Cambridge Assessment International Education

# Cambridge IGCSE™

**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH** **0475/21**

Paper 2 Drama **May/June 2025**

**1 hour 30 minutes**

*0392544629*

You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- Answer **two** questions.
- Your answers must be on **two** different set texts.
- You must answer **one** (a) passage-based question and **one** (b) essay question.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

**INFORMATION**

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- All questions are worth equal marks.

This document has **12** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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## SHELAGH DELANEY: *A Taste of Honey*

**Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.**

**Either 1 (a)** Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:

JO: I don't know much about love.

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GEOF: We're bloody marvellous!

(*from* Act 2, Scene 1)

How does Delaney strikingly portray Geof at this moment in the play?

**Or** **1 (b)** To what extent does Delaney portray Helen as uncaring towards Jo?



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## WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

**Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.**

**Either 2 (a)** Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:

[*A swelling, agitated hum of women's voices rises immediately in the background.*

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When the time comes for him, the same ocean will bring him back.

(*from* Scene 3)

How does Soyinka make this moment in the play both amusing and serious?

**Or** **2 (b)** How far does Soyinka encourage you to feel sorry for Elesin?



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## TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

**Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.**

**Either 3 (a)** Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:

STELLA: Stanley was born just five minutes after Christmas.

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BLANCHE: Honey, there was – a good deal of talk in Laurel.

(*from* Scene 5)

Explore the ways in which Williams makes this such a tense moment in the play.

**Or** **3 (b)** In what ways does Williams portray Blanche as a victim?

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

**Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.**

**Either 4 (a)** Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:

OBERON: This falls out better than I could devise.
But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?

PUCK: I took him sleeping – that is finish'd too –
And the Athenian woman by his side;
That, when he wak'd, of force she must be ey'd.

[*Enter* DEMETRIUS *and* HERMIA.]

OBERON: Stand close; this is the same Athenian.

PUCK: This is the woman, but not this the man.

DEMETRIUS: O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

HERMIA: Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
And kill me too.
The sun was not so true unto the day
As he to me. Would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
This whole earth may be bor'd, and that the moon
May through the centre creep and so displease
Her brother's noontide with th' Antipodes.
It cannot be but thou hast murd'red him;
So should a murderer look – so dead, so grim.

DEMETRIUS: So should the murdered look; and so should I,
Pierc'd through the heart with your stern cruelty;
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

HERMIA: What's this to my Lysander? Where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

DEMETRIUS: I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

HERMIA: Out, dog! out, cur! Thou driv'st me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Has thou slain him, then?
Henceforth be never numb'red among men!
O, once tell true; tell true, even for my sake!
Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,
And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch!
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
An adder did it; for with doubler tongue
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

DEMETRIUS: You spend your passion on a mispris'd mood:
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

(*from* Act 3, Scene 2)

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How does Shakespeare make this such a dramatic moment in the play?

**Or** **4 (b)** In what ways does Shakespeare persuade you to sympathise with Titania?



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## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra*

**Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.**

**Either 5 (a)** Read this passage, and then answer the question that follows it:

[*A hill near Alexandria.*

*Enter* ANTONY *and* SCARUS.]

ANTONY: Yet they are not join'd. Where yond pine does stand
I shall discover all. I'll bring thee word
Straight how 'tis like to go.

[*Exit.*]

SCARUS: Swallows have built
In Cleopatra's sails their nests. The augurers
Say they know not, they cannot tell; look grimly,
And dare not speak their knowledge. Antony
Is valiant and dejected; and by starts
His fretted fortunes give him hope and fear
Of what he has and has not.

[*Alarum afar off, as at a sea-fight.*

*Re-enter* ANTONY.]

ANTONY: All is lost!
This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me.
My fleet hath yielded to the foe, and yonder
They cast their caps up and carouse together
Like friends long lost. Triple-turn'd whore! 'tis thou
Hast sold me to this novice; and my heart
Makes only wars on thee. Bid them all fly;
For when I am reveng'd upon my charm,
I have done all. Bid them all fly; begone.

[*Exit* SCARUS.]

O sun, thy uprise shall I see no more!
Fortune and Antony part here; even here
Do we shake hands. All come to this? The hearts
That spaniel'd me at heels, to whom I gave
Their wishes, do discandy, melt their sweets
On blossoming Caesar; and this pine is bark'd
That overtopp'd them all. Betray'd I am.
O this false soul of Egypt! this grave charm –
Whose eye beck'd forth my wars and call'd them home,
Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end –
Like a right gipsy hath at fast and loose
Beguil'd me to the very heart of loss.
What, Eros, Eros!

