
A-level
ENGLISH LITERATURE B
(7717/2B)

Paper 2B: Texts and Genres: Elements of Political and Social Protest
Writing

Mark scheme

Specimen Material

Version/Stage: Version 3.0

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 Assessment Writer.

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.

Further copies of this Mark Scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

Information for Examiners marking Elements of Political and Social Protest Writing: Open Book

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

The significance of Open Book

Examiners must understand that in marking an Open Book exam there are examining implications. Candidates have their texts in front of them and they are expected to use them to focus on specific passages for detailed discussion. They will not have had to memorise quotations so when quotations are used they should be accurate. Because candidates have their texts in the examination room, examiners need to be alert to possible malpractice. The texts should not be annotated but if examiners suspect that they have been or that notes from texts have been copied, they must alert the malpractice team.

There are specific issues for AO2 – how meanings are shaped in texts. There is, with Open Book, the expectation that candidates can use the text they have in front of them to make specific and detailed reference to structural and organisational issues.

Arriving at Marks

1. All questions are framed to address all the Assessment Objectives (AOs). Weightings are given above the generic mark scheme. Answers are marked holistically but, when deciding upon a mark in a band, examiners should bear in mind the relative weightings of the assessment objectives (see page 6) and be careful not to over/under credit a particular skill. In all questions more weight should be given to AO1, AO2 and AO3 than to AO4 and AO5. This will be exemplified and reinforced as part of examiner training and standardisation. 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 candidates begin tentatively but go on to make relevant points.
3. Examiners should be prepared to use the full mark range and not ‘bunch’ scripts in the middle for safety. Top marks are attainable if candidates could not be expected to do more in the time and under the conditions in which they are working.
4. Examiners should mark positively. Although the mark scheme provides some indicators for what candidates 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. Candidates’ 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 try to remain flexible if a candidate introduces unusual or unorthodox ideas.
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 may 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 page 7. The key words for the bands are important and are printed below.

MARK BAND DESCRIPTORS	
Band 5	perceptive/assured
Band 4	coherent/thorough
Band 3	straightforward/relevant
Band 2	simple/generalised
Band 1	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 candidate have an overview of the unseen passage?
 - has the candidate written about elements of political and social protest writing?
 - has the candidate written about authorial method?
 - has the candidate quoted from the extract to support ideas?
 - the candidate's AO1 competence.

Section B

13. Examiners need to bear in mind the following key points when marking questions based on single texts:
- has the candidate engaged in a relevant debate or constructed a relevant argument?
 - has the candidate referred to different parts of the text to support their views?
 - has the candidate referred to the writer's authorial method?
 - the candidate's AO1 competence.

Section C

14. Examiners need to bear in mind the following key points when marking questions connecting two texts:
- has the candidate focused on the element of political writing set up in the question and referred to two texts?
 - has the candidate engaged with significance in relation to the task and the two texts?
 - has the candidate considered the writers' authorial methods in the two texts?
 - has the candidate given substantial coverage of two texts?
 - the candidate's AO1 competence
 - has the candidate satisfied the rubric over Sections B and C – one poetry text, one post-2000 novel and a third text, with one of the texts being pre-1900?

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 candidate performance.
17. Please remember that scripts can go back to candidates, so although your audience is a senior examiner, you must express your views temperately.
18. The following symbols can be used when marking scripts:
- tick for a good point, idea, reference etc
 - tick in brackets for a potentially good point, not fully made
 - underlining for an error in fact or expression
 - D when a candidate is describing content
 - R for repetition
 - I for irrelevance
 - ? for when meaning is not clear.

Please do not use your own private systems, as these will mean nothing to senior examiners. If in doubt about what to use, simply write clear comments.

19. Use the Model Marked Script for guidance.

The Assessment Objectives and their significance

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

The AOs are as follows:

- AO1** Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression. (28%)
- AO2** Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts. (24%)
- AO3** Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received. (24%)
- AO4** Explore connections across literary texts. (12%)
- AO5** Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations. (12%)

Rubric Infringements

The rubric of this paper could be infringed in the following ways:

- candidates might not write on a poetry text in either Section B or Section C
- candidates might use the same text in Section C that they have used in Section B
- candidates might not use a pre-1900 text in either Section B or Section C
- candidates might only answer on one text in Section C.

If there has been an infringement, then both Sections B and C need to be read and judged on their quality. Marks should then be given based on the candidate's best answer. The writing on the illegitimate text cannot be credited. If the best answer is in Section C and there is an infringement, 0 marks will be given for Section B. If the best answer is Section B, only the writing on the legitimate text will be credited in Section C. The mark given will not be beyond Band 3.

Mark Scheme

It is important to remember that these students, in the main, are 18 years old so we are judging their skills at the end of Key Stage 5.

Weightings for each question are as follows:

AO1: 7 marks; AO2: 6 marks; AO3: 6 marks; AO4: 3 marks; AO5: 3 marks

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

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

<p>Band 1 Largely irrelevant/largely misunderstood/largely inaccurate 1-5 marks</p> <p>‘Largely irrelevant’ work is shown when students write in an unclear way with only occasional reference to what is required by the question.</p> <p>‘Largely misunderstood’ and ‘largely inaccurate’ work is shown when knowledge of the text is insecure, hazy and often wrong.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some vague points in relation to the task and some ideas about task and text(s) • the writing is likely to be unclear and incorrect; if it is accurate the content will be irrelevant • 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 	<p>This band is characterised by work which is largely irrelevant and largely misunderstood and largely inaccurate, 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 irrelevant.</p>
<p>0 marks</p>		<p>No marks for response when nothing is written or where response has no connection to the text(s) or task.</p>	

Section A

Question 01

Explore the significance of the elements of political protest in this extract. Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed analysis of the ways Bolt has shaped meanings.

