

# **Sample answers**

## **Literature in English**

**9695/51-53**



UNIVERSITY *of* CAMBRIDGE  
International Examinations

These three sample answers are for 9695 AS/AL Literature in English Paper 5. They are intended to give an idea of the range of response and the requirements at the top, middle and middle/bottom of the mark range. They are not necessarily ideal or model answers, but are chosen as being representative answers on model texts.

Section AWilliam Shakespeare : The Tempest2) Question B

Prospero is portrayed in the following passage by Shakespeare as commanding, controlling, compassionate and loving. We also see Prospero has a great dislike for Caliban.

The language that Prospero uses when talking of Caliban is hard and strong, such as "beast Caliban", "a devil, a born devil". Prospero's tone when reminded of Caliban is angry and spiteful as seen in the words, "false conspiracy", and "I will plague them all". In these we see that Prospero absolutely despises Caliban with a passion and sees him as a nuisance as he says, "my old brain is troubled", when explaining to Ferdinand why he is upset.

Prospero is portrayed as a commanding and controlling person. This is seen in his firm tone of voice in the phrases, "well done, avoid no more!" "Come, with a thought", "Ariel, come". Ariel also calls Prospero, "my commander", to show how commanding Prospero is and what authority he has over him.

Prospero however is also presented as being loving and compassionate. This is seen in the

gentle voice he talks to in when speaking to Ferdinand, "you do look my son, in a man's sort; in this we also see compassion for a person Prospero could and could have reason to despise due to the mistakes and actions of King Alonso.

We also see Prospero's compassion in the way he praises Ariel, "well done, my bird." In Prospero's words, "bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled", we see how Prospero is open about his feelings and what he is going through.

Through Ariel we see that Prospero is short-tempered as Ariel says, "I thought to have told thee of it; but I fear'd / best / I might anger thee."

This is how Prospero manages to keep command. We also see Prospero is a punisher and seeks justice, which could add on to why Ariel fears him so much. This is seen in the words, "I will plague them all, / Even to roaring."

Ariel tends to have a blunt voice with no passion or emotion in it. He is portrayed to have the typical master-servant relationship with Prospero as seen in the words, "what's thy pleasure."

Ariel is presented as Shakespeare as the obedient servant, who follows orders as seen in the words, "I go, I go". It is evident however that Ariel sees Prospero as a commander as seen in the

words, "my commander" Ariel <sup>is</sup> also to afraid of Prospero which is ~~why~~ probably why he is obedient to him as seen in the phrase, "but I fear'd."

Ariel is also presented as a forced punisher, doing the work of Prospero. This is seen in how he torments Caliban for Prospero by leading them close to his cell for him.

Ariel he does have good mastery of the language and speaks in smooth poetic lines as he describes what he did to Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo.

X

Section B      Question 3 (b)

3b) The following passage consists mainly of dialogue, this technique helps bring out the theme of society and Fanny's obligation to the Bertram family. It also shows how Fanny has very little control of her life, and what she can and cannot do.

The narrative bits of the passage let us see people's reactions to the scene taking place. This helps show Fanny's place in the Bertram family and the theme of society that the play is based on.

Tom Bertram's unchanging position on Fanny's refusal to perform goes to show that Fanny can be bullied around as she is from a lower rank in society. Had it been Maria or Julia who did not want the part they would have been forced to take it.

Mrs. Norris's attitude towards Fanny is of harshness and comments such as, "I am quite ashamed of you, Fanny, to make such a difficulty of obliging your cousins," "I shall think her a very obstinate, ungrateful girl, if she does not do what her aunt and cousins wish her," "considering who and what she is," constantly remind us that Fanny is of lower rank to everyone else.

It also reminds us that Fanny is there out of charity and therefore has little control of her life as is expected to do whatever is required of her by anyone.

~~In the phrase, "Fanny was up in a movement", we see that Fanny was used as a servant in the Bertram household as she is~~

In the phrase, "Fanny was up in a movement, expecting some reward, for the habit of employing her in that way was not yet overcome", we see that Fanny is used as a servant in the Bertram household and is used to it as she expects to be sent.

The exclusion of Fanny from the conference shows that Fanny's presence and opinion is not counted worthy or worth bearing, therefore putting a class barrier by excluding her.

In Fanny's reaction, in her being asked to participate in the play, "Me!" cried Fanny, sitting down again with a most frightened look", shows that Fanny is timid and shy as the news of her acting frightens her.

