p>                                           |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | AO4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>simple exploration of connections across literary texts arising out of generic study</li> </ul>                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | AO3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>simple understanding of the significance of relevant contexts in relation to the task</li> <li>generalised connections between those contexts and the genre studied</li> </ul>                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | AO2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>simple understanding of authorial methods in relation to the task</li> <li>generalised engagement with how meanings are shaped by the methods used</li> </ul>                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | AO1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a simple structure to the argument which may not be consistent but which does relate to the task</li> <li>generalised use of literary critical concepts and terminology; simple expression</li> </ul>               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Band 1<br/><b>Largely irrelevant/largely misunderstood/largely inaccurate</b><br/><b>1–5 marks</b></p> <p><b>‘Largely irrelevant’</b> work is shown when students write in an unclear way with only occasional reference to what is required by the question.</p> <p><b>‘Largely misunderstood’</b> and <b>‘largely inaccurate’</b> work is shown when knowledge of the text is insecure, hazy and often wrong.</p> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some vague points in relation to the task and some ideas about task and text(s)</li> <li>• the writing is likely to be unclear and incorrect; if it is accurate the content will be irrelevant</li> <li>• little sense of the AOs in relation to the task; little sense of how meanings are shaped; little sense of any relevant contexts; little sense of any connection arising out of generic study; little sense of an argument in relation to the task</li> </ul> | <p>This band is characterised by work which is <b>largely irrelevant</b> and <b>largely misunderstood</b> and <b>largely inaccurate</b>, and so unlikely to be addressing the AOs in a relevant way.</p> <p>At the top of the band students will mention some unconnected points in relation to the task during the course of their writing. The writing is likely to lack clarity.</p> <p>At the bottom of the band there will be no connection with the task; the writing will be hard to follow and <b>irrelevant</b>.</p> |
| <p><b>0 marks</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |  | <p>No marks for response when nothing is written or where response has no connection to the text(s) or task.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

0 1

***Othello* – William Shakespeare**

Read the extract below and then answer the question.

Explore the significance of this extract in relation to the tragedy of the play as a whole.

Remember to include in your answer relevant analysis of Shakespeare's dramatic methods.

**[25 marks]**

**Some possible content** is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed, but as 'significance' relates to contextual, structural, linguistic and interpretative issues, some ideas will inevitably address more than one AO. In their answer students should refer to the significance that can be seen in the extract and how some of this significance may pertain to the tragedy of the play as a whole.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied *Othello* through the lens of **tragedy**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

The students are given an extract so when working on that they should quote directly to support their ideas. This is a **closed book** exam, so while it is expected that students will use quotations when writing about other parts of the play, it is also legitimate to make more general reference.

Please refer to pages 4–8.

**AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations**

With respect to the interpretative significances that can be found, there will be a variety of interpretations here in relation to readers and audiences. Some students might comment on the choices made by directors.

Some possible ideas:

- the tragic trajectory of the extract from Emilia's attempt to console Desdemona after the exit of Othello, Lodovico and the attendants, to Desdemona's dazed and desperate desire to do as Othello has instructed in dismissing Emilia; Desdemona's avowal of loyalty and love for Othello, her wanting her wedding sheets put on her bed, the turning of Desdemona's thoughts to those of death, her singing the song of her mother's maid, Emilia's attempts to cut through the sadness with some practical normality, Desdemona's fear of what is to come, her interweaving of her own fate with that of Barbary leading to her weeping
- contextualisation – before this extract: Desdemona's desperate appeal to Iago to tell her how to win back the favour of Othello after he strikes her in front of Lodovico, Iago's reassurance that all will be well, Iago's appeasing the fractious Roderigo and the plot to kill Cassio, Othello's talking to Lodovico about affairs of state and his instruction to Desdemona to go to bed and to dismiss Emilia; after the extract: Desdemona's and Emilia's discussion of wives, husbands and unfaithfulness, Desdemona's protestation that she could not be unfaithful contrasting with Emilia's more cynical views and assertions that women have feelings just like men
- Desdemona as a victim of Othello's cruelty, brutality and coercive behaviour – here and elsewhere
- her being unable to comprehend what is happening to her
- her being utterly loyal to Othello and sincere in the expression of her love
- her sadness, loss of agency, confusion and grief in contrast to her vivacity and courage in the first Act
- her suffering

- her singing the tragic song of Barbary which links her to her childhood
- the innocence of Desdemona
- her sympathy for 'poor Barbary'
- the helplessness of Emilia who is unable to do anything to ease Desdemona's suffering
- Emilia's confusion, her possible misreading of the situation, saying that Othello is now 'gentler' but also her alarm that Othello has said she must be dismissed
- Emilia's attempt to offer friendship
- the victim status of Desdemona, Barbary and Emilia who are all made wretched by the behaviours of the men they love
- the foreshadowing of and preparations for Desdemona's death
- the aspect of forsaken love
- the parallels in the stories told of Desdemona's mother's maid and the Egyptian charmer who gave the handkerchief to Othello's mother
- the cruelty of Othello who has brought Desdemona to this point
- the villainy of Iago whose work this is
- etc.

#### **AO4 Explore connections across literary texts**

With respect to significance of connections with the tragic genre students might focus on:

- the breakdown of relationships as seen in Desdemona's suffering at the hands of a violent husband whose actions she does not understand
- misery and suffering as seen in Desdemona's agitation and weeping
- tragic villainy as seen in the successful workings of Iago's plot
- etc.

#### **AO3 Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received**

With respect to significance of contexts students might focus on:

- the gender context in relation to how women are treated by the men who have power over them
- the moral context in relation to the mental torture that is being inflicted on Desdemona
- the marriage context in relation to Desdemona's desire to obey and continue to love her husband
- the domestic context as seen in the simple loving relationship between Desdemona and her maid
- etc.