The play *A Man for All Seasons* was written by Robert Bolt in 1960 about historical events in 1535 during the reign of Henry VIII. Sir Thomas More, Chancellor of England and a Catholic, has refused to endorse the king's wish to divorce his wife and to set himself up as head of the Church in England. Henry desperately wants More to support him because he likes him personally and he knows that the country greatly respects More, a man of conscience and integrity. At this point in the play, More is on trial for high treason because he will not swear the Oath of Supremacy which puts Henry at the head of the church, in defiance of the Pope's authority. Presiding over the trial is the Duke of Norfolk. More's chief accuser is Thomas Cromwell.

[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, many strands listed could easily address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that, because students will be writing about the extract through the lens of **political and social protest writing**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

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:

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

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

With respect to significance of dramatic method: (comments on method need to be embedded into the argument about the significance of political and social protest writing elements).

Focus might be on:

- the formal and imposing setting of the 16th century court-room
- More's confidence and dignity in contrast to the bullying of Cromwell
- More's impressive retorts – "Death ... comes for us all, my lords" and impressive replies on the significance of silence
- display of grief from More, dramatic effect of More's denial
- More's dramatic power of argument and his impressive and tragic stage presence
- the use of visual contrast
- use of Latin and the translation: Silence Gives Consent
- the dramatic surprise of Bishop Fisher's execution which is ominous for More
- the use of stage directions
- the confrontation between More and Cromwell, Cromwell's accusation
- use of quick-fire dialogue

- use of contrast in sentence types, use of dramatic pauses, rhetorical questions
- the use of modern language in the stage directions (trial has been rigged, eyes sparkling with suspicion, shoddy reasoning, etc)
- the use of elevated formal language in the instructions to More and the reading of the charge
- the use of emotive language ‘traitorously’, ‘maliciously’
- the use of titles and proper nouns – Supreme Head of the Church in England, the Tower
- the use of imperatives in the accusations
- the use of questions and answers, word play, 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:

Focus might be on:

- setting of courtroom as represented on stage
- Bolt’s use of history to comment on perennial issues of power and corruption
- ideas about protest, power and corruption – relevant to the 1960s context and to audiences in the 21st century
- religious context when More affirms the greater power of God
- legal context and the irony of More’s faith in the law (this court must construe according to the law); the manipulation of the laws by the court officials
- literary context of More as tragic figure – his heroic qualities and enlisting of audience sympathy
- sense of the theatricality of the trial, etc

AO4 Explore connections across literary texts.

With respect to significance of connections with the political and social protest writing genre seen in other reading could include:

Focus might be on:

- set in a court room, where the individual is being tried by the state
- manoeuvrings for power
- a character as centre of moral rectitude
- the significance of silent protest and what it ‘betokens’
- use of threat to dissidents
- sense for More and the audience that the trial has been rigged – to silence his protest
- focus on guilt and innocence
- (naïve) trust in the law
- the ordinary man with right on his side but clearly about to be swallowed by a more powerful and corrupt system, etc

AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

With respect to the interpretative significances that can be found:

Students might develop any of the points mentioned above and suggest what meanings arise from those ideas and how readers might react, for example:

- sense of corruption in the court officials, suggesting the corruption at the heart of power politics

- possible debate around the necessary pragmatism of those in power versus the integrity of the individual
- the defiance of the ordinary man represented by More who utters unquestionable truths about mortality – that Death will not kneel to Royalty but will send even kings to Judgement Day
- debate on the littleness of man in a microcosmic sense
- debate on the sense that human corruption has destroyed the integrity of the law, whether law can have integrity etc

Accept any valid discussion of interpretations, narrative method and any valid discussion of contexts of production and reception which are grounded in the passage.

Section B

Question 02***Songs of Innocence and of Experience* – William Blake**

‘Opposition to anything that oppresses the human spirit is the element that dominates *The Songs of Innocence* and *The Songs of Experience*.’

To what extent do you agree with this view? Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of Blake’s authorial 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 the work of Blake through the lens of **political and social protest writing**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

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:

- quality of argument as students address ‘To what extent’ they agree with the given view
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy

AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts. With respect to authorial method:

Focus might be on:

- structural issues – the patterning and mirroring of *Songs of Innocence* with *Songs of Experience*
- use of contrast with ‘The Two Contrary States of the Human Soul’
- lyric and narrative verse within both *Innocence* and *Experience*
- rural and urban settings, the use of range of rhyme-schemes, rhythmic patterns etc
- paired poems that contrast semi-idyllic world with world of suffering and cruelty
- use of voices, simple language, linguistic devices, religious symbolism, imagery of binding and imprisonment, uses of repetition, etc

Given that this is an **open book** exam, comment on the ways meanings are shaped should be specific and accurate.

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 poems:

In writing about whether ‘opposition to anything that oppresses the human spirit’ dominates *The Songs of Innocence* and *The Songs of Experience*, students will specifically be engaging with moral, social and psychological contexts and the representations of childhood. In discussing whether readers find the issue of opposition ‘dominating’, students will be engaging with and demonstrating understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts of when the poems were written and how they have been received. Focus might be on:

- the importance of the child-figure as idealised
- how ‘Innocence’ provides the depiction of a world free from oppression – rural settings, caring adults, play, laughter and joy in a Rousseau-esque, child-centred environment
- the use of settings as backdrops for the oppression and opposition, churches, London streets
- ‘Innocence’ and ‘Experience’ created at different times (1789 and 1793) as a response to changing contexts and Blake’s responses to them
- how Blake questions the ‘education system’ and the way it limits the creativity of children
- attitudes of religion – religion is portrayed as spiritually tyrannical in ‘A Little Boy Lost’ and ‘Holy Thursday’ and it represses and restricts human emotional and sexual desire in ‘The Garden of Love’, etc

AO4 Explore connections across literary texts.

With respect to connections with the wider political and social protest writing genre:

In writing about ‘opposition to’ and ‘anything that oppresses the human spirit’, students will be connecting with the political and social protest elements of ‘oppression’ and ‘opposition’.