We see that Fanny does not like attention and prefers to be left alone in the phrase, "said Fanny, shocked to find herself at that moment the only speaker in the room". However it could also go to show how Fanny never receives attention.

and therefore it shocks her that she is receiving attention from people.

In the words, "Fanny, growing more and more red from excessive agitation and looking distressfully", we see how vulnerable Fanny is to the Bertrams. We also see that her role is to do as the Bertrams please cause of her place in society.

Though Fanny is said to be, "ungrateful indeed, considering who and what she is," her treatment shows us how cruel society was in victorian era.

## **Example 1**

**Paying close attention to language and tone, consider Shakespeare's presentation of Prospero and Ariel in the following passage.**

**(Act 4, Scene 1, 'Prospero: I had forgot that foul conspiracy...Prospero: ...Even to roaming.'**)

The first essay on *The Tempest* is in Band 4, work that is 'solid'. The candidate does address the task consistently, the presentation of Prospero and Ariel, maintaining focus throughout what is quite a short essay. There is some knowledge of the text applied to the task and there is a clear understanding of how the writer's choices shape meaning – for example in considering the language of Prospero as 'hard and strong'. However this is not developed into analysis nor does the essay move beyond the candidate's generalised opinions. The focus though is on the 'portrayal' and there is a partial awareness of the dramatic methods: Ariel's reaction influences the way the audience sees Prospero for example. The reference to King Alonso hints at a wider knowledge of the text, but crucially here the candidate does not give a context for the passage nor is there any placing of the passage in terms of characterisation and plot. This limits the development of the essay to a series of thoughts and opinions which are partly repetitive and though these are clearly expressed if simple, there is little sense of an argument or a view unfolding here and the essay remains assertive in tone. Opinions are offered on for example different views of Prospero but these are not rooted in the language or dialogue sufficiently to be evidence of discrimination. The literary features noticed such as Ariel's 'smooth, poetic lines' are not analysed and the effects are merely asserted.

**Paying close attention to language and dialogue, write a critical appreciation of the following passage, showing what it contributes to your understanding of Fanny's role and characterisation.**

**(Chapter 15: ' "Fanny," cried Tom Bertram"...considering who and what she is."')**

The Austen essay, also on the passage, is somewhat weaker, mainly because there are fewer points relevantly made, though once again the essay is focused on the task. There is less evidence of the wider knowledge of the text and the simple ideas on Fanny's position in the Bertram household are neither developed nor fully supported. Again the absence of any contextualisation or placing of the passage hinders the development and the subtlety of Austen's dialogue and language is not considered. For example, Aunt Norris's comment is seen only in the way it shows Fanny's position and there is no comment on what it reveals about Mrs Norris and Fanny's role in the novel as the method through which Austen reveals the hypocrisy and wickedness perhaps of Mrs Norris. This essay therefore remains in Band 5 as a basic attempt, relevant and showing limited knowledge, but not having any depth to the argument nor able to offer analysis of the literary features noticed by the candidate which are in the first place basic points.

## Section A

1b. Throughout the course of this extract Shakespeare clearly portrays the relationship between Hamlet and his mother, Gertrude through the play. This is the first time in the play that they are seen 'alone' as Hamlet confronts his mother. "Mother you have my father much offended", by this Shakespeare suggests how he feels she has "offended" not only him self but also his father Ghost Hamlet due to her "hasty marriage". The tone, actions and language used by Shakespeare in this extract clearly depicts the distant, tense and cold relationship that Hamlet and his mother maintain.

Shakespeare portrays Hamlet as a very direct character in this extract. Throughout the whole play we see how Hamlet has "method in madness" <sup>this portrays</sup> his intelligent use of puns through the play. In this case when talking to his mother he changes the focus of the conversation from him towards his mother. Gertrude creates distance by the language as she is talking formally, "thou" and Hamlet is informal "you". Shakespeare suggest by this how even though Hamlet feels betrayed by

his mother, he is still being direct to her. On the other hand Gertrude's formality adds tension and distance in their relationship. Hamlet's actions in this scene also portray his lack of trust in his mother as he "kills Polonius through the arras" thinking it was Claudius. This action and Gertrude being present in it later on in the play suggests how Gertrude wished to protect her son.

Shakespeare makes ~~to~~

Shakespeare suggests how throughout this Gertrude and Hamlet's relationship is "suggested" by Shakespeare to be in a "balance" in this extract. Therefore it is a constant conversation at the beginning 'attacking' each other with their feelings.

Hamlet's "idle tongue" suggests how he tells his mother his direct feelings and is honest to her in that he feels of her rushed and 'incestuous' marriage. Hamlet says Gertrude ~~tongue~~ has a "wicked tongue".