#### **AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts**

With respect to significance of dramatic method students might focus on:

- the exit of Othello which sets up Desdemona's sadness and leaves her and Emilia alone on stage
- the subdued mood of the extract as seen in Desdemona's sadness and passive acceptance of her fate
- the dialogue between Desdemona and Emilia which is spiritless
- Desdemona's weeping on stage
- Desdemona's singing of the song of Barbary
- its being broken up by snippets of speech related to her own story which she interweaves with Barbary's tragic story
- the language associated with death
- the language associated with the body (head, lip, bosom, eyes)

- the tone of resignation in some of the utterances of both Desdemona and Emilia ('All's one', 'Tis neither here nor there')
- the use of contrast in the pained words of Desdemona and the consolatory words of Emilia
- etc.

Given that this is a **closed book** exam, references to other parts of the play may be more generalised than those from the passage.

**AO1 Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression**

With respect to competence in writing focus needs to be on the:

- quality of argument
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy.

**Accept any valid discussion of interpretations, any valid discussion of contexts and any valid discussion of dramatic methods which are grounded in the passage and which relate to the play as a whole.**

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**King Lear – William Shakespeare**

Read the extract below and then answer the question.

Explore the significance of this extract in relation to the tragedy of the play as a whole.

Remember to include in your answer relevant analysis of Shakespeare's dramatic methods.

**[25 marks]**

**Some possible content** is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed, but as 'significance' relates to contextual, structural, linguistic and interpretative issues, some ideas will inevitably address more than one AO. In their answer students should refer to the significance that can be seen in the extract and how some of this significance may pertain to the tragedy of the play as a whole.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied *King Lear* through the lens of **tragedy**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

The students are given an extract so when working on that they should quote directly to support their ideas. This is a **closed book** exam, so while it is expected that students will use quotations when writing about other parts of the play, it is also legitimate to make more general reference.

Please refer to pages 4–8.

**AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations**

With respect to the interpretative significances that can be found, there will be a variety of interpretations here in relation to readers and audiences. Some students might comment on the choices made by directors.

Some possible ideas:

- the tragic trajectory of the extract: from Lear's angry outburst to Gonerill where he defends his knights, through to his recognition that Cordelia's fault was small in comparison, to a confession of his folly where he strikes his own head; Albany's entrance where he seems surprised – and guiltless – of what has happened, but which stirs Lear to curse Gonerill in vitriolic terms, wishing her to be either childless or to have a thankless child, his exit after this; Albany's disbelief and Gonerill's dismissal of his concern; Lear's re-entry having discovered that fifty of his followers have already been dismissed; his further angry attack on Gonerill who he admits has made him cry, his cursing her
- contextualisation – before this extract the Fool has been jesting with Lear about Lear's folly in dividing the kingdom; Gonerill has entered and raged at Lear about the behaviour of the Fool and his knights; Lear has reacted badly and a fierce argument has ensued; Lear has been emotional and erratic, Gonerill cool and incisive in her criticism of his knights and himself; he has ordered his men to saddle his horses as he intends to leave; Albany enters and tells him to be patient; his plea has no effect; after the extract Lear curses Gonerill further and says he will go to Regan whom he thinks will 'flay' Gonerill's wolfish visage; Gonerill and Albany speak, with Albany expressing sorrow and asking Gonerill to show restraint; she ignores him and consults with Oswald, disparaging Albany's milky gentleness
- Lear as the fallen tragic hero who is rapidly losing his power
- his fierce defence of his knights whom he says are men of choice and rarest parts
- his acknowledgement of the wrong he has done to Cordelia

- his, in effect, cursing his own bloodline
- his self abuse – striking his head
- Lear's anger and lack of self control
- his vicious and performative curse of Gonerill
- the sustained violence of his curse on Gonerill's womanhood
- the cruelty of what he says to his daughter
- his weeping on stage in temper, hurt and shock
- his dominant stage presence – he speaks most of the lines
- Gonerill's initial silence giving directors many opportunities for how this scene is played (Is she shocked? Goading? Hurt? Disbelieving? Sneering? Self-righteous? A victim or a villain?)
- the visual confrontation between father and daughter as family relationships fall apart
- Gonerill's defiance and resilience after Lear's exit
- her contemptuous dismissal of her husband who is amazed by the altercation
- Albany's conciliatory nature
- Albany's respect towards Lear (he calls him 'my lord' and 'sir')
- the potential for Albany to intervene in a positive way
- his weakness and ineffectiveness
- the emotional power of the scene which is painful to watch
- the change in mood and situation from the beginning to end of the extract as the tragedy develops
- etc.

#### **AO4 Explore connections across literary texts**

With respect to significance of connections with the tragic genre students might focus on:

- the fall of the tragic hero as seen in Lear's losing power to his daughter
- misery and suffering as seen in Lear's anger and weeping
- conflict as seen in Lear's angry confrontation with Gonerill
- etc.

#### **AO3 Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received**

With respect to significance of contexts students might focus on:

- the context of power as seen in the removal of Lear's knights and his feeling emasculated
- the psychological context in relation to Lear's mental torment
- the gender context as seen in the vicious attack by Lear on Gonerill as a woman, the potential mother of children
- etc.

#### **AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts**

With respect to significance of dramatic method students might focus on:

- the direct confrontation on stage of the defiant Gonerill and the enraged Lear
- the visual effect on Gonerill of Lear's curse on her ability to produce children
- Lear's changes of emotion, subject matter and mood
- his dramatic self abuse as he strikes his head in front of Kent and his knights
- his evocation of Nature to suspend her purpose
- the violence of his language as he curses his daughter ('convey sterility', 'child of spleen', 'thwart disnatured torment', 'fret channels', 'Blasts and fogs upon thee')
- the use of exclamations and questions
- Lear's weeping on stage and his drawing attention to it

- the busy stage with the entrances and exits
- the contrast between Gonerill and Albany
- the ways the characters address each other (Lear calls Gonerill ‘detested kite’, ‘this creature’; Lear calls Albany ‘my lord’)
- the register of bodily parts (‘frame’, ‘womb’, ‘organs’, ‘wrinkles’, ‘brow’)
- the symbolic value of the knights in relation to Lear’s power and manhood
- etc.