Focus might be on:

- the presentation of protest through use of contrasting states
- the presentation of setting/symbol to contrast absence of oppression with repression of emotion and social oppression
- the oppression caused by religion which fails in its deliverance of mercy and compassion, doing nothing for the powerless and disenfranchised, etc

AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

With respect to meanings and interpretations:

Some students will agree with the proposition set up in the task and focus on:

- how the poems collectively show the value Blake has for the unfettered freedom of the human spirit and his hatred for anything that oppresses it and that these ideas do dominate
- how in ‘Innocence’ Blake constructs the opposite of oppression in order to show the value he places on freedom
- how in ‘Experience’ Blake constructs images of oppression to show what has been lost or sacrificed, etc

Some will disagree and focus on other potential areas of main interest:

- how Innocence and Experience are two distinct worlds ‘Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul’ with neither group being *dominated* by opposition to anything that oppresses the human spirit
- how Innocence is a world without oppression (‘The Lamb’, ‘The Nurse Song’, ‘The Divine Image’, ‘Holy Thursday’) and not dealing with opposition to oppression, etc

The word ‘dominates’ will need to be interrogated.

Accept any valid interpretations, any valid comments on contexts of production and reception and any relevant integrated comment on dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.

Question 03**Selected Poems – Tony Harrison**

‘In his poetry Harrison is always critical of the ways in which social divisions are both constructed and maintained.’

To what extent do you agree with this view? Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of Harrison’s authorial 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 the poems of Harrison through the lens of **political and social protest writing**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

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:

- quality of argument as students address ‘To what extent’ they agree with the given view
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy

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

With respect to authorial method:

Focus might be on:

- structural issues – circular structure of ‘V’, use of quatrains
- use of contrast of form – sometimes free verse with intermittent rhyme breaking formal traditional mode; sometimes – as in ‘V’-formal elegiac verse in imitation of Gray’s Elegy; sometimes lyrical, reflective first person ‘Marked with D’; use of the sonnet form in ‘Working’
- urban settings
- use of first person and other voices
- use of educated, erudite language, including Greek, interspersed with colloquial language, vulgarisms, expletives
- symbolism, uses of repetition, imagery, snatches of song, etc

Given that this is an **open book** exam, comment on the ways meanings are shaped should be specific and accurate.

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 poems:

In writing about whether Harrison is always critical of the ways in which ‘social divisions’ are both ‘constructed and maintained’, students will specifically be engaging with social and political contexts. In discussing whether Harrison is ‘always critical’ of these divisions, students will be engaging with and demonstrating understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts of when the poems were written and how they have been received. Focus might be on:

- Harrison’s deliberately making political statements about power, opportunities, education in the 1980s
- social divisions foregrounded in his writing about the miners’ strike of 1984, Leeds Grammar School in the 1940s and 1950s
- his personal concern, through documenting his own working class problems, with how different opportunities create division within families
- how Harrison shows the working classes as restricted and suppressed by the maintaining of social divisions by the powers that be
- his concentration on the lower social classes and their lack of opportunities and lack of ambition
- the part played by employers in the construction and maintaining of social divisions, ‘V’, ‘Marked With D.’, ‘Divisions’, ‘Working’
- Harrison’s awareness of control exerted by the ‘ruling class’ and the way that class divides
- the part played by education in the construction and maintaining of social divisions, ‘Them and [uz]’, ‘V’, etc

AO4 Explore connections across literary texts.

With respect to connections with the wider political and social protest writing genre:

In writing about Harrison’s being ‘always critical’ of the way social divisions are constructed and maintained, students will be connecting with the political and social protest element of literary protest. Harrison gives a voice to the voiceless, ironically through the prestigious art form of poetry. Significantly he also uses humour to make his protests, in a similar way to political satirists that preceded him. Focus might be on:

- the restricting of the lives of those deprived of power through language
- the ways literature attempts to give the voiceless a voice
- the attempt at replicating the language of those marginalised by society through being unemployed, and using the language to mount a protest in verse, and particularly a traditional form with echoes of Thomas Gray
- the way protest literature delights in using language that breaks literary/poetic conformity of ‘traditional’ writing, etc

AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.**With respect to meanings and interpretations:**

Some students will agree with the proposition set up in the task and focus on:

- Harrison's being a clear political protest writer who uses his poetry to criticise any number of authority figures and institutions
- Harrison's condemnation and questioning of those with political power (industrial magnates, the police, the government, local politicians, the educational world) in their construction and maintaining of social divisions, 'National Trust', 'Them and [uz]', 'V', a condemnation which dominates his poetry
- Harrison's personal frustration at not being able to affect change, so in effect he criticises himself, etc

Some will disagree and focus on Harrison's not being 'always' critical:

- the way that in 'V' he endorses the social structures in his attitude to his wife, etc.
- Harrison's ambivalent attitude to education; he knows it has allowed him to improve his social status, 'V', 'Them and [uz]' (he enjoys the cultural benefits it has given him)
- education is a means of 'freeing' Harrison's tongue and allowing him to articulate his concerns, so not always critical
- his poetry is about more than social division: in 'Marked with D', he seems proud of the divisions and expresses loyalty and love to parents, also in 'V'
- the way he is not critical in 'V' but more guilty about his own personal shortcomings
- the way he supports the police and authorities in part in 'V', etc

The word 'always' will need to be interrogated.

Accept any valid interpretations, any valid comments on contexts of production and reception and any relevant integrated comment on dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.

Question 04***The Kite Runner* – Khaled Hosseini**

‘In *The Kite Runner*, the personal and the political are always linked.’

To what extent do you agree with this view? Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of Hosseini’s authorial 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 *The Kite Runner* through the lens of **political and social protest writing**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

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:

- quality of argument as students address ‘To what extent’ they agree with the given view
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy

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

With respect to authorial method:

Focus might be on:

- bildungsroman form which Amir self-consciously uses to mount his protest about the impact of the political world on the personal
- structural issues of time shifts (analepsis and prolepsis), use of Afghanistan/American chapters, etc
- use of voices, first-person perspective, reconstructed voices of Hassan, Baba, Assef, Rahim Khan
- use of chronology carries thirty years of personal history
- use of simple boyhood language in contrast to the mature, educated adult language of the narration
- time span – from the 1960s to the Russian invasion, the Taliban rule and the events of 9/11
- setting – the Afghanistan of Amir’s boyhood, the Afghanistan to which he returns to rescue Sohrab, California, etc

Given that this is an **open book** exam, comment on the ways meanings are shaped should be specific and accurate.