[*Enter* CLEOPATRA.]

Ah, thou spell! Avaunt!

CLEOPATRA: Why is my lord enrag'd against his love?

ANTONY: Vanish, or I shall give thee thy deserving
And blemish Caesar's triumph. Let him take thee
And hoist thee up to the shouting plebeians;
Follow his chariot, like the greatest spot
Of all thy sex; most monster-like, be shown

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For poor'st diminutives, for doits, and let
Patient Octavia plough thy visage up
With her prepared nails.

[*Exit* CLEOPATRA.] *50*

(*from* Act 4, Scene 12)

How does Shakespeare strikingly convey Antony's anger at this moment in the play?

**Or** **5 (b)** To what extent does Shakespeare portray Octavius Caesar as an admirable character?



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| Answer booklet | Write the question number in the left-hand margin at the start of each answer. |

Question number

1b

Delaney portrays Helen as uncaring towards Jo to a large extent: she is careless, selfish and frequently cruel, and she abandons her daughter at the very moments Jo most needs her. Yet Delaney refuses to make her a simple villain. Helen's flashes of affection, her humour and her repeated returns suggest a woman who cares in her own erratic way but is incapable of putting anyone before herself, and this ambiguity is what makes the relationship so painful and so real.

From the opening scene, Delaney establishes Helen's neglect. The pair arrive at a shabby, cold flat that seems to have been chosen for cheapness rather than comfort, and Jo is left to complain about the damp, the darkness and the lack of a proper home. Helen is far more interested in her own cold, her whisky and her appearance than in her daughter's comfort. Their exchanges are quick, sharp and full of insults, and Delaney's realistic, abrasive dialogue suggests that this sniping is simply normal between them. Helen shows little sustained interest in Jo's schooling, her talent for drawing or her future, and the sense that Jo has been dragged from one lodging to another throughout her childhood makes Helen seem irresponsible rather than nurturing.

Helen's carelessness is most striking in the way she talks about Jo's origins. She tells her, almost casually, about the man who was Jo's father, describing him as not very bright and making light of their brief affair. The fact that she shares this information so flippantly, without any thought for how Jo might feel, reveals her emotional thoughtlessness. Delaney often has Helen step outside the scene to address the audience directly, in the style of a music-hall performer, and this device emphasises her self-absorption: she is always playing to an audience, even

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when her daughter is in distress.

The clearest evidence of Helen's lack of care is her decision to marry Peter. When Peter arrives, he openly resents Jo, and Helen does little to protect her from his mockery. Helen then leaves Jo alone in the flat to begin her new married life, even though Jo is still a schoolgirl and clearly does not want her to go. The abandonment is bleak, and it leaves Jo vulnerable to the brief romance with the sailor that results in her pregnancy. Delaney structures the play so that Helen's departure directly precedes Jo's loneliness, implying that Helen's selfishness has consequences.

However, Delaney complicates this picture. In Act 2, Helen visits the pregnant Jo, and although the visit soon turns into a quarrel and she leaves with the drunken Peter, she has come with money and some concern for her daughter. When her marriage collapses, she returns to the flat and appears to take charge, promising to provide for the baby and insisting she will look after Jo. Her rivalry with Geof and the way she drives him out may seem selfish, yet it also suggests a possessive, if clumsy, maternal instinct. Some audiences might see Helen as a product of her own hard life, a woman who has never been cared for and so does not know how to care.

The ending, though, returns us to her inadequacy. When Jo reveals that the baby may be black, Helen's shocked reaction is to go out for a drink, leaving Jo alone on stage, reciting the nursery rhyme Geof taught her. Delaney's open ending leaves it uncertain whether Helen will come back, and the image of the pregnant girl alone is a powerful final comment on how often Helen has failed her.

Overall, I feel Delaney presents Helen as largely uncaring, not because she feels

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nothing for Jo, but because her own pleasures always come first. The play's power lies in showing that a mother can love her child and still neglect her, and Jo's sharp, wary independence is the clearest sign of what that neglect has cost her.

2b

Soyinka encourages us to feel sorry for Elesin to a considerable extent, but our pity is never simple. He is a magnificent, larger-than-life figure who is interrupted at the most sacred moment of his life, and his humiliation in the final scene is painful to watch. Yet Soyinka also makes it clear that Elesin's own weakness, his love of the pleasures of the world, is the deeper cause of his failure, so the audience's sympathy is mixed with judgement, much as the Praise-Singer's and Iyaloja's is.