Given that this is a **closed book** exam, references to other parts of the play may be more generalised than those from the passage.

**AO1 Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression**

With respect to competence in writing focus needs to be on the:

- quality of argument
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy.

**Accept any valid discussion of interpretations, any valid discussion of contexts and any valid discussion of dramatic methods which are grounded in the passage and which relate to the play as a whole.**

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**Othello – William Shakespeare**

‘Othello is presented as having no moderation: he loves and hates with the full force of his emotions.’

To what extent do you agree with this view?

Remember to include in your answer relevant comment on Shakespeare’s dramatic methods.

**[25 marks]**

**Some possible content** is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed. Some ideas will inevitably address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied *Othello* through the lens of **tragedy**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

This is a **closed book** exam, so while it is expected that students will use quotations when writing about the play, it is also legitimate to make more general reference.

Please refer to pages 4–8.

**AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations**

With respect to meanings and interpretations, students may choose to look at all sides of the debate or just one. It is the quality of the student’s response that matters.

Some students might consider:

- the intensity of Othello’s love for Desdemona which overwhelms him
- his stating to Iago in Act 1:2 that he fetches his life and being from men of royal siege and that although he would not have confined his ‘unhouséd free condition for the seas’ worth’, he would for the love he feels for Desdemona
- his being smitten by her when he was invited to Brabantio’s house, his being captured by her adoration of him
- his preparedness to speak of the depth of his love before the Duke and the Senate
- his telling his intimate tale of love to the powers of state
- his confidence in sending for Desdemona to speak publicly of their love
- his willingness to allow her to go with him to Cyprus
- the intensity of his feelings when he says that his love for his wife will not prevent him doing his duty to the state
- his desire to perform his duty to the state ‘with all [his] heart’
- his staking his ‘life upon her faith’ when Brabantio suggests she might deceive him
- the intensity of his feelings when he is reunited with Desdemona in Cyprus, his saying that his feelings stop his heart beating (‘I cannot speak enough of this content; It stops me here; it is too much of joy’)
- the extravagance and intensity of his language
- his confession that his soul is so absolutely contented that there is no other comfort
- his anger after the drunken brawl when he admits that his blood is beginning to rule his ‘safer guides’
- his statement to Desdemona after the dismissal of Cassio and her begging him to reconsider that he loves her and when he loves her not, ‘Chaos is come again’

- his loss of identity after Iago persuades him that Desdemona is unfaithful, his saying farewell to his former existence, 'Farewell the tranquil mind... Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone'
- his anger when Iago tells him of his dream 'I'll tear her all to pieces'
- his calling on black vengeance and claiming that he will never change his course of hatred
- his appalling treatment of Desdemona showing his intense hatred
- his determination to kill her
- the collapse of his whole world
- the intensity in his feeling when he believes he is killing her to save other men
- his overwhelming desire to save her soul as he begs her to confess
- his hatred of Iago when he learns the truth as he tries to kill him
- his self-hatred as he kills himself
- etc.

Some students might consider:

- that Othello has moderation in his judgements as a General
- that he is respected by the Venetian authorities for his calm and control
- that Othello's feelings are moderated when he is first seen, that he is controlled when Iago tries to stoke his anger
- his calm and measured behaviour and voice when Brabantio's men come to arrest him
- his calm and controlled demeanour in front of the Duke and Senate
- his moderated feelings when the Duke tells him that he must go straightaway to Cyprus and he asks that Desdemona be cared for by her father
- his measured speech when he asks the Duke to listen to Desdemona and her wishes
- his measured reaction after Cassio's drunken brawl when Othello asks questions and asks Iago 'who began it' before reacting
- that he loves Cassio but has moderation in his treatment of him
- his control when Iago first tries to poison his thoughts when he tries to reason with himself and concludes 'If she be false... then heaven mocks itself'
- his moderated thinking when he demands ocular proof from Iago
- his control in the 'It is the cause' speech where he reasons with himself and where he balances why Desdemona must die against his instinct that her balmy breath almost persuades justice to break its sword
- his measured suicide speech which is controlled and balanced
- etc.

#### **AO4 Explore connections across literary texts**

With respect to connections with the wider tragic genre students might focus on:

- the tragic aspect of the tragic hero
- the tragic aspect of the intensity of passion
- the aspect of hatred that drives the tragedy
- etc.

#### **AO3 Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received**

With respect to contextual issues arising from the question and the play students might focus on:

- the context of the affections as seen in how Othello loves and hates
- the context of power as seen in how the intensity of Othello's emotions determines events
- the gender context as seen in the way that Othello loves his wife

- etc.

## **AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts**

With respect to dramatic method students might focus on:

- structural issues relating to when Othello is presented as displaying intense or moderated emotions
- the contrasts between the intensity of Othello's love and his hatred
- the dramatic actions and climactic moments that result from Othello's displays of love and hatred, eg his striking of Desdemona, his falling into a trance, his attempt to kill Iago
- the language used by Othello when he expresses his love, hatred or measured responses – his language of love which is romantic and the violence of his language of hatred
- the way that Othello addresses others when he displays the full force of his emotions
- Othello's use of rhetorical devices when he expresses his love and his hatred, for example the balanced clauses and repetition in 'She loved me for the dangers I had passed, / And I loved her, that she did pity them'
- the lack of control in his speech when his emotions take over him after Iago persuades him that Desdemona is unfaithful, 'It is not words that shakes me thus! Pish! Noses, ears, and lips! Is't possible? – Confess? Handkerchief! O devil!'
- etc.