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 novel:**

In writing about whether in *The Kite Runner* the ‘personal’ and the ‘political’ are always linked students will specifically be engaging with social, family and political contexts. In discussing whether the personal and political are ‘always linked’, students will be engaging with and demonstrating understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts of when the novel was written and how it has been received. Focus might be on:

- Amir’s personal reflections of his country, the ‘old’ Afghanistan of his childhood with the country oppressed and destroyed by the Taliban
- the political history of Afghanistan, the invasions by the Russians
- the impact of 9/11 on the lives and the thoughts of those in America leading to war in Afghanistan
- the war in Afghanistan against terrorism and its causes and its impact on personal lives
- the position of women – the vile treatment of Hassan’s mother, the difficulties that Soraya experiences (after her affair she is regarded as ‘damaged goods’)
- the divisions between the Pashtuns and the Hazaras, etc

AO4 Explore connections across literary texts.**With respect to connections with the wider political and social protest writing genre:**

In writing about whether in *The Kite Runner* the ‘personal’ and ‘political’ are always linked, students will be connecting with the elements of political and social protest writing which show how individuals are affected by wider political (whether local, national or international) concerns. In Amir’s world, there is no personal without the political. Focus might be on:

- Political and social protest writing also has many layers. In *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini creates his hero as a serious writer – specifically a novelist – who can voice his personal protests about the political situations in Afghanistan in a specific, literary way. In choosing this form, Hosseini combines real historical and political events with the fictive autobiography for his protest novel. Links to other texts using such methods
- bildungsroman as way of showing growing political awareness
- the significance of social ‘castes’ in the assumption and negotiation of power (cf Pashtun/Hazara in novel)
- the ‘invasion’ of the public into the personal (Amir’s personal life is shattered by the Soviet military invasion which forces his family to escape to America, etc)

AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.**With respect to meanings and interpretations:**

Some students will agree with the proposition set up in the task and focus on:

- the linking of the personal and political being responsible for Hassan's treatment by Amir and of the Hazaras by Pashtuns generally
- departure of Baba and Amir from Afghanistan a response to Russian invasion/political turmoil
- Amir's return to Afghanistan which is linked to rise of the Taliban
- the significance of Assef in both a personal and political capacity
- Amir's father who has such strong political views
- Amir's relationship with General Taheri
- Amir's role as storyteller; etc

Some will disagree and focus on the personal and political not always being linked:

- those aspects of the story and characterisations that can be 'divorced' from the political background: Amir's relationship with his father and jealousy over Hassan
- Amir's fabrication of Hassan's theft and Amir's responsibility for Hassan's departure
- the 'personal' relationships between Soraya and Amir and their desire for a child; thus 'political and personal' not 'always' linked
- the absence of 'mother' figures in both Amir's and Hassan's lives
- Amir's fight to recognise Sohrab in his own right, distinct from his ethnicity (he tells General Taheri 'you will never again refer to him as Hazara boy in my presence') etc.

The word 'always' will need to be interrogated.

Accept any valid interpretations, any valid comments on contexts of production and reception and any relevant integrated comment on dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.

Question 05***Harvest* – Jim Crace**

‘In *Harvest*, the world is unmade in seven days and it is those with political power who are solely to blame.’

To what extent do you agree with this view? Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of Crace’s authorial 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 *Harvest* through the lens of **political and social protest writing**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

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:

- quality of argument as students address ‘To what extent’ they agree with the given view.
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy

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

With respect to authorial method:

Focus might be on:

- use of historical novel to provoke thought about those with political power and their impact on the people
- structural issues – time span of seven days, but there is also the use of analepsis for Thirsk’s back story and his coming to the village twelve years ago
- use of narrator – Thirsk as first-person perspective, one who is literate
- use of other voices and different political perspectives: Jordan, Kent, the villagers
- the title and its implications regarding the pastoral world which is soon to be destroyed
- use of elegiac style
- setting – time and place, medieval village
- biblical language, use of prose which is not exactly of the 21st century but is not antiquated, perhaps suggesting that the political issues are timeless, etc

Given that this is an **open book** exam, comment on the ways meanings are shaped should be specific and accurate.

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 novel:**

In writing about whether in *Harvest* the ‘blame’ for the unmaking of the world in seven days rests solely on those with ‘political power’, students will specifically be engaging with social, religious, pastoral, economic and political contexts. In discussing whether those with ‘power’ are ‘solely to blame’, students will be engaging with and demonstrating understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts of when the novel was written – in literary terms very recently. Given that this is a historical novel, students will also be engaging with the historical context of when the novel was set. Focus might be on:

- the economic context of the new master who has no affinity with the land and would prefer to ‘simply check figures’, Profit, Progress, Enterprise are Jordan’s ‘private Muses’
- the religious context of the reversal of the Creation process, the villagers who are evicted from Eden in mass exodus
- the symbolism of mapping and enclosing
- Crace’s desire, as a 21st century writer, to look back at the past to comment on the political situation of his own times
- the political context of the dangers of isolationism (particularly relevant contextually in the light of Britain’s potential exit from the EU and Scottish independence etc)
- the modern context of the terrors of mob rule (the 2011 London riots, for example) as Crace shows how the villagers behave when they attack Jordan’s groom (‘a hundred angry, waspy fists’), etc

AO4 Explore connections across literary texts.**With respect to connections with the wider political and social protest writing genre:**

In writing about whether in *Harvest* the blame for the world’s being unmade in seven days is solely at the hands of those with political power, students will be connecting with the elements of political and social protest writing which focus on the destruction of communities by those who wield power. In this respect Crace is working in the tradition of social protest writers like Goldsmith in ‘The Deserted Village’ who wrote sympathetically of those who were dispossessed and critically of those who were responsible.