In the opening scene Soyinka makes Elesin hugely attractive. He sweeps into the market with energy and humour, teasing the Praise-Singer and dancing with the women. His story of the Not-I bird, the creature that every man and beast flees from when Death calls, is a brilliant piece of performance: through its rhythms, repetitions and comic portraits of frightened people, Elesin presents himself as the one man who will not run from death. His confidence and eloquence draw the audience in, and this makes his later fall more tragic, because we have seen how much he seemed to promise. However, Soyinka plants warning signs. Elesin's sudden desire for the beautiful girl who is already betrothed to Iyaloja's son, and his insistence on marrying her on the very night of his death, show that his attachment to the earth is strong. Iyaloja agrees, but solemnly warns him to consider what he leaves behind, and we may begin to sense that his appetite for life is dangerous.

The main reason we feel sorry for Elesin is the intervention of Pilkings. Elesin is in

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the middle of his trance, sinking towards the passage of transition, when the colonial police seize him. Soyinka shows that the white officials do not understand what they are interrupting; they see a barbaric custom rather than a ritual that holds the world of the Yoruba together. When Elesin appears in chains in Scene 5, he is a broken man, and his words to Pilkings, that he has shattered the peace of the world forever, show that he understands the scale of the disaster in a way his captor does not. There is real pathos in his description of how his will was "squelched in the spittle of an alien race". The disgusting, physical image conveys utter humiliation, as though his spiritual strength has been spat upon.

Yet Soyinka refuses to let Elesin hide behind the colonial interruption, and this limits our pity. In the same scene Elesin confesses to Pilkings that he first blamed the white man, then his gods, and then his new bride, before admitting that the weakness came from within himself. He admits that he half welcomed the interruption, wondering whether it might be the will of the gods. This honesty is moving, but it also confirms that his failure was partly a failure of will. Iyaloja's scorn in Scene 5 is merciless: she taunts him as one who chose to eat the leftovers of the world rather than go ahead of his people, and the Praise-Singer laments that the world has been left to plunge over the edge.

The most painful moment for Elesin comes with Olunde's arrival and death. When Olunde first sees his father in chains, he rejects him with the devastating words "I have no father, eater of left-overs." The son who returned from England expecting to bury his father instead dies in his place, and when Elesin is shown Olunde's body, he strangles himself with his chain. Soyinka makes this a terrible ending: Elesin's death is too late to restore the order, and Iyaloja says that he has gone at last into the passage, but too late, and that his heir has taken the honour that should have been his.

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Overall, I feel Soyinka makes us pity Elesin deeply as a man crushed between two worlds, but he also wants us to see that the real tragedy, as he suggests in his note to the play, is metaphysical rather than a simple clash of cultures. Elesin's sympathy comes from his humanity: he loved life too much to leave it, and that very human weakness is what destroys him and his son.

3a

Williams makes this a tense moment by turning an apparently light conversation about birthdays and star signs into a quiet interrogation. Stanley has begun to gather information about Blanche's past, and the audience, like Blanche, senses that he is circling her. The tension lies less in what is said openly than in what lies underneath: Stanley's menace, Blanche's fear of exposure, and Stella's unawareness of the danger.

The passage begins innocently with Stella's remark that "Stanley was born just five minutes after Christmas", and Blanche's playful response that he is a Capricorn, the Goat. The animal sign is apt, hinting at the crude, lustful masculinity Blanche sees in him, and her teasing is a way of keeping control. Yet Stanley immediately turns the question back on her, and the balance of power shifts. When Blanche says that she is Virgo and explains that "Virgo is the Virgin", Stanley's contemptuous "Hah!" is brief but devastating. The single syllable tells the audience that he does not believe her purity for a moment, and it warns Blanche that he knows more than she would like. Williams uses this tiny piece of dialogue to make the polite surface of the conversation crack.

The tension then sharpens as Stanley casually asks whether she knows a man named Shaw. The casual manner is a deliberate tactic: Stanley presents his

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information as idle gossip, but every detail, especially his mention of the Hotel Flamingo, is aimed precisely at her. Blanche's reply is elaborate and evasive. She suggests that Shaw must have confused her with "this 'other party'" and claims, with affected refinement, that the Flamingo is not the sort of place she would be seen in. The contrast between her genteel, over-elaborate speech and Stanley's blunt, plain questions dramatises the conflict between her fragile illusions and his crude realism. When she adds that she has seen and smelled the hotel, Stanley's sly reply that she must have got pretty close if she could smell it catches her in her own words. The audience watches her composure being picked apart, and the effect is like a cat playing with a mouse.