This clearly depicts how he feels betrayed and hurt by his mother as she has an 'evil' tongue; for taking Claudius as her husband. These 'insults' to each other show the distance created and the tension between both characters as they both feel 'offended' by each other in different ways.

~~Opinion~~

As Polonius is spying on the conversation Hamlet and the Queen are having this suggests how Polonius does not trust anyone and he thinks the only way to find out the real truth is by spying. Gertrude allows Polonius to stay behind the "arras" this depicts how she cared of her son as he is now 'mad'. "Have you forgotten me?" not only is she scared of her son as he is mad but she is also scared of him forgetting her. This shows how she does truly care about her son and wishes to know if he still cares about her. Despite the distance created this portrays how she still wishes to have her son by her side, even though she is scared of him and the actions that he might make. Gertrude does not understand her sons attitude "In noise so rude against me" this suggests how she does not understand her sons actions of killing Polonius "What wilt thou murder me?" Shakespeare clearly portrays the lack of trust she has in her son as she is scared he will kill her, due to his 'madness'

Throughout the play many critics suggest the oedipal complex in the relationship between Hamlet and Gertrude. Ernest

Jones suggests how he loves two women Ophelia and Gertrude yet dislikes them at the same time. "Come, come and sit you down" this suggests how Hamlet is trapped between the love he feels for his mother and at the same time the 'hated'. Critics suggest how this hatred and violentness is also a sign of desire towards his mother as he is frustrated and jealous of Claudius as he secretly wishes to be the one in bed with his mother.

In conclusion through this extract Shakespeare portrays how the tone and atmosphere is tense between Hamlet and his mother, the tension rises as Gertrude does not know why hamlet has done "this bloody deed" suggesting the distance between the two characters. The language between them emphasises the distance in their relationship as they speak to each other in different tenses suggesting how they feel different connection between each other.

5d. Discuss Dickens' presentation of schools and ideas about education in Hard Times.

In 'Hard Times' the role of school and the education the children receive plays a big role. Dickens portrays how in the nineteenth century industrialisation everything was being threatened to turn into 'machines' even the people, therefore Dickens satirises the system which was based on "facts and only facts" by Gradgrind exposing the outcome of this education and its failure. On the other hand Dickens shows how the excess of fancy is too much, thus the perfect education would be the balance between 'fancy' and 'facts'.

Gradgrind is the character responsible for the education system based on facts in Coketown. "This is the principle on which I bring up my own children" this portrays how not only Louisa and Tom are victims of this oppressive education but all the children involved in the system as well. The schools in Hard Times are portrayed as one mere factory in Coketown that produces "little vessels arranged in order". The 'production' of these children emphasise how this

educational system they follow leads them to being 'clowns' of each other. They all follow the same process through their educational system and they import the same amount of facts into their brains. Gradgrind's ideal education is the one that brings both of his children to a downfall at the end of the novel.

### ~~The Education~~

The ideal education in Coketown for the high society is based on facts. By this Dickens suggests how the children can not have a childhood as the facts make them think directly like adults. The perfect example of ideal man raised in this education is "Bitzer who only thinks facts yet he does say "I wonder" therefore bringing into doubt the Gradgrind system and its effect as they are prohibited to "wonder". The education in Hard Times speeds up the ~~aging~~ ageing process therefore makes the children tired since a young age; "I have been tired for a long time now". The overload of facts in this educational system ~~brings~~ brings characters like Louisa and Tom to their downfall. Louisa wishes to wonder yet she is ~~not~~ prohibited, the only thing she can see slightly wondering is when she looks into the "fire". This fire is a contrast to the cold hard facts she

receives in her education. She wishes she coulds taught how to wonder and feel emotions yet due to the education this is something impossible for her and even though she truly wishes she knew how she never can. "I have not read any amusing sight or ~~ever~~ read any amasing books" this emphasises once more the lack of emotions and imagination that Gradgrind's education brings to his children. The ideal education for Gradgrind is based on "facts and only facts" therefore he does not understand at the end of the novel how his 'perfect' educational system brings the downfall of his children.

On the other hand Dickens presents the overload of just fancy in the circus. Through the character of Sissy Dickens clearly portrays the balance between two completely different ideas of education. One based on cold facts and the other on fancy. Due to Gradgrind facts Sissy feels "stupid" when joining the Gradgrind family as she can not 'impart' all the facts as "it is too late". Gradgrind is "discpinted" in this. Dickens suggests how his idea of facts does not work on Sissy, therefore she is not like the rest

of the little vessels.