Focus might be on:

- Crace’s tone is lyrical and nostalgic (like Goldsmith’s) evidenced in the description of the last harvest
- the tyranny of capitalism as seen in other works with a socio-economic leaning
- the ending of the novel is elegiac and full of tragic weight, so linking with these genres, etc

AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.**With respect to meanings and interpretations:**

Some students will agree with the proposition set up in the task and focus on:

- the destruction of village life as it is known by the fifty-eight villagers
- the desire by the powerful to enclose land for sheep
- the machinations and tyrannical modernising zeal of Edmund Jordan
- the weakness of Master Kent
- the power struggle of Jordan and Kent leading to the emptying of the village
- the use made by Jordan of the villagers' superstitions to make them turn on each other
- the ambiguous part played by Mr Quill
- the reversal of the Creation story with Jordan playing God, etc

Some will disagree that those with power are solely to blame and focus on:

- the villagers' own self-destruction, their inward-looking nature, many being related
- the fear the villagers have of strangers and how this leads to the unmaking of their world (they are guilty of inbreeding partly because they do not welcome outsiders)
- the misconception that the world is a perfect world to start with – life is always hard, the villagers struggle to live off their products
- Crace's ambiguity in showing that the village as it is needs progress, justice is rather random and ineffective, arguments flare up, Master Kent is inept
- the part played by nature which is 'inflexible and stern'
- the weakness of the villagers in letting things happen and being party to it, unmaking their own world
- Thirsk's own weakness – he can't make a decision (when the two strangers are put in the pillory he does not immediately help them), etc.

Students need to address 'solely'.

Accept any valid interpretations, any valid comments on contexts of production and reception and any relevant integrated comment on dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.

Question 06**Hard Times – Charles Dickens**

‘Stephen Blackpool’s “Tis aw a muddle” is an apt assessment of the power structures in *Hard Times*.’

To what extent do you agree with this view? Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of Dickens’ authorial 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 *Hard Times* through the lens of **political and social protest writing**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

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:

- quality of argument as students address ‘To what extent’ they agree with the given view
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy

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

With respect to authorial method:

Focus might be on:

- Dickens’ use of the industrial novel to investigate the muddle caused by those with power
- structural issues – changes of scenes and different characters’ stories, use of climaxes, beginning and ending, key events
- use of third person narrator – one who is deeply critical in his condemnation of the powerful and deeply sympathetic for those who suffer
- use of other voices with identifiable idiolects – Sleary and Bounderby; attempt by Dickens to represent a Northern accent for Stephen Blackpool
- the title and its implications
- use of names, Bounderby, Blackpool, Gradgrind, M’Choakumchild
- use of elegiac style
- setting – Coketown, schoolroom, circus, industry
- use of descriptive detail to draw attention to the muddle etc

Given that this is an **open book** exam, comment on the ways meanings are shaped should be specific and accurate.

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 novel:

In writing about whether in *Hard Times* “ ’Tis aw a muddle” is an apt assessment for the ‘power structures’, students will specifically be engaging with social, religious, educational, gender and political contexts. In discussing whether the assessment is ‘apt’, students will be engaging with and demonstrating understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts of when the novel was written and how it was received. Given that this is an industrial novel, students will also be engaging with the specific issues at the heart of industrial communities in the 19th century.

Focus might be on:

- Stephen’s sense of ‘muddle’ extending into the ‘muddle-headed’ ideologies represented by Bounderby and Gradgrind
- the muddle of education standards and values based on ‘facts’ at the Gradgrind ‘factory’
- the muddle of industrial management based on ‘laissez faire’ – both shown to be erroneous through their effect on Louisa and Tom, the death of Blackpool and the action of striking workers
- the social laws that will not permit Stephen to divorce his drunken wife
- the attitudes to women and marriage that lead to Louisa’s abuse, etc

AO4 Explore connections across literary texts.

With respect to connections with the wider political and social protest writing genre:

In writing about whether in *Hard Times* “ ’Tis aw a muddle” is an apt assessment for the ‘power structures’, students will be connecting with the elements of political and social protest writing which focus on the suppression of the lower classes and women by men who hold power.

Focus might be on:

- Dickens’ satirical tone which is critical and angry – and connects to satire as form
- his deep sympathy (and sentimentality) towards those who suffer –
- his use of humour – not always a common ingredient in protest writing
- his creating of the alternative caring world of the circus, to offer a different way of living, and thinking, a way that values creativity, a way that Gradgrind learns is better
- the way that *Hard Times* was published in weekly parts in 1854 which suggests Dickens was merging political journalism with fiction, etc

AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

With respect to meanings and interpretations:

Some students will agree with the proposition set up in the task and focus on:

- the muddle of Bounderby's 'self-made man' image which is founded on lies
- the muddle of the marriage laws – Stephen's words reflect his sense of marital entrapment to a drunken wife and with no recourse to divorce, Louisa's 'arranged marriage' which causes her misery
- the muddle of the attitudes towards women as exemplified by Louisa's marriage and relationship with James Harthouse, etc

Some will disagree that it is all a muddle and focus on:

- the circus group and their organised and caring society
- the role of Sissy Jupe – Dickens suggests that feeling, compassion and love in all areas through the development of fancy/imagination in childhood and education will clear a path through the muddle and allow people to 'come together'
- Louisa's growth as a human being
- Gradgrind's learning through the muddle, etc

Accept any valid interpretations, any valid comments on contexts of production and reception and any relevant integrated comment on dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.

Question 07**Henry IV Part I – William Shakespeare**

‘Shakespeare shows that rebellion, whatever its origin or purpose, is sure to result in vengeance.’

To what extent do you agree with this view? Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration 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. Some ideas will inevitably address more than one AO.

Examiners must also remember that, because students have read and studied *Henry IV Part I* through the lens of **political and social protest writing**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

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:

- quality of argument as students address ‘To what extent’ they agree with the given view
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy

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

With respect to dramatic methods:

Focus might be on:

- a drama structured upon the effects of the deposition/usurpation of Richard II by Henry Bolingbroke, the Henry IV of the title;
- a drama which is structured around different types of rebellion
- the use of dialogue to show rebellion – Hotspur, Vernon and their anger; Hal and Falstaff’s more humorous exchanges
- Falstaff’s comic rebellion which is also visual
- use of different settings for the different rebellions: Henry’s court, the tavern, Shrewsbury plains
- language, imagery, etc

Given that this is an **open book** exam, comment on the ways meanings are shaped should be specific and accurate.