Given that this is a **closed book** exam, comments on the ways meanings are shaped may be generalised.

## **AO1 Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression**

With respect to competence in writing focus needs to be on the:

- quality of argument
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy.

**Accept any valid discussion of interpretations, any valid discussion of contexts and any relevant integrated comments of dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.**

0 4

**Othello – William Shakespeare**

Explore the significance of murder and killing to the tragedy of the play.

Remember to include in your answer relevant comment on Shakespeare's dramatic methods.

**[25 marks]**

**Some possible content** is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed, but as 'significance' relates to contextual, structural, linguistic and interpretative issues, some ideas will inevitably address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied *Othello* through the lens of **tragedy**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

This is a **closed book** exam, so while it is expected that students will use quotations when writing about the play, it is also legitimate to make more general reference.

Please refer to pages 4–8.

**AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations**

With respect to the interpretative significances that can be found, there will be a variety of interpretations here in relation to readers and audiences. Some students might comment on the choices made by directors.

Some possible ideas:

- the tragic horror of the taking of human life by other human beings
- the murder of Desdemona by Othello which shapes the plot
- the murder of Emilia by her husband in his attempt to silence her as she reveals his villainy
- the murder of Roderigo by Iago who, after using him, callously disposes of him
- the murders which take place in Act 5 as the play reaches its tragic conclusion
- the violent nature of the murders, Desdemona's by smothering, Emilia's and Roderigo's by stabbing
- Othello's murder of Desdemona which is set up by Iago
- Othello's belief that he is killing Desdemona to 'save more men'
- his belief that he is acting as an agent of Justice in his role of executioner
- his desire to save Desdemona's soul as he begs her to repent before he kills her
- Desdemona's fear as Othello stands over her, threatening her before he murders her
- Desdemona as an innocent female victim at the mercy of male power
- Desdemona's loyalty to Othello at her death, blaming herself for what has happened, her final words being 'Commend me to my kind lord – O farewell!'
- Emilia's being killed from behind, Iago's final words to his wife being 'Villainous whore' and 'Filth, thou liest'
- the contrast in the way the two victims die: Desdemona's trying to protect her husband, Emilia's exposing Iago's evil
- Roderigo's being the first murder to take place
- Iago's playacting during his murder of Roderigo – his pretence that he kills Roderigo because Roderigo has tried to kill Cassio
- Roderigo's being the first to recognise Iago for what he is: 'O damned Iago! O inhuman dog!'
- the self-murder of Othello as he stabs himself at the end of the play
- his killing himself to atone for his sins

- his killing himself to avoid shame and punishment
- the centrality of the marriage bed with three murdered bodies on it at the end of the play
- the attempted murder of Cassio by Roderigo under Iago's instruction
- etc.

#### **AO4 Explore connections across literary texts**

With respect to significance of connections with the tragic genre students might focus on:

- the tragic aspects of death and killing which affect the sad mood at the end of the tragedy
- the tragic aspect of victims who are largely innocent
- the tragic aspect of murderers who are violent men
- etc.

#### **AO3 Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received**

With respect to significance of contexts students might focus on:

- the context of power in relation to the physical power of Othello and Iago
- the context of marriage as seen in the way that two murders are by husbands who kill their wives
- the psychological context in relation to Iago's cruel manipulation of two men whom he incites to murder others
- etc.

#### **AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts**

With respect to significance of dramatic method students might focus on:

- structural issues relating to when the murders and killings take place in the play
- the physical acts of murder and killing which are all on stage
- the build up to Desdemona's murder with Othello's soliloquy and his debating with himself about the act he is going to carry out
- the frenetic and desperate actions of Iago as he kills his wife
- the language used by the murderers as they murder their victims
- contrasts and comparisons between Othello and Iago
- the final words of the murder victims
- the reactions of other characters to the murders which take place
- etc.

Given that this is a **closed book** exam, comments on the ways meanings are shaped may be generalised.

#### **AO1 Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression**

With respect to competence in writing focus needs to be on the:

- quality of argument
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy.

**Accept any valid discussion of interpretations, any valid discussion of contexts and any relevant integrated comments of dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.**

**0 5*****King Lear* – William Shakespeare**

‘In *King Lear*, those who confront the powerful with the truth have to be admired.’

To what extent do you agree with this view?

Remember to include in your answer relevant comment on Shakespeare’s dramatic methods.

**[25 marks]**

**Some possible content** is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed. Some ideas will inevitably address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied *King Lear* through the lens of **tragedy**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

This is a **closed book** exam, so while it is expected that students will use quotations when writing about the play, it is also legitimate to make more general reference.

Please refer to pages 4–8.

**AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations**

With respect to meanings and interpretations, students may choose to look at all sides of the debate or just one. It is the quality of the student’s response that matters.