Williams uses stage directions to make Blanche's fear visible. Her outward politeness is undercut by signs of physical distress, as she struggles to steady herself and reaches for her handkerchief, so the audience sees the gap between what she says and what she feels. Stanley, by contrast, is relaxed and confident, and his casual exit, after hinting that Shaw will be passing through Laurel again, leaves a threat hanging in the air. His absence does not relieve the tension; it intensifies it, because Blanche is left alone with the knowledge that he is investigating her.

The final section shifts the tension inward. Blanche turns anxiously to Stella, trying to discover whether she has heard any unkind gossip, and Stella's innocent denial shows that she has no idea what is happening. Blanche's admission, "Honey, there was a good deal of talk in Laurel", is a crucial moment: it is the closest she has yet come to confessing the truth about her past. The endearment "Honey" sounds affectionate, but it also seems to soften what she is about to admit, and the vague phrase "a good deal of talk" both reveals and conceals. The audience realises that the past she has fled is catching up with her.

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For me, the tension of this moment comes from dramatic irony and foreboding. We sense that Stanley's questions are only the beginning, and that the image of Blanche as a "Virgin" is about to be destroyed. Williams makes us feel the fear of a woman whose survival depends on illusion, facing a man determined to drag her into the light.

3b

Williams portrays Blanche as a victim in several overlapping ways: of past loss and guilt, of a world that has no place for fragile people, and above all of Stanley, who exposes, humiliates and finally destroys her. Yet Williams does not make her a simple innocent. Her lies, snobbery and self-deception contribute to her fall, and much of the play's power comes from the way he makes us pity her even as we see her faults.

From her first entrance Blanche is presented as vulnerable and displaced. She arrives in Elysian Fields "daintily dressed" in white, looking, as the stage directions suggest, like a moth, an image of something pale and delicate drawn helplessly towards light. Her directions, that she was told to take a streetcar named Desire and transfer to one called Cemeteries, turn the journey into a symbolic route from desire to death, and suggest that she is carried along by forces she cannot control. She has lost Belle Reve, and her account of "the long parade to the graveyard" as family members died one by one shows that she has endured years of suffering alone while Stella escaped.

Williams deepens our sense of her as a victim through the story of Allan Grey, which she tells Mitch in Scene 6. Her young husband's suicide after she discovered his homosexuality and told him on the dance floor that he disgusted her haunts

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her. The Varsouviana polka that plays whenever she is reminded of him, ending in the sound of a gunshot, is an expressionist device that lets the audience hear the memory inside her head. She is a victim of her own guilt, and her image of a searchlight that has been turned off, leaving her in darkness, conveys how love and hope were extinguished for her. Her later promiscuity at the Flamingo can then be seen as a desperate search for comfort rather than simple immorality.

Above all, Blanche is Stanley's victim. From the start he sees her as a threat and sets out to expose her, rummaging through her trunk, mocking her "Hollywood glamour stuff" and investigating her past. In Scene 7 Williams uses dramatic irony and cross-cutting to devastating effect: Blanche sings cheerfully in the bath while Stanley tells Stella the story of her disgrace in Laurel. His cruellest act is his "birthday" present in Scene 8, a bus ticket back to Laurel, which shows his pleasure in humiliating her. He also destroys her hope of escape by telling Mitch the truth, so that Mitch confronts her, tears the paper lantern from the bulb, and says that she is not clean enough to bring into the house with his mother. The lantern symbolises the softness and illusion she needs to survive, and its removal leaves her exposed to the "naked light bulb" she said she could not bear.

The rape in Scene 10 is the culmination of this victimisation. Stanley's line "We've had this date with each other from the beginning!" suggests that he has always regarded her destruction as inevitable, almost as his right. Williams stages the violence through the lurid reflections and jungle noises described in the stage directions, which make the moment feel nightmarish and primitive. Afterwards, Blanche becomes a victim of a second betrayal: Stella chooses not to believe her, saying she could not believe her story and go on living with Stanley. Blanche is sent to an asylum, and her final line, "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers", is painfully ironic, because the people closest to her have shown her the

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least kindness.