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:

In writing about whether in *Henry IV Part I* Shakespeare shows that ‘rebellion’, whatever its origin or purpose is sure to result in ‘vengeance’, students will specifically be engaging with social, moral, and political contexts. In discussing whether rebellion is ‘sure’ to ‘result in vengeance’, students will be engaging with and demonstrating understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts of when the play was written and how it has been received. Given that this is a historical play, set two hundred years earlier than when Shakespeare was writing, students will also be engaging with how Shakespeare used a different time period to reflect upon his own world.

Focus might be on:

- the belief in the divine right of anointed monarchs; Elizabethan England’s focus on legitimacy of Tudor monarchy and desire for national unity
- the planned uprising of Hotspur, Northumberland, Vernon and Glendower and their various claims to have a moral purpose
- the divisions in the ranks of the rebels which inevitably will end in vengeance (it is clear they will not offer a more secure or moral power structure than King Henry’s)
- Hal’s behaviour as ‘rebellious son’ seen by Henry as providential punishment or vengeance for, in part, his usurpation of Richard’s throne
- Hal’s rebellion against his father by spending time with Falstaff in the tavern which leads to Henry’s anger towards him (Hal loses his place in council to his brother, Henry reprimands him in a serious dressing down), etc

AO4 Explore connections across literary texts.

With respect to connections with the wider political and social protest writing genre:

In writing about whether in *Henry IV Part I* Shakespeare shows that ‘rebellion’, whatever its origin or purpose is sure to ‘result’ in ‘vengeance’, students will be connecting with the elements of political and social protest writing which focus on the discord created by those who rebel. Essentially the play supports the king and the order he represents, despite his ill-gotten crown, and condemns those who rebel against him. However, as always in Shakespeare, there is ambivalence. Focus might be on:

- whether rebellion against weak political powers can be justified
- a text which could be seen as conservative at heart, unlike much protest writing
- characters like Hotspur, who as a rebel, must be defeated, but who is also presented in part, as admirable and tragic
- the comic voice and dramatic space given here to Falstaff to protest against order and authority, to rebel comically against the power of the state, etc

AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

With respect to meanings and interpretations:

Some students will agree with the proposition set up in the task and focus on:

- the rebellion of Hotspur and Worcester leading to Henry’s vengeance on them, his lack of any kind of tolerance for Worcester and Vernon who are executed

- the fact that though the rebellion is defeated by Henry, there are still those who will seek vengeance (the Archbishop of York, the Welsh, etc)
- Hotspur's rebellion against the crown resulting in Hal's vengeance upon him
- Falstaff's rebellion against authority resulting in the mild vengeance enacted on him by Hal, etc

Some will disagree that rebellion always results in vengeance and focus on:

- the rebellion of Henry resulting in a kind of stability for the monarchy
- the rebellion of Henry not leading to vengeance but to a shoring up of the duties and responsibilities of his sons
- Hal's 'rebellion' against his father does not result in 'vengeance' but in reconciliation through the defeat of Hotspur
- Falstaff's rebellion on the battlefield does not lead to vengeance but to expressions of love from Hal, etc

Accept any valid interpretations, any valid comments on contexts of production and reception and any relevant integrated comment on dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.

Question 08***A Doll's House* – Henrik Ibsen (Translated by Michael Meyer)**

'By the end of the play Nora is presented as having fulfilled her desire to be absolutely free.'

To what extent do you agree with this view? Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of Ibsen'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 *A Doll's House* through the lens of **political and social protest writing**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

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:

- quality of argument as students address 'To what extent' they agree with the given view
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy

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

With respect to dramatic methods:

Although this is a translated text, we will treat the translated text as Ibsen's own words.

Focus might be on:

- a tightly structured drama in three acts with a clear trajectory: exposition, development, dénouement and resolution – Nora's being bound by social restraints at the start of the play with a movement towards her freedom at the end
- domestic setting of Torvald's house in Norway, domestic interior throughout
- time setting – Christmas over a period of three days, late 19th century
- use of voices and dialogue
- use of exits and entrances, especially Nora's final exit, etc

Given that this is an **open book** exam, comment on the ways meanings are shaped should be specific and accurate.

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:

In writing about whether in *A Doll's House* Nora is presented as having 'fulfilled her desire' to be 'absolutely free', students will specifically be engaging with social, moral, gender, economic and political contexts. In discussing whether she is presented as becoming 'absolutely free', students

will be engaging with and demonstrating understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts of when the play was written and how it was received. Focus might be on:

- Nora's fighting back against her oppressive husband
- the production context of the first performance – her dramatic exit was so shocking that an alternative ending was also produced in which Nora is shown her sleeping children and cannot leave her husband
- Nora's moral rights to make decisions
- Nora's exemplifying the position of women in the represented world of the 19th century
- the oppressiveness of male patriarchy (Torvald reflects society's belief that men are masters in their homes and that their wives are under their care and protection, but are also subservient to them and should obey them)
- the importance of money in the world of the play – money is the central means by which the powerful exert control; Nora has no economic power of her own and cannot take out a loan without the permission of her husband, etc

AO4 Explore connections across literary texts.

With respect to connections with the wider political and social protest writing genre:

In writing about whether in *A Doll's House* Nora has 'fulfilled her desire' to be 'absolutely free', students will be connecting with the elements of political and social protest writing of the individual's right to be free of oppressive social constraints, exemplified here by marriage.