Some students might consider:

- the speaking of truth to power by Cordelia, Kent and the Fool, the trio of good characters who merit admiration
- the admiration felt for the ways that Cordelia, Kent and the Fool risk their lives, face exile, are seriously reprimanded or punished for speaking truth to power: Kent is threatened with his life, Cordelia is banished and the Fool is threatened with whipping
- admiration for Cordelia’s refusal to play the absurd love test game and flatter her father, telling him she loves her majesty according to her bond, ‘nor more, nor less’
- admiration for her courage – she is a young woman, who speaks truth to the power of her father, the king, implicitly questioning his acceptance of her sisters’ replies (‘Why have my sisters husbands if they say they love you all?’)
- her bravery in not being cowed by his growing rage
- her controlled speech to her father after Lear banishes her where she speaks of her sisters’ ‘glib and oily art’; how Cordelia’s words are sincere unlike theirs which elicits admiration
- her brave accusations to her sisters (who now have power) before she leaves for France where she tells them she knows what they are and that ‘Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides’
- admiration for Kent’s extraordinary intervention when Lear banishes Cordelia, especially since the rest of the court are silent, so setting him above them all
- his facing the wrath of Lear when he calls Lear mad, his saying that he is not afraid to speak when ‘power to flattery bows’
- admiration felt for the way that Kent calls out Lear’s ‘hideous rashness’ and for his telling the king that he ‘dost evil’
- that Kent as Caius is admirable when he speaks truth to the power of Cornwall in calling out Oswald, that all the insults Kent heaps on Oswald are justified
- that Kent’s telling Cornwall that he has seen better faces before him than Cornwall’s is admirable given how contemptible Cornwall is

- that the Fool's speaking truth to Lear is admirable because he helps Lear to see the truth
- that the Fool's speaking truth to Lear is admirable because he knows he can be punished but truth is more important to him
- that Gloucester's speaking truth to the power of Cornwall and Regan is admirable given his precarious position and given their appalling treatment of Lear and himself
- that Gloucester's speaking truth to power when he tells Regan that he sent the king to Dover because he would not see her 'cruel nails pluck out his poor old eyes' is admirable in that it shows he has some backbone and the moment places him firmly on the side of the good
- etc.

Some students might consider:

- that Cordelia cannot be admired since she is stubborn and in speaking truth to power she begins Lear's tragic decline
- that Cordelia is somewhat holier-than-thou when she says she cannot heave her heart into her mouth
- that Cordelia's calling out the lies of Gonerill and Regan ('Why have my sisters husbands if they say they love my father all?') is thoughtless and isolates her, increasing their hostility to her and her father
- that Kent's intervention on Cordelia's behalf in full view of the court is far from admirable as it increases Lear's anger, causing more division and prevents any softening of attitude
- that Kent's intervention is foolish, that Lear as powerful monarch cannot revoke his decision since it is so public
- that Kent would have been better to hold his peace and use his power as a courtier to work behind the scenes; that his intervention is rash, leaving audiences in fearful anticipation
- that Kent's intervention, which ends in his banishment, weakens Lear's position and is not admirable
- that Kent, as Caius, is thoughtless and stupid when he speaks truth to the power of Cornwall about the sycophancy of Oswald
- that his telling Cornwall that it is his occupation to be plain and that he has seen better faces before him than that of Cornwall is more than unwise since he knows the character of Cornwall, and knows that his speaking out will lead to punishment (being placed in the stocks) which will degrade Lear
- that the relentlessness of the Fool's speaking truth to the power of Lear is too much to bear, too uncomfortable to be admired
- etc.

#### **AO4 Explore connections across literary texts**

With respect to connections with the wider tragic genre students might focus on:

- the tragic aspect of power as seen in Lear as monarch and the new power base of Regan, Gonerill and Cornwall
- the aspect of truth which opposes deceit and deception
- the tragic aspect of admiration for honest characters with integrity who stand up for truth
- etc.

**AO3 Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received**

With respect to contextual issues arising from the question and the play students might focus on:

- the context of morality in terms of truth-telling and lying
- the psychological context in relation to the struggles that take place within truth tellers and within those who hear the truth
- the context of social power structures since those who speak truth to power have lower hierarchical positions than those to whom they speak
- etc.

**AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts**

With respect to dramatic method students might focus on:

- structural issues relating to where speaking truth to power takes place
- the explosive dramatic impact of when speaking truth to power takes place, for example when Cordelia and Kent speak truth to power in front of the full court
- dramatic surprise, for example when Gloucester speaks truth to the power of Cornwall
- the consequences to those who speak truth to power, for example Kent's being placed in the stocks, Gloucester's having his eyes plucked out
- settings where speaking truth to power takes place, for example the court, Gloucester's castle
- the emotional tone that is used when characters speak truth to power, Cordelia's controlled defiance, Kent's anger
- the simple language of Cordelia's truth – 'Nothing my lord'
- the heavily rhetorical language of Kent when he argues with Lear
- the use of the Fool's rhymes and jokes to tell the truth
- etc.

Given that this is a **closed book** exam, comments on the ways meanings are shaped may be generalised.

**AO1 Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression**

With respect to competence in writing focus needs to be on the:

- quality of argument
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy.

**Accept any valid discussion of interpretations, any valid discussion of contexts and any relevant integrated comments of dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.**

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**King Lear – William Shakespeare**

Explore the significance of murder and killing to the tragedy of the play.

Remember to include in your answer relevant comment on Shakespeare's dramatic methods.

**[25 marks]**

**Some possible content** is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed, but as 'significance' relates to contextual, structural, linguistic and interpretative issues, some ideas will inevitably address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied *King Lear* through the lens of **tragedy**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

This is a **closed book** exam, so while it is expected that students will use quotations when writing about the play, it is also legitimate to make more general reference.

Please refer to pages 4–8.

**AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations**

With respect to the interpretative significances that can be found, there will be a variety of interpretations here in relation to readers and audiences. Some students might comment on the choices made by directors.