Dickens throughout Hard Times tries to make the reader find the perfect balance between two different educational systems, that contradict each other. Dickens portrays the schools as if they were one mere factory in Coketown, dull; cold and full of the same 'products'. Dickens ~~presents~~ shows the perfect outcome of both educational systems through the character of Sissy. Due ~~to~~ to fancyfull Sissy and factual Gradgrind the young ~~g~~ Gradgrinds are raised and educated in the perfect atmosphere as they have a balance between them both. Dickens does show the reader how Mrs Gradgrind knows that <sup>the</sup> "something your father has missed or forgotten ... I don't know what it is" this suggests how she does know something was ~~wrong~~ wrong with her husband's educational system but lacks the energy and ~~the~~ imagination to know what it is. In conclusion Dickens presents the educational system in Coketown as a 'disaster' as no ~~character~~ character except for Sissy has the balance between facts and fancy.

Example 2

PlanHAMLET

## Lang tone actions

CANG  
TONE  
ACTIONSIntro

Lang throughout extract formal ~~but~~ betrays side yet not formal hamlet.

Distance created throughout the extract gertrude thinks her son is even more mad.

Begins Polonius contrast cynthy of any one Gertrude follows his role so he can see and here why hamlet is 'mad' as he believes it is only way to find out the truth.

Turn off focus of language. hamlets language

- "Idle tongue"
- "Wicked tongue"

• Hamlet - attitude - not just feels betrayed tells mother his feelings after killing Polonius.

• Gertrude - attitude distant  
Clerk extract turns gertrude around. ~~yes~~ claudius.

- First time we see both Hamlet and Gertrude completely alone, mother has not seemed to him alone since begins play always some one inbetween.

Oedipus complex - Ernest Jones feels love for both woman Ophelia and Gertrude yet dislikes them both at the same time. wishes he could of been claudius.

~~AARD TIMES~~

- Gradgrind education

"facts and only facts are centred in life [system]"

"this is the principle on which I raise my own children"

- system based on facts they do not seem like a school yet like one almost factory in hard times that creates "little vessels arranged in order"

- Mr Charrington

- feels like "a juvenile jail"

- perfect octogen sitter "polite white" □

School facts brings their down fall

- Sissy

- Fary does not feel like she fits in place

- the circus goes to far on facts

sissy balance between both

- sissy end of the novel little all raised by factual Gradgrind Faryfull Sissy receive perfect balance.

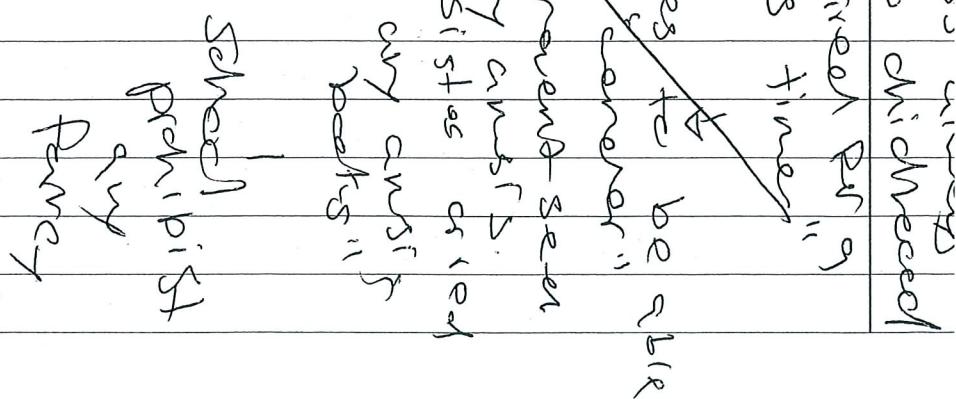
"scratching your

other leg

snuff  
frocks

doll

hats



## **Example 2**

**Paying close attention to the language, tone and action, write a critical appreciation of the following passage, showing what it contributes to your understanding of the relationship between Hamlet and his mother.**