Focus might be on:

- the achievement or otherwise of domestic freedom
- finding a voice to protest against social control
- the potential strength of the individual as in here the power of Nora's declaration that her first duty is to herself, an absolute rejection of what society expects of her
- power and powerlessness in literature, etc

AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

With respect to meanings and interpretations:

Some students will agree with the proposition set up in the task and focus on:

- the way Nora's concepts of 'freedom' change over the course of the play
- at the beginning, freedom = freedom from money cares and the freedom to keep the house tidy and spend time with the children
- at the close of action, 'freedom' is the casting off of patriarchal 'oppression' and condescension
- Nora's finding a voice
- Nora's becoming an adult, etc

Some will suggest that Nora does not fulfil her desire to be ‘absolutely free’ and focus on:

- Nora’s being hemmed in by the patriarchal legal system, not allowing her to make money decisions without breaking the law
- Nora’s escape, but at the cost of her home and children, both of which matter to her and involve great sacrifice
- the fact that there is no political structure to support Nora’s decisions as an individual, etc

Accept any valid interpretations, any valid comments on contexts of production and reception and any relevant integrated comment on dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.

Question 09***The Handmaid's Tale* – Margaret Atwood**

'*The Handmaid's Tale* is not primarily about the suppression of women but about their defiance.'

To what extent do you agree with this view? Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of Atwood's authorial 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 *The Handmaid's Tale* through the lens of **political and social protest writing**, the AOs must necessarily be connected to that genre through the task.

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:

- quality of argument as students address 'To what extent' they agree with the given view
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy

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

With respect to authorial methods:

Focus might be on:

- futuristic dystopian form
- fictive biography
- use of pseudo-academic notes
- voice of Offred in the first person, but also Moira, Nick, the Commander
- embedded stories of Moira, Janine, real historical events
- foregrounding of story-telling method – construction and reconstruction, use of chronology, structural issues of flashbacks, parallels, time jumps
- biblical language and imagery, allusions to Genesis, Jeremiah, Job, etc

Given that this is an **open book** exam, comment on the ways meanings are shaped should be specific and accurate.

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 novel:

In writing about *A Handmaid's Tale's* not being primarily about 'the suppression of women' but 'their defiance', students will specifically be engaging with social, moral, gender, religious, and political contexts. In discussing whether the novel is 'primarily' about the defiance of women rather

than their suppression, students will be engaging with and demonstrating understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts of when the novel was written and how it was received.

Focus might be on:

- the divisions between women and men that have been set up by the state in their new society
- the religious ideology behind the setting up of Gilead with its roots in Puritan beliefs and the Old Testament
- the links between Gilead and far right religious groups of the 1980s, the growing concern in the 1980s about new reproductive technologies
- the links with the second wave of feminism in the United States in the 1970s – Offred’s defiance coming from her growing respect for what her mother stood for in the 1970s
- the parallels between the treatment of women in Gilead and Afghanistan, Iran, Romania
- the way that some of the ideas of the 1980s (when Atwood wrote her novel) could now be seen as dated from a western perspective, though not from groups focusing on the rights of women worldwide to have an education, exemplified by the story of Malala Yousafzai, etc

AO4 Explore connections across literary texts.

With respect to connections with the wider political and social protest writing genre:

In writing about whether *A Handmaid’s Tale* is not primarily about the ‘suppression of women’ but ‘their defiance’, students will be connecting with the elements of political and social protest writing which focus on women’s subjugation and their finding a voice to defy the authorities which have power over them.

Focus might be on:

- the first person narrative voice as a means of recording story
- secret thinking (which later appears in written form) as a form of defiance against the male oppressors and the state and her voice is distinctly female and so connects with other texts
- the literary context of the dystopian novel and the links between *A Handmaid’s Tale* and *1984*
- the links between the writings of suppressed groups or incarcerated individuals who take risks to reveal their stories, for example, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the writings of Nelson Mandela,
- Atwood’s use of humour and seriousness to foreground Offred’s defiance, etc

AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

With respect to meanings and interpretations:

Some students will agree with the proposition set up in the task and focus on:

- the importance of writing as a form of resistance
- her survival and ability to smuggle out the tapes
- the defiance of Moira

- Offred's mother – the feminist icon who, in a sense, refuses to be dead. Offred's constant resurrecting her through the narrative is significant
- Ofglen who dies a fighter
- Offred's holding on to her identity and sexuality
- her intelligent critique of the system, etc

Some will suggest that the novel is not 'primarily' about the defiance of women and focus on:

- the terrible conditions for the handmaids in Gilead
- their being categorised and labelled (for Offred: a walking womb)
- the treatment of those who defy the system – Ofglen, those killed at the Salvagings, the fate of Janine
- the state-sanctioned rape
- the wives of the Commanders who have to agree to the grotesque displays of polygamy
- the final word of the novel being given to a male suggesting that little has changed for women
- removal of language to prevent female friendships, etc

Students need to engage with 'primarily'.

Accept any valid interpretations, any valid comments on contexts of production and reception and any relevant integrated comment on dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.

Section C

Question 10

‘Political and social protest writing often focuses on rebellion against those in power.’

Explore the significance of rebellion as it is presented in **two** political and social protest texts you have studied.

[25 marks]

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:

- quality of argument in relation to victims in political and social protest writing
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy

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

If students are writing about *A Doll’s House*, although this is a translated text, we will treat the translated text as Ibsen’s own words.

With respect to significance of authorial methods:

Focus might be on:

- the text’s form of drama, poetry or prose – dramatic form of *Henry IV Part I* to show rebellion of Hotspur and Northumberland against the king
- the use of narrators – the first person narrator of Offred to show her rebellion through preserving her voice
- the uses of text titles – ‘V’ – to signify Harrison’s rebellion against conventional poetry and the establishment
- the uses of structural features – the three acts of *A Doll’s House* to show the build-up to Nora’s rebellion against her husband and her society
- the uses of language – the descriptive detail and imagery in ‘The Garden of Love’ to highlight Blake’s rebellion through his poetry against the oppression of the church
- dialogue – in *Hard Times* when the strikers rebel against Bounderby’s oppressive factory management
- the use of chronology, use of time jumps in *The Kite Runner* to draw attention to the rebellions of Baba against the Russians and Amir against the Taliban authority as represented by Assef, 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:

Focus might be on:

- settings (time and place) – the plains of Shrewsbury for the rebels' confrontation with Henry and his army
- social – the rural community of *Harvest* who rebel against enclosures through their attack on Jordan's groom
- moral – the didactic nature of *Hard Times* which suggests that rebellions can bring about change as exemplified through Gradgrind
- psychological – the pressure placed upon Nora by her husband which leads to her rebellion, etc

AO4 Explore connections across literary texts.

