

## Aspects of comedy: Exemplar student response and commentary (AS Paper 1, Section B)

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Below you will find an exemplar student response to a Section B question in the specimen assessment materials for AS Paper 1, followed by an examiner commentary on the response.

### Sample script – Paper 1B, Section B, band 3 response

Explore the view that, in *She Stoops to Conquer*, barmaids are not simply figures of fun, they are positively celebrated.

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

Barmaids are celebrated in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* and they are also part of the comedy – figures of fun. Bet Bouncer is the barmaid who is most celebrated even though she does not say anything in the play. Barmaids are also celebrated through Kate Hardcastle who becomes one and enjoys being one.

Tony Lumpkin is in love with Bet Bouncer and he positively celebrates her and the inn where she works. He loves going to the Three Jolly Pigeons especially because his mother and step father disapprove and he sings songs with his low class friends to show how much fun he is having when he is there. This is a key part of the play's comedy. Although his mother wants him to marry his wealthy cousin Constance, he only has thoughts of Bet. He tells Hastings that she is really beautiful with black eyes and broad red cheeks like a 'cushion'. He agrees to enter into a plan with Hastings so that he will take Constance off his hands and then he can be happy with 'dear Betsy'. When the plotting becomes complicated towards the end of the play and everyone is angry with Tony he thinks of another plan. He is so sure of his success that he says if it doesn't work he will leave Hastings and Marlow his horse and Bet Bouncer too. In saying this he seems to be saying that she is his highest prize and is therefore celebrated. When everything is resolved at the end and everyone is happy – except for Mrs Hardcastle, Tony learns that he is of age to do as he pleases. Nothing is said about Bet Bouncer at the end of the actual play in Act 5, but Goldsmith knows that the audience wants to know about how she ends up so he gives a speech to Tony Lumpkin in the Epilogue. In the speech he speaks in rhyming couplets and he sounds really happy. He is going to London with 'big Bet Bouncer' and he

thinks they will both be celebrated by the posh people in London when they 'set the fashions' and go to the opera and theatre and when they walk through the streets. Because this is the ending of the whole play then it is fair to say that barmaids are celebrated.

The other barmaid in the play is Kate Hardcastle but she only pretends to be one. Even so she is celebrated because Marlow falls in love with her and he is even prepared to marry her even though she is of a low class – or so he thinks. At the end of the play he confesses his love to her. He says she is beautiful and graceful and virtuous. He even gets down on his knees to express his feelings. When he first meets her though, he is only interested in her sexual attraction and her low class because he does not feel embarrassed in front of low class women. In an earlier conversation he has with Hastings he says he has always felt comfortable talking to low class women but high class women make him feel awkward and he cannot look them in the eye. When Kate is herself – the girl his father wants him to marry, he stammers and gets confused.

Kate can also be seen by the audience as the play's heroine so she could be celebrated because of the way she plays the part of a barmaid and gets the better of Marlow. Kate is clearly confident and friendly and on stage the audience would see her outgoing personality in the way she serves beer and wine to her customers and the way she flirts with Marlow. They would also enjoy her lower class speech and the way that she deliberately misunderstands what Marlow says. When he says he wants a taste of the nectar of her lips she pretends to not know what nectar means and asks if it is a French wine. Here Goldsmith is suggesting that low class women are ignorant and this makes them figures of fun too.

## Examiner commentary

In this response the candidate has quite good knowledge of *She Stoops to Conquer* and focuses on the task though there is more discussion of 'celebrated' than 'figures of fun'. An argument is constructed and the candidate offers a view on the proposition set up in the question. The comments made are straightforward. Not all ideas follow on smoothly from what has been said before and in places the candidate describes parts of the plot, but comments are made relevant. There is no doubt for this candidate that Bet bouncer is a barmaid so there is some assertion. Some appropriate detail is used from the text including a few quotations suggesting that the candidate has prepared quite well for the closed book examination.

A01 – The essay has a structure and the introduction makes it clear how the candidate is going to approach the question. Ideas are sensibly ordered for the main part. There is some use of critical vocabulary. The candidate's expression is clear.

A02 – There is straight forward understanding of Goldsmith's dramatic methods though discussion of these methods is not very probing. The student has some

notion of how the play's structure supports ideas about how barmaids are celebrated. There is a little comment about Goldsmith's use of language.

A03 – There is straightforward understanding of the gender context and those of social class. These contexts relate to the wider generic context of comedy.

A04 – As the candidate engages with the task and the celebration of the barmaid who is a low class woman, there is an understanding of how a typical comedic element is used in this play. The candidate is aware that inns, low class characters and alcohol are key ingredients of the comedy genre.

A05 – There is a straightforward engagement with the debate set up in the task and the student clearly agrees with the proposition and works quite well with ideas about barmaids being celebrated.

This response seems to be operating in Band 3.