**(Act 3, Scene 4, ‘Polonius: A will come straight...Queen: ...thunders in the index?’)**

The first essay is also a passage-based answer, this time on Hamlet and Gertrude's relationship. Here there is a solid knowledge of the context 'first time they are seen 'alone' – with the candidate aware tacitly of the irony of that. This is characterised by the candidate as 'distant, tense and cold' because of the 'hasty marriage'. But there is no more detailed context offered, so that the Mousetrap is ignored and the refused chance to murder the praying Claudius. There is some sense of exploring the language – the references to 'you' and 'thou' and the effect of the repetitions by Hamlet – but these do not develop into analysis of the effects. The candidate does offer other opinions on the relationship – what Gertrude is 'scared of' for example but these are not structured into an argument. The oedipal interpretation is mentioned but not linked to this passage very effectively and though there is a sense of the wider text at times there is no clear explanation of why this passage is significant in terms of either the relationship or the characterisation or the development of the plot. Overall this is a strong Band 4 essay – quite detailed and aware of some of the literary features, but not able to develop a structured argument or showing much engagement with the subtlety of the language here or even with the dramatic nature of the events unfolding.

**Discuss Dickens's presentation of schools and ideas about education in *Hard Times*.**

The Dickens essay is an option (a) essay and presents a competently organised response to the task. Relevant knowledge has been selected and shaped to the task with a sound overview offered in the opening paragraph on which the candidate builds with close reference to the text, focusing on Gradgrind himself with an apposite quotation and a neat link to the 'factories of Coketown'. To develop the views offered the candidate discusses Bitzer in contrast to Louisa and sees the effect of the use of the 'fire' and the concept of 'wonder', thus showing sound understanding of Dickens's methods and how meaning is created for the reader. The second part of the essay in focusing on 'fancy' and Sleary's circus is a less obvious choice of material for this task but is successfully adapted to the task by concentrating on Sissy and her inability to adapt to the Gradgrind system. The concluding paragraph, in touching on the role of Mrs Gradgrind, shows a sound knowledge of the whole text and effectively if somewhat repetitively sums up the essay, emphasising its relevance to the task set by the question. Overall this is a Band 3 essay, with intelligent if straightforward ideas, brought together in a simple but relevant argument, which is coherently expressed and offers at times personal relevant opinions.

Example 3

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- a) In the play of Hamlet it is extremely difficult to determine what ~~is justice~~ justice is. The question of the relative morality of both Claudius and Hamlet is one of the deepest problems of the play, and the question of whether Hamlet is justified in avenging his father by killing Claudius is one which has been much debated among the critics, and one which has left no definite answer. Shakespeare himself disapproved of revenge, and much of Hamlet may be seen Shakespeare's attempt to make the audience feel ashamed of wanting any man, particularly Claudius, to be killed. ~~This is not to say,~~ therefore, that all the characters are dealt out justice as a result of the revenge plot is perhaps a little misguided; however, it is certainly conceivable that some of the characters receive justice at the end, particularly those who have betrayed such as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and those who have notoriously abused others, such as Polonius.
- The concept of revenge is an ~~an excessively~~ concept is one of extreme complexity, and one which is tremendously difficult to understand. Revenge lies in excess of justice, in the margin between the law and criminality. Revenge requires an act of violence to be born a punishment and a liberation and the death of Hamlet seems to be particularly

clownish or this ambiguity: he dies a revenger and a murderer, but primarily a soldier and a ~~thief~~ Prince. Therefore, the very concept of the concept that there can be an act of violence which is cleansing and acceptable, and one which is abhorrent and unlawful is an extremely terrifying one; as Saint Bellon said in his essay on capital punishment: 'nobody's ~~black~~ hands are clear enough to know the switch.' Therefore, the very concept that revenge can deal out justice is a questionable one and one which is particularly pertinent to the play of Hamlet.

It is, perhaps, appropriate to begin with the character at whose much of the justice of the play is aimed: Claudius. Claudius is throughout depicted as an 'unnatural murderer,' one ~~whose~~ who is a 'carrier of evil,' ~~of~~ poisoning the veins of the community. At first glance, therefore, it seems right that Claudius should be killed by Hamlet, in punishment for his murder. One way it is perhaps easiest to justify ~~a~~ Claudius' murder is by examining the Biblical story of Abraham and his son Isaac. In believing that God wished him to do so, Abraham is willing to kill his own son in the name of the heavenly voice of God. If we accept the Ghost, similarly, as a heavenly appearance, Hamlet may, therefore, be justified in killing his uncle, and in such a way, his revenge deals out justice. However, the question of whether Abraham is a murderer or an obedient son of God still remains. The question of whether God can justify an act of violence is one which