With respect to significance of connections with the political and social protest writing genre:

Focus might be on:

- rebellion as central to protest writing
- rebellions which are through writing
- rebellions in thinking and not accepting the rules of authority
- rebellions of a military nature
- rebellions by women against patriarchal control
- rebellions by the underprivileged and powerless, etc

AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

With respect to the interpretative significances that can be found:

Students might develop any of the points mentioned above and suggest what meanings arise from those ideas and how readers might react, for example:

- Blake – the narrator of the poems (perhaps Blake himself) rebelling against authority by writing poetry, the call for rebellion by the Earth, the little boy lost who dares to question the institutional wisdom of the priest, etc
- Harrison – the rebellion of the skin in 'V' who desecrates the gravestones, Harrison's rebellion against the conventional language of poetry, etc
- Hosseini – the rebellion of Amir against the Taliban as represented by Assef, the rebellion of Hassan's mother, the rebellion of Baba against Russian oppression, etc
- Crace – the rebellion of the Derby twins and Brooker Higgs in the taking of magic mushrooms and setting fire to the barn, the rebellion of the three outsiders, etc
- Dickens – Louisa's rebellion against her upbringing and marriage, the workers' rebellion against the mill owners, etc
- Atwood – Offred's rebellion against the rules, Moira, Offred's mother, etc
- Ibsen – Nora's rebellion against her husband's rules, both in the early stages of the play and at the end, etc
- Shakespeare – the rebellion of Hotspur, Northumberland, Glendower, Hal's rebellion against his father's rules, Falstaff's rebellion against authority, etc

Accept any valid interpretations, any valid comments on contexts of production and reception and any relevant integrated comment on dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.

Question 11

‘Political and social protest writing shows that, if people are to effect change, they need to group together.’

Explore the significance of people joining together as it is presented in **two** political and social protest texts you have studied.

[25 marks]

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:

- quality of argument in relation to victims in political and social protest writing
- organisation of ideas
- use of appropriate concepts and terminology
- technical accuracy

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

If students are writing about *A Doll's House*, although this is a translated text, we will treat the translated text as Ibsen's own words.

With respect to significance of authorial methods:

Focus might be on:

- the text's form of drama, poetry or prose – dramatic form of *Henry IV Part I* to show how the play's structure is used to reflect the joining together of groups to aid Hotspur in his military confrontation with Henry (the withdrawal of Northumberland's and Glendower's forces showing perhaps why the rebellion fails); the dramatic action of the fighting
- the use of narrators – the third person narrator of *Hard Times* to show endorsement for those who join together (Louisa and Sissy) to effect change (through their influence Gradgrind becomes a better man)
- the uses of text titles – *Harvest* – to signify the importance of a community and how working together can yield results
- the uses of structural features – the use of alternative speakers in 'V' to highlight the lone voice of the skin which suggests why he cannot effect change
- the uses of language – the descriptive detail and imagery in 'London' to reflect humanity suffering in isolation – the reason why change does not happen
- dialogue – in *The Handmaid's Tale* when Moira leads a resistance against the authorities, 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:

- settings (time and place) – Torvald's house at Christmas at which different characters arrive to indirectly help Nora to come to her decision

- social – the rural community of *Harvest* who join together in their rebellion against enclosures through their attack on Jordan’s groom in their attempt to effect change
- moral – the question of whether Hotspur and the rebels are justified in joining together to displace the king (Hotspur believes that Mortimer is the rightful successor of Richard)
- historical – the use made of the women’s rights movements of the 1970s to show how the joining together of women did effect change, etc

AO4 Explore connections across literary texts.

With respect to significance of connections with the political and social protest writing genre:

Focus might be on:

- joining together through writing and art to bring about change
- intellectuals’ collective responsibility to give a voice to the voiceless
- collective attacks on the establishment
- collective outrage against oppression, etc

AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

With respect to the interpretative significances that can be found:

Students might develop any of the points mentioned above and suggest what meanings arise from those ideas and how readers might react, for example:

- Blake – the family groups and village groups in *The Songs of Innocence*, the way that Blake focuses on individuals who are helpless and unable to effect any change, etc
- Harrison – the two voices of Harrison in ‘V’ which must be reconciled, the speaker’s joining together with his wife to find happiness, the speaker’s joining together emotionally with his parents in ‘Marked with D’ to reconcile his personal anxiety, the focus on individual isolation in ‘V’ and ‘Them & [uz]’, the way the skins in ‘V’ have joined together to rebel, etc
- Hosseini – the joining together of Rahim Khan and Amir to bring about Amir’s redemption by rescuing Sohrab, the joining together of Amir and Sohrab to defeat Assef, etc
- Crace – the way Jordan breaks the community by not allowing people to join together, he drives them apart by accusing them of witchcraft, the joining together of the Beldams to offer some resistance, the aloneness and sense of hopelessness perhaps of Thirsk at the end of the novel, etc
- Dickens – the strikers at the mill in contrast to Stephen’s isolation, the joining together of Louisa and Sissy Jupe to find some consolation, etc
- Atwood – the handmaids finding ways to communicate as acts of defiance, Offred’s joining with Nick to effect escape, etc
- Ibsen – Nora’s joining with Mrs Linde in her rebellion against her husband’s power and rules, though her final defiance is as an individual, Mrs Linde’s joining forces with Krogstad to help him to become a better person, etc
- Shakespeare – the grouping of the rebels and the failure of the plot when Glendower and Northumberland do not play their part, Hal’s joining with Falstaff and company for enjoyment and for political purposes, his covering himself with ‘the base contagious clouds’, etc

Accept any valid interpretations, any valid comments on contexts of production and reception and any relevant integrated comment on dramatic methods that are embedded into the argument.

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