Some possible ideas:

- that murders and killings are committed by both the good and the bad to either uphold morality or for evil intent
- that two women are murdered and the third is guilty of self-murder
- that the murderers and killers are both male and female
- that the murderers use a variety of methods: hanging, stabbing, poison
- that Cordelia's murder is shocking and, although performed offstage, affects the remainder of the play negatively
- that the murder of the absolute innocent and good Cordelia makes the play unbearably pessimistic – and was removed from the play in Nahum Tate's version which held the stage for 167 years
- that the effect of Cordelia's murder on Lear is devastating, not least of all because he had hopes of being happy with her in prison and singing together like birds in a cage
- that the murder of Cordelia is what causes the despair and death of Lear
- that the murder of Cordelia reveals the utter depravity and power hungry nature of Edmund given that he pays the Officer to kill her and authors how it is to be done 'carry it so / As I have set it down'
- that the Officer shows the depth of corruption in the post-Lear world: he will kill for the 'noble fortunes' promised by Edmund
- that Cordelia's murder, witnessed by Lear, causes him to seek immediate revenge as he kills the slave who hangs her
- that Regan's murder (poisoned by Gonerill) shows how evil preys on itself
- that Gonerill's poisoning of Regan is because of sexual jealousy; she cannot bear the thought that Edmund might marry Regan
- that this murder is planned and premeditated
- that Regan's murder, which happens offstage, receives little attention; no one mourns her passing

- that the First Servant of Cornwall mortally wounds his master because he cannot endure Cornwall's horrible torture of Gloucester
- that he in turn is killed by Regan who runs at him with a sword and kills him from behind
- that Oswald is killed by Edgar who protects Gloucester whom Oswald had attempted to kill
- that Edgar kills Edmund in arm-to-arm combat to prove his integrity and his right
- that proclamations are put out by the different powers for the death of Edgar (by Gloucester) and for Gloucester (by Regan)
- the attempted self-murder of Gloucester when he thinks he has jumped off the cliff of Dover, but who is 'saved' by Edgar to cure his despair
- etc.

#### **AO4 Explore connections across literary texts**

With respect to significance of connections with the tragic genre students might focus on:

- the tragic aspect of murder and killing as seen in the hanging of Cordelia
- tragic villains as seen in those who commit murders or authorise them, for example Gonerill, Edmund
- tragic victims as seen in the murder of Cordelia
- etc.

#### **AO3 Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received**

With respect to significance of contexts students might focus on:

- the moral context as seen in the decisions made about the murder of others, the depravity of Edmund, the attempt by the First Servant to do some good
- the context of power as seen in the way that Edmund authorises the killing of Cordelia; and Regan puts the death sentence on Gloucester
- the context of gender and how expectations are overturned given that both Gonerill and Regan commit or authorise murders
- etc.

#### **AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts**

With respect to significance of dramatic method students might focus on:

- structural issues relating to where the murders, killings or attempted murders take place
- the entrances and exits relating to murder, for example Lear's entrance carrying the dead Cordelia, Regan's exit when she is sick with poison
- the dramatic actions of the murderers, the killing of the First Servant by Regan and the killing of Oswald by Edgar
- settings where the murders and killings take place, Cordelia's and Regan's being offstage, Cornwall's being in Gloucester's castle which Cornwall had taken over
- the language used by the killers as they commit their crimes or as they act out of revenge or a sense of righteousness (the jubilation of Gonerill when she hears that Regan is 'sick' 'If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine', Lear's triumph 'I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee')
- arguments that precede the murders, for example the barbed confrontation of Gonerill and Regan over Edmund, the argument between Edgar and Oswald
- etc.

Given that this is a **closed book** exam, comments on the ways meanings are shaped may be generalised.

**AO1 Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression**

With respect to competence in writing focus needs to be on the:

- quality of argument
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy.

**Accept any valid discussion of interpretations, any valid discussion of contexts and any relevant integrated comments of dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.**

**0 7** 'In tragic texts, families and family life are torn apart.'

To what extent do you agree with this view in relation to **two** texts you have studied?

Remember to include in your answer relevant comment on the ways the writers have shaped meanings.

**[25 marks]**

**Some possible content** is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed. Some ideas will inevitably address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied the two texts through the lens of **tragedy**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

This is a **closed book** exam, so while it is expected that students will use quotations when writing about the texts, it is also legitimate to make more general reference.

Please refer to pages 4–8.

### **AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations**

With respect to meanings and interpretations, students may choose to look at all sides of the debate or just one. It is the quality of the student's response that matters.

Some students might consider:

- *Death of a Salesman's* being a domestic tragedy with a family in crisis at its centre; tension, awkwardness and dishonesty between Willy and Linda because of Willy's suicide attempt at the start of the play; the discord between Willy and Biff – Willy's losing his temper with Biff for not making any money, Willy's disappointment with him – calling him a lazy bum; Biff and Happy's knowing that there is something wrong with their father; Linda's denunciation of the boys for their lack of faith in their father; the back story of Willy and Biff with Biff's discovery of Willy's affair with The Woman and how it wrecked him; Willy's guilt; Biff and Happy's leaving Willy in the restaurant; the back story of Willy's relationships with his father and brother and the tension between them; Ben's urging Willy to take his life; Willy's suicide and how the family are broken at his funeral; Linda's sobbing at the end and saying she doesn't 'understand it'; Happy's delusions in following his father's dreams
- *Richard II's* being about the royal family at war with each other over power and kingship; the discord, distrust and tension between the two cousins, Richard and Bolingbroke; Bolingbroke's usurpation of Richard; Bolingbroke's claiming that Richard's favourites have kept him from being with his wife 'Made a divorce betwixt his queen and him / Broke the possession of a royal bed'; the various separations of Richard and Isabel; Isabel's fear in Act 2:2 when Richard is preparing to depart for Ireland some unborn sorrow is coming towards her; the sadness of Isabel in the garden scene as she hears the criticism of her husband and how Bolingbroke 'Hath seiz'd the wasteful king'; Isabel's misery as Richard is led to the tower, her anger that Bolingbroke has deposed her husband, her misery that they must be parted 'And must we be divided? must we part?'; Northumberland's telling the married couple to separate, Richard's saying 'Bad men, you violate / A two-fold marriage'; the conflict between Richard and his uncles; Richard's tearing apart the bonds of family when he takes Gaunt's lands; the division between York, the Duchess and Aumerle about Aumerle's loyalty to Richard, York's readiness to expose Aumerle's treason to Bolingbroke; Bolingbroke's troubled concern about his unthrifty son and how he is a plague to his father
- Lamia's and Lucius' lives being torn apart on their wedding day by the revelation of Apollonius who calls Lamia a serpent; Lycius' sudden death and Lamia's disappearance; Isabella's brothers