is perhaps disturbing. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that the Ghost is heavenly, but rather a mere evil ~~and~~ appearance. After all, the Ghost is not in heaven, but rather in purgatory for committing acts which the ghost himself can only describe as 'Horrible! Horrible! Horrible!' His decision to Hamlet, therefore, is more evil ~~and~~ than it is correct and ~~more~~ heavenly. In such a way the killing of Claudius cannot be justified through religion, a question which is further compounded for Hamlet ~~first~~ by attempting to know what God exactly desires, and whether he even exists. ~~To~~ In Nietzschean terms, ~~Claudius'~~ the killing of Claudius is not even justified; Nietzsche would define such an action as disrupting the seemingly well ordered and administered society of Denmark. Denmark seems to be smoothly run, and Claudius a good king; Hamlet's actions, therefore, are unjustified in that he is disrupting the social order of Denmark. This is keeps with utilitarianism in a similarly way: Hamlet's actions would not ~~not~~ represent the greatest good for the greatest number but would rather only fully benefits himself, and that in itself is questionable. The Justice for Claudius' revenge, is perhaps not to be killed, but ~~to be made to see more~~ perhaps to be

made to see the error of his ways which, in part, is achieved: 'How ignorant last year speech doth give my conscience.' However, this is negated by his death. In such a way it is hard to determine how the revenge plot deals out ~~revenge~~ to justice in *Hamlet*, at whose it is clearly aimed.

The revenge plot, although aimed at Claudius, also results in the death of ~~or makes~~ the majority of the main characters. Polonius' death demonstrates Hamlet carrying out an impulsive action of stabbing him behind the 'arrras' yet is this, again, justice. Polonius ~~revenge~~ is arguably a particularly disreputable character in the play of Hamlet.

He instructs Reynaldo to spy on his Laertes, telling him to snub Laertes in name in Paris by telling others of Laertes' 'fencing,' 'squabbling,'<sup>to</sup> and 'gambolling.' Nor only does he this treat his son but his daughter too. ~~Her~~ parents ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> Ophelia the 'loves' Ophelia not in order to understand the source of Hamlet's madness; and he attacks her for what he perceives as her promiscuity, telling her that she has been most 'free' and 'forlornous' and logically declares that if she continues with such 'tenders' she'll 'tender' him a 'fool.' Finally, he does demonstrates himself to be a hypocrite, not following his advice he kills Laertes, giving many people his 'tongue' and before not being particularly 'true' to himself. Polonius therefore demonstrates a man who should receive justice, yet, once more is killing appropriate. The answer in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is of course no, yet someone whom has acted like a 'hypocrite'

Example 3

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deserves to be reprimanded in some manner or another. The case is similar with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, both have betrayed Hamlet, acted like 'sponges [s]' with the King, and yet instituting death to their death does not seem to be justice, nor appropriate.

Spoiled that the revenge plot deals out justice to Ophelia ~~by way of her own self-punishment~~. In some ways plausible. Ophelia who has been abused, pained and used by various characters throughout the play is denied of self-expression, and moreover, of self. The revenge plot results in her madness and subsequent suicide, perhaps allowing her to fully express her pent up emotional frustrations. As far as the Victorians Ophelia was certainly deathly justice, personifying the tragic heroine, allowing her ~~extreme~~ sexual curiosities to run wild, and her self-expression to finally break through and yet her speech is 'nothing.' Unlike Hamlet, there is no 'method' in Ophelia's madness. Shakespeare comes extremely close to offering Ophelia a form of self-expression but denies her of it. It seems more that Ophelia is a paler shadow of Hamlet, ~~ever~~ embracing the true madness that Hamlet feels, and acting out

No suicide that I wanted theories. In such a way, it does not seem the revenge & for death justice to Ophelia, unless we see her madness as the finally gaining a form of self-expression.

Example 3

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and Claudius, it is not ~~as~~ ~~very~~ no revenge  
plot that this can be achieved. In fact a reader  
can see the error of their ways, Gertrude  
has 'black spots' and Claudius' conscience is  
giving a 'smart lash,' yet these confessions are  
regarded as a result of their deaths at the end  
of the play. The revenge plot does not act as  
a sufficient vehicle to deliver justice more  
than to the revenger himself, who is placed  
in such an impossible position that he cannot  
act. Merely ~~revenge~~ justice is delivered to  
Hamlet, and even perhaps Laertes who  
similarly seeks revenge. Yet to say that the plot  
deals revenge to all the characters is a  
statement which is extremely hard to  
determine as revenge acts in excess of justice,  
such is one of the main messages of many  
revenge tragedies.