However, Williams complicates our sympathy. Blanche is condescending, calling Stanley an "ape" and a survivor of the Stone Age, she drinks secretly, flirts with the young newspaper collector, and lies constantly. Her declaration "I don't want realism. I want magic!" shows that she partly chooses illusion over truth. Some might argue she is a victim of herself as much as of Stanley. Yet I feel Williams ultimately presents her as a victim because her flaws are born of suffering, and because the world of the play, represented by Stanley's brute force, has no mercy for anyone too fragile to fight back.

4a Shakespeare makes this a dramatic moment by staging a furious quarrel that the audience understands far better than the characters do. Oberon and Puck stand watching, Hermia believes she is facing a murderer, and Demetrius simply wants to be loved, so the scene crackles with misunderstanding, violent language and a comedy that keeps threatening to turn into something darker.

The passage opens on Oberon's satisfaction: "This falls out better than I could devise." His smug confidence creates immediate dramatic irony, because the audience knows Puck has anointed the wrong Athenian. Puck's cheerful "that is finish'd too" sounds complete and tidy, yet within a few lines the neat plan unravels. When Oberon says "this is the same Athenian" and Puck replies "This is the woman, but not this the man", the balanced line, with its sharp turn on "not", lets the audience share the fairies' sudden discovery of the mistake. We are placed above the lovers, watching them, which makes everything that follows both painful and funny.

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Hermia dominates the exchange, and her language is startlingly violent for the gentle girl of Act I. She imagines Demetrius "o'er shoes in blood" and begs him to "plunge in the deep, / And kill me too", so her grief at Lysander's disappearance escalates instantly into the language of tragedy. Her hyperbole is magnificent: she would sooner believe the earth could be "bor'd" and the moon creep through its centre than believe Lysander would desert her. This cosmic image suggests the depth of her faith in his love, but the audience knows that Lysander, under the love-juice, has done exactly that, so her loyalty is both moving and heartbreakingly misplaced. The comparison "The sun was not so true unto the day / As he to me" is tender, and its sincerity sharpens the irony.

Demetrius, by contrast, answers accusation with Petrarchan compliment, and this mismatch is part of the drama and the humour. He turns her word "murderer" into a conceit about being "Pierc'd through the heart with your stern cruelty", and praises her as bright "As yonder Venus". He is speaking the language of courtly love while she is speaking the language of murder, so the two never really meet. Hermia's impatient "What's this to my Lysander?" cuts straight through his poetry, which feels almost comic in its bluntness.

The quarrel then reaches its most savage pitch. Demetrius's brutal "I had rather give his carcass to my hounds" shows his jealousy, and Hermia explodes with "Out, dog! out, cur!" The short, exclamatory phrases and the insults drawn from animals show how far she has been driven "past the bounds / Of maiden's patience". Her contempt grows through a chain of images: "a worm, an adder", and finally "thou serpent", with the pun on "doubler tongue" suggesting both the forked tongue of a snake and the lies of a two-faced man. The sarcastic "O brave touch!" mocks the cowardice of killing a sleeping man. The verse, in rhyming couplets, gives her fury a ringing, almost formal force, as though every accusation lands with a click.

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Yet Shakespeare never lets the danger become real. Demetrius's flat reply that he is "not guilty of Lysander's blood; / Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell" deflates the tragic register, and the audience, who know Lysander is alive and chasing Helena, can enjoy Hermia's passion without fearing for him. The phrase "mispris'd mood" neatly sums up the scene: everything here springs from mistaking. I find this the real source of the drama: Shakespeare lets us feel the intensity of Hermia's love and anger while also laughing at the chaos the fairies have caused, and he builds suspense for the even wilder confusion that follows when both men wake adoring Helena.

4b

Shakespeare persuades us to sympathise with Titania by presenting her first as a dignified queen with a genuine and loyal reason for defying her husband, and then as the victim of a humiliating trick that she neither deserves nor understands. Although she is proud and fierce, the play repeatedly shows her treated as a possession to be controlled, and her final reconciliation with Oberon leaves an uneasy sense of how much she has been made to surrender.

Our first view of Titania establishes her strength and independence. Oberon greets her with "Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania", and the adjective "proud" frames her as stubborn, yet she answers him as an equal, refusing his bed and accusing him of his own affairs. Her great speech beginning "These are the forgeries of jealousy" is one of the most powerful in the play. She describes how their quarrel has thrown nature into chaos: rivers have flooded, crops have rotted, "The fold stands empty in the drowned field", and the seasons have swapped places so that "hoary-headed frosts / Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose". The vivid, sorrowful imagery shows that Titania feels the suffering of mortals and takes

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responsibility, calling herself and Oberon the "parents and original" of these evils. Shakespeare gives her the voice of conscience, which makes her far more sympathetic than her husband, who simply wants his own way.