wanting to control her life and deciding who she will marry, their plot against her lover and their killing him which makes her wretched, their failure to understand her grief and then plotting to steal her basil pot from her, their sloping off in disgrace 'With blood upon their heads, to banishment'; Madeline's being detached from her family and wanting to be alone on St Agnes' eve, the tensions in the family as they give Madeline looks of 'love, defiance, hate, and scorn', her family who would have no mercy for Porphyro and are described as 'barbarian hordes'; Porphyro's taking Madeline away from her family home leaving the Baron to 'long be-nightmared'

- Cuchulain's actions in the past as he sought glory – and a new lover – which tear apart his family, leaving Emer bitter and resentful; Emer's sending her son to kill his father; Cuchulain's killing his son as the war rage breaks in him; his grief, despair and rage when he discovers the identity of his son from which he does not recover; the boy in 'Out, out –' who appeals to his helpless sister for his hand to be saved, the family's being physically torn when the boy's heart stops; Jessie's not returning to her mother's home when she is killed by the sea, her mother's ominously hearing a 'startled sea-gull screech', her mother's never knowing the truth of what took Jessie away from them
- Tess' family being set on a course of ruin by the father's encounter with Parson Tringham, Tess' feeling of despair and responsibility as she sees her mother and father drunk in Rolliver's Inn, her taking the bees to market the following day because her father is incapacitated leading to the disaster with Prince, Tess' being cajoled and guilt tripped by her parents to seek help from the D'Urbervilles, Tess' return home pregnant and her receiving little sympathy (her mother's disappointment at Tess' not marrying Alec), her father's preventing the despairing Tess from fetching the clergyman when her baby is dying, the failure of the parents to sympathise when Tess' marriage to Angel breaks down, her mother's illness which compounds Tess' misery and then her father's death meaning the family has to leave the family home, their destitution that drives Tess back to Alec; the bitter love felt by Mrs D'Urberville for Alec, her death which apparently affects him later in the story; the fractured family life of Angel Clare as he rebels against his parents' religious teaching, their influence on him which leads to his rejecting his own family life with his wife, Tess
- the suspicions and dishonesty at the heart of the Buchanan family, the parading of the child Pammy, Tom's betrayal of Daisy with other women and his affair with Myrtle, Tom's domestic violence towards Daisy, Daisy's affair with Gatsby and her wanting to leave Tom which causes his anger; the Wilson's family life which is on the brink because of Wilson's lies and Myrtle's ambitions, her affair with Tom which causes her to disrespect George and want to leave him, her violent death which breaks Wilson's heart and sanity; Gatsby's pursuit of the American Dream which leads him to abandon his family, his father's only hearing of his death through a Chicago newspaper
- etc.

Some students might consider:

- the Loman family's caring for each other despite the tensions; Biff's obvious love for his father and Willy's love for his sons which is enduring, the happy memory of Biff and Happy's childhood, Happy's wanting to follow in his father's footsteps, Biff's sympathetic defence of his father at the Requiem, the love of the boys for Linda, Linda's working to keep the family ties secure; the bond between Charley and Bernard, the confidence they have in each other; Wagner's seeming secure family bond with Howard
- the love between Richard and Isabel which is unchanged by the sequence of tragic events suggesting that emotionally the family is not torn apart; their commitment to each other ('Thus give I mine, and thus take I thy heart'); the love between Gaunt and Bolingbroke as seen when Gaunt begs for leniency and when Bolingbroke returns from exile to claim his inheritance and defend his family's rights; Bolingbroke's forgiveness of his cousin Aumerle and restoring the family bond between York, the Duchess and Aumerle
- the brothers of Isabella wanting to keep their family intact in not allowing their sister to marry a commoner; their working as a pair to do what they think is right for their family's fortunes and future; their removing the basil pot to try to end Isabella's misery and restore 'her youth' and

- ‘pleasures gay, / And even remembrance of her love’s delay’; the newly formed family unit of Lamia and Lucius being more powerful than the forces which attack it since they die for love
- the family in ‘*Out, out –*’ who are not torn apart since their lives continue after the boy’s death ‘And they, since they / Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs’; the family of Dr Rose and his wife in *Miss Gee* being unaffected by her illness and tragic condition, their lives continuing seemingly as if nothing happened
  - Tess’ love and responsibility for her parents as seen in her behaviour towards them and her wanting to keep them together, the family unit of Tess and her siblings which is full of love and care, Tess’ wanting Angel to marry Liza-Lu at the end to unite the people she loves; the family unit of the Clares being secure and loving towards Angel even though he has different views, Hardy’s suggesting that they would have cared for Tess had she gone to ask for help; Dairyman Crick and his wife who, with their wider ‘adopted’ family of dairy maids, seem to live an idyllic existence and remain intact
  - the survival of the Buchanans’ marriage (Tom and Daisy, and their family, are still together two years after the tragedy of *Gatsby*), Tom and Daisy’s seeming to have made a secret pact which binds them together; Nick’s respect for his own father and his returning at the end to his family roots
  - etc.

#### **AO4 Explore connections across literary texts**

With respect to connections with the wider tragic genre students might focus on:

- the tragic aspect of families and family bonds being broken
- the tragic aspect of dislocation, cracking and breaking
- the tragic aspect of misery which is a consequence of families being torn apart
- etc.

#### **AO3 Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received**

With respect to contextual issues arising from the question and the texts students might focus on:

- the context of mortality given that the family units in all texts are affected by death
- the context of family as seen in the different dynamics between the families in the different texts
- the gender context in relation to how the different family members react to their being torn apart
- etc.

#### **AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts**

With respect to dramatic/authorial method students might focus on:

- structural issues in relation to where family groups operate and where the tearing apart happens
- the settings where the family groups are torn apart
- the narrative perspectives in the presentation of the breaking up of families
- the use of dialogue, language, dramatic action, exits and entrances in the drama texts in relation to families being torn apart
- the use of narrative and poetic methods in the prose and poetry in relation to families being torn apart
- etc.

Given that this is a **closed book** exam, comments on the ways meanings are shaped may be generalised.

**AO1 Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression**

With respect to competence in writing focus needs to be on the:

- quality of argument
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy.

**Accept any valid interpretations, any valid comments on contexts and any relevant integrated comments on dramatic/authorial methods that are embedded into the argument.**

**0 8**

Explore the significance of errors of judgement to the tragedies of **two** texts you have studied.

Remember to include in your answer relevant comment on the ways the writers have shaped meanings.

**[25 marks]**

**Some possible content** is given below. It suggests some of the ways the Assessment Objectives might be addressed, but as 'significance' relates to contextual, structural, linguistic and interpretative issues, some ideas will inevitably address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that because students have read and studied the two texts through the lens of **tragedy**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

This is a **closed book** exam, so while it is expected that students will use quotations when writing about the texts, it is also legitimate to make more general reference.

Please refer to pages 4–8.

### **AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations**

With respect to the interpretative significances that can be found, there will be a variety of interpretations here in relation to readers and audiences. Some students might comment on the choices made by directors.

Some possible ideas:

- Willy's error of judgement in filling his sons with hot air and pride; Willy's error of judgement in having an affair with The Woman; his error of judgement in refusing to take help from Charley; Biff's error of judgement in stealing the pen; his error in not confronting his father directly about the affair and his upbringing and allowing resentment to fester; Linda's error of judgement in burying her knowledge about Willy's suicide attempt
- Richard's error of judgement in stopping the lists; his error in changing his mind re Bolingbroke's punishment; his error of taking Gaunt's plate and land; his error of going to Ireland; his error of handing the crown to Henry; his error of judgement in believing himself unassailable; his error of judgement in believing that the earth will come to his defence; Bolingbroke's error in judgement of taking the crown
- Lycius' error in wanting to publicly display Lamia and insist on a public wedding; Lamia's error in agreeing to Lycius' desires despite her reservations; the knight's error in allowing himself to be taken in by the faery-child; Isabella's error in forming a relationship with someone whom her family would not accept; her error in digging up the body of Lorenzo, cutting off his head, putting it in her pot of basil, luxuriating in her grief which sends her mad and which her brothers decide has to be rectified
- Jessie's error of judgement in debating with her would-be-lover on the beach as the tide comes in; Cuchulain's error of judgement in fighting the young man whose head reminds him of a woman he once knew; Miss Gee's error of judgement in going to the doctors too late; Tithonus' error of judgement in asking for immortality and not eternal youth
- Tess' error of judgement in accepting Alec's rescue proposal at the Chaseborough fair; Tess' error of judgement in marrying Angel knowing how Angel reveres her as a model of chastity and perfection; her error of judgement in going with Alec to Sandbourne to live as his mistress; Tess' error of judgement in not asking the Clares for help
- Gatsby's error of judgement in pursuing the American Dream, his believing that 'of course' it was possible to recreate the past, his error of judgement in telling Tom Buchanan at the Plaza Hotel that Daisy had always loved him even when she was married to Tom; his error or judgement in

thinking that Daisy is noble and pure and worth giving his life to; Nick's error of judgement in being sucked into the world of the super rich and losing his moral compass

- etc.

#### **AO4 Explore connections across literary texts**

With respect to significance of connections with the tragic genre students might focus on:

- the tragic aspect of an error of judgement
- the tragic aspect of the tragic hero or heroine who makes the error of judgement
- the aspect of the tragic consequences that occur after an error of judgement
- etc.

#### **AO3 Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received**

With respect to significance of contexts students might focus on:

- the context of morality as seen in relation to the errors of judgement made, for example Gatsby's wanting to break up the family of a married woman and Willy's affair with The Woman
- the context of power as seen in relation to errors of judgement, for example the knight's power over the faery-child and Richard's power as king
- the psychological context as seen in the errors of judgement and the impact of those errors on the tragic hero and heroine and others in their orbit
- etc.

#### **AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts**

With respect to significance of dramatic/authorial method students might focus on:

- structural issues in relation to where the errors of judgement take place
- the settings where the errors of judgement are made, for example Richard at the lists, Willy in Charley's office
- the narrative/dramatic perspectives in relation to the errors of judgement, for example Biff's outburst against his father in relation to Willy's affair, Hardy's sympathetic voice which excuses Tess even though Tess blames herself, Bolingbroke's return from exile to accuse Richard of taking his land, Nick's lack of moral outrage when discussing Gatsby's affair with Daisy, the ambiguity of Rossetti in telling of Jessie's defiance
- the use of dialogue, language, dramatic action, exits and entrances in the drama texts in relation to the errors of judgement
- the use of narrative and poetic methods in the prose and poetry in relation to the errors of judgement
- etc.

Given that this is a **closed book** exam, comments on the ways meanings are shaped may be generalised.

**AO1 Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression**

With respect to competence in writing focus needs to be on the:

- quality of argument
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy.

**Accept any valid interpretations, any valid comments on contexts and any relevant integrated comments on dramatic/authorial methods that are embedded into the argument.**