## Example 3

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- a) Much of the Nun's Priest's tale offers a commentary on the follies of mankind. Both characters of Chaucerian and Perteine ~~parody~~<sup>satirise</sup> the pretentious, and indulgent nature of the nobility, particularly in comparison to the widow. A great deal of the Nun's Priest's tale seems to be Chaucer's commentary on how ~~the~~ it was not simply the aristocracy who could possess 'gentil' qualities, in fact, as a result of wealth, ~~for~~ ~~was~~ ~~was~~ it was much harder for the ~~other~~ nobility to act morally, and in a noble manner.

Particularly in the prologue, Chaucer seems to be justifying, and similarly questioning the purpose of story telling. The Monk's statement of 'tel us with May a many our hertes glade' as a result of the nun's tale which was evidently immensely ~~boring~~<sup>boring</sup> is perhaps Chaucer commenting on how humans do not desire to hear stories ~~with~~ with 'sentence', 'exemplum' and moral meaning. Chaucer may be commenting on what man's desire to never hear the truth, ~~bitter~~<sup>bitter</sup> and true, never hear the genuine but rather tales of good 'fame'. In many ways,

Therefore, The Nun's Priest manages to subvert, and slightly criticise this notion by telling a story which is extremely humorous, prompting the Monk to bless the Nun's Priest's 'breeches and every straw' but also one which contains a great deal of 'sentence' and 'moralite.' In such a way, the ~~greatest~~ tale successfully deals with the concept of man never desiring to hear the truth, the unhappy or the genuine.

This theory can be further transferred to the character of Chanticleer. Chanticleer, instead of taking notice of ~~desires~~ his dreams which demonstrated his unhappy end he decides to 'difye' (defy) it. Furthermore, he allows himself to be 'raunshed' by 'flattery.' The Fox's speech, if examined carefully, is certainly one of menace and treachery, particularly with the sonority of words such as 'blasie' and 'guylleise,' and similarly the continuous repetition of 'yon,' 'ye' and 'yon' and yet Chanticleer, a 'al his pride' fails to recognise this, succumbs to the flattery and is successfully beguiled. This therefore demonstrates how The Nun's Priest's Tale not only comments on man's desire to never hear or acknowledge the truth, but also his ability to be utterly blinded by flattery.

The theme of flattery further relates to the theme of pride, another theme which is salient in The Nun's Priest's Tale. Perhaps the describes Chanticleer as 'a coward' and demands now he takes a 'taxatif,' as his dreams are nothing but 'vanities.' Although

## Example 3

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Chaucer offers an unusually academic and intellectual response, citing Cicero, Macbeth and The Bible; this all seems to stem from his desire not to take a 'laxity.' The Nun's Prioress therefore demonstrates how pride can affect man can be so proud that ~~that~~ it can even drive him to ignore his own advice. As well as ~~Prioress'~~ flattering ~~her~~, therefore, it is also 'pride' that causes Chaucer to ignore his own dream and not take his fate into his own hands. Furthermore, it is through Chaucer's references to such authorities as Cicero, Macbeth and ~~Cato~~ and the Bible that results in placing both Chaucer's and Pertelote's fayings in a more human context; the 'anachorite's' help to make the 'sentence' of the story more relevant to humans, and therefore more reflective upon human nature.

'The Nun's Prioress's Tale' also demonstrates how ~~men~~ more of noble birth and wealth do not ~~necessarily~~ necessarily possess 'gentil' qualities. Although Pertelote is described as 'curteys, discrete, and desonarie' ~~the~~ her speech seems to indicate quite the opposite, reprimanding Chaucer as a 'coward' declaring that she cannot love such a man. Similarly,

both Chaucerian and Petelot's are indulgence and excessiveness are also very much apparent throughout The Nun's Priest's Tale, particularly as they 'forniced' each other 'twerty times' before dawn. All this is made much more vivid and abhorrent in comparison to the 'farre widow' who is 'harme' and 'stende' and whose 'temprece dite was al her plijkt.'

The widow represents a poor humble woman who finds it much easier to live a balanced life as a result of her humble background.

Chaucer, however, shows a subtle criticism of the aristocracy through the presentation of Chaucerian and Petelot in comparison to the widow, whose life seems to be much more balanced and indeed 'gentil' than that of the creature and his master. It is also perhaps a subtle criticism of the Nunness, who herself is a Nun and yet seemingly finds it extremely difficult to lead a humble and balanced lifestyle. Indeed wealth is shown to be a curse in the tale, particularly with the pilgrimage in one of Chaucerian's 'exemplaris' whose 'gold' caused his 'mordre.'