Crucially, her refusal to give up the changeling boy springs from love and loyalty rather than mere stubbornness. She remembers his mother, "a vot'ress of my order", gossiping with her by the sea and laughing at the ships with their sails "big-bellied with the wanton wind". The warmth and humour of the memory make the friendship real, and the sudden line that "being mortal" she died in childbirth is quietly moving. The repetition in "for her sake do I rear up her boy; / And for her sake I will not part with him" turns her defiance into a promise to a dead friend. An audience is likely to feel that Titania is in the right, and that Oberon's demand is petty.

Oberon's response is to punish her. His spell is cruel in its intention: he hopes she will wake and love some "vile thing", and he lists a lion, a bear, a meddling monkey, which shows that he wants to degrade her. When she wakes to Bottom with an ass's head and asks "What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?", the comedy is irresistible, but it rests on her helplessness. Her extravagant devotion, telling Bottom he is "as wise as thou art beautiful" and promising to "purge thy mortal grossness", is funny precisely because she has lost all control of her judgement. Shakespeare invites us to laugh, but also, perhaps, to feel uncomfortable that a powerful queen is reduced to doting on a weaver for her husband's amusement.

The most troubling detail comes in Act 4, when Oberon reveals that, while she was bewitched, she gave him the boy without a struggle. He gained by trickery what he could not win by argument, and only then does he say that he begins to

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"pity" her "dotage". His pity seems to arrive conveniently late. When she wakes, her words "My Oberon! What visions have I seen! / Methought I was enamour'd of an ass" show her bewilderment and disgust, and her short question about how these things came to pass is never fully answered. She is left not knowing what was done to her.

To some extent Shakespeare balances this sympathy. Titania is proud and imperious, she commands her fairies like a queen, and the play's comic structure requires harmony to be restored, so her reconciliation with Oberon heals the natural disorder she described. Yet I think the play persuades us to sympathise with her because her loyalty, her compassion for the suffering world and her helpless humiliation are so clearly drawn, while Oberon's victory depends on deceit. The harmony at the end is real, but Titania pays for it.

Sa

Shakespeare conveys Antony's anger here as something volcanic and unstable: it erupts suddenly, swings between rage, self-pity and grief, and finally pours itself onto Cleopatra in some of the cruellest language of the play. What makes it so striking is that the fury is inseparable from humiliation, because Antony is raging not only at Cleopatra but at his own fall.

Shakespeare prepares for the outburst carefully. Scarus's ominous lines about swallows nesting "In Cleopatra's sails" and augurers who "look grimly, / And dare not speak" create a mood of foreboding, and his description of Antony as "valiant and dejected" warns us that his master is already caught between hope and fear. The calm before the storm is broken by the alarum and Antony's abrupt, short line "All is lost!", which is all the more shocking because only moments earlier he went confidently to watch from the pine.

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His anger instantly finds a target. "This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me" reduces Cleopatra to her nationality, as though she were now an alien enemy rather than his lover, and the bitter image of the fleets who "cast their caps up and carouse together / Like friends long lost" shows how deeply he feels the mockery of the scene. The insult "Triple-turn'd whore" is shocking in its crudeness; it suggests she has turned from Julius Caesar to Pompey to Antony, and now to Octavius, so that his rage reaches back across her whole past. The contemptuous "this novice" for Caesar reveals wounded pride: being defeated by a younger, colder man is unbearable to him. The repeated command "Bid them all fly" sounds like a man giving up command altogether, and the paradox that his heart "Makes only wars on thee" shows love turned into its opposite.

Once Scarus leaves, the anger becomes a soliloquy of grief, which makes it more complex and more moving. The farewell "O sun, thy uprise shall I see no more!" and the image of Fortune and Antony shaking hands give his rage a tragic dignity. Then comes one of Shakespeare's most striking images: the followers "That spaniel'd me at heels" now "discandy, melt their sweets / On blossoming Caesar". The coined verbs "spaniel'd" and "discandy" make flattery fawning and sticky, while "blossoming Caesar" contrasts the young rising power with Antony as the pine that is "bark'd", stripped and dying. His anger at Cleopatra is here bound up with disