

Love through the ages: Exemplar student response (AS Paper 1, Section B)

This resource is an exemplar student response to a Section B question in the specimen assessment materials for AS Paper 1.

Paper 1, Section B, Band 4

Sample question

Examine the view that Richard Lovelace presents the speaker in this poem as having a selfish attitude to love.

Sample response

'The Scrutiny' is a poem written by Richard Lovelace. Lovelace was a cavalier poet, and cavalier poetry seeks to entertain an audience. In this poem Lovelace could be seen to present a selfish attitude to love as the speaker in the poem seems to argue that you need to have lots of experience of love in order to prove that you love someone.

Firstly, Lovelace starts the poem with the speaker directly addressing his lover asking her why she believes he is "forsworn" since he "vowed to be" hers. Here he seems to be acting in a very defensive manner which supports the suggestion that he has a selfish attitude to love. It could be inferred that, because he is questioning his lover, he may be trying to point the blame at her to invoke feelings of discomfort. At the time in which the poem was written society would have been heavily patriarchal and male dominated. It could be said that his presentation of love is a reflection of those views.

In addition, in the second stanza of the poem the speaker seems to continue to invoke feelings of discomfort in his female lover arguing that he has loved her "much and long a tedious twelve hours space". In particular, the use of the word "tedious" to describe the time in which the speaker has loved his lover is significant, as it suggests that he feels that he could have been doing something more worthwhile. This idea is supported by the fact that the speaker then argues that you cannot know that you love someone until you have gained experience in love and have loved lots of people. An example of this is when Lovelace writes that if the speaker stayed with his lover, it would "rob" her of a "new embrace".

Furthermore, the suggestion that you need to experience love in order to prove your love for someone is reflected throughout the rest of the poem. In particular, in Stanza 3 Lovelace seems to develop the reasoning for this argument. He

creates the impression that love is like a quest or hunt to find the right woman. It could be argued that this is a very sexist idea. This idea is supported when the speaker of the poem argues that you need to “search” for the right woman like “Skilful mineralists that sound for treasure”. The fact that Lovelace argues that men need to hunt for the right woman links to the typical notion of a patriarchal society in which women were considered to be the possessions of men.

In conclusion, in the final stanza of the poem Lovelace concludes his argument. He suggests that only once the speaker of the poem has “loved” his “round” then he can return to his lover “ev’n sated with variety”. It can be argued that this is a very selfish attitude to have. In particular, the fact that women are referred to as “spoils” supports the suggestion that women were seen as the possessions of men. It also supports his belief that love is like a conquest.

Examiner commentary

This is a Band 4 answer. It is consistently coherent and thorough and fits best overall with the middle part of Band 4.

A01- The candidate takes a logical, thorough and coherent approach. It is written precisely and accurately using appropriate register and terminology. The discourse markers at the start of each paragraph, however, are not really necessary or helpful in developing an overview of the poem.

A02- There is a thorough understanding of and engagement with the author’s use of language and structure. In taking the stanzas one by one the opportunity for an overview of the poem, its voice and its playfulness, is lessened.

A03- The candidate explores contexts such as gender, genre and time in a thorough and coherent manner.

A04 and A05- There is a logical connection implied to other cavalier poems and thorough engagement with the given critical view.

Overall this script is lower Band 4.