Chaucer also demonstrates how frequently man has the opportunity to take control of his own fate and yet repay him. Chaucer gives so many examples of ~~road~~ <sup>the</sup> supported horses by 'aristocree's' of those who foolishly ignored the ~~fate~~ importance of dreams yet in the story of the two pilgrims the fate of one is always in the hand of another,

## Example 3

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and in the case of Kerebus, he is too young to understand the importance of faith, and Cremus too proud. Chameleer is the only character who has the opportunity to take control of his own fate and yet chooses not to as a result of his pride and flattery. Although this could be seen as a comment on ~~the~~ predestination, and how circumstances are as a result of God's will, it is perhaps more likely that this is a comment upon the ~~the~~ passivity of human nature, who when faced with the option of taking action or remaining passive frequently choose the latter often for a foolish and naive.

The portrayal of the fox also illustrates the foolishness of pride. The fox learns to 'hurt his peers' and understand what he has got, rather than always desiring more. This is a clear comment on the way in which humans so frequently are never satisfied, as a result of which we frequently lose what we have already got.

The elevated, mock-heroic quality of the Nun's Priest Tale, allows these serious concerns and messages to be

conveyed in ludicrous circumstances, namely <sup>cocked</sup> the fox and the hen discussing high brow philosophy in a farmyard. This parenthesis misses out this elevated nature of the text could arguably detract from the success at which the fables of human nature are conveyed as it creates a humorous tone, which arguably draws away from the 'moralism' causing its reader to leave with only the 'chaff', ignoring the 'fruit.'

In such a way The Nun's Priest's Tale offers an extremely serious comment on the fables of human nature. This may many seem to flattery and pride, and how the nobility, although he ~~s~~ may possess wealth, are not necessarily 'gentil.' ~~and yet~~ However, some of this is lost in the humor of the tale, and furthermore the ~~attempts at~~ characterisation of the animals may draw away from the themes. Oscar Wilde in particular did not characterise the characters in his plays to much to add more substance to his themes and concerns of the play. This aside however, The Nun's Priest Tale conveys a number of serious messages and concerns ~~not~~ through the ~~beastly~~ animal characters in relation to the unions and wills referred to earlier, and the slightly diluted by the mock heroic, and elevated qualities of the ~~writer~~, and comedy of the tale.

### **Example 3**

**'In the end the revenge plot deals out justice to all the characters.'**  
**How far does your reading of the script support this view?**

This is a very good script throughout. The first essay, option (a) on *Hamlet*, begins with a consideration of the morality of revenge, showing an understanding of different views and how these lead to the essential problem of the play and ultimately its enduring tragic qualities. Linking justice to the idea of revenge enables the candidate to explore the text in detail, moving from the general point and the moral ambiguity highlighted by the quote from Saul Bellow to a detailed examination of Claudius, which cleverly is linked to the story of Abraham and Moses, via the ghost of old Hamlet. The analysis here is sustained and shows a sensitive grasp of how meaning and ambiguity is created by the writer. The development of an alternative 'Nietzschean' view of the murder of Claudius enables the candidate to show a perceptive and balanced grasp of the text – Claudius as the 'good king' – and to link back to the task: what is justice. There is further perceptive analysis of Polonius's role in the play but even here the candidate does not opt for the simple notion of a just death but questions the morality in terms of the 20th century audience – a persuasive statement of differing opinions. There is a sensitive grasp of the role and characterisation of Ophelia, showing personal engagement, which is fully supported and in a way original – Ophelia as a 'paler shadow of Hamlet'. This leads neatly to the perceptive consideration of Hamlet himself which in turn leads to the concluding paragraphs where the candidate summarises the evidence presented and offers a final view on the task set. Overall this is an accomplished and very detailed essay, fully meeting the requirements of Band 1 in all respects.

**In what ways and how successfully does Chaucer use the beast fable to present human nature in *The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale*?**

The Chaucer essay, also option (a), is equally successful. The opening of the essay deconstructs the task through the exploration of 'story telling' and leads the candidate into a detailed and well supported argument on the role and characterisation of Chauntecleer, which fully and directly addresses the task set. Chaucer's methods and concerns are well identified here – flattery, nobility and pride, for example and the candidate successfully shows how these human concerns are not only presented through the beast fable but also explored and developed. As well as dealing with such weighty issues the candidate also sees the humour in the mock heroic style and the effect of the 'ludicrous circumstances' in creating the humorous tale, without undervaluing Chaucer's seriousness in exposing human folly. Overall this is a very good essay, clearly within Band 1, offering balanced and well supported views, weighing different opinions and finding detailed relevant material to support the perceptive and persuasive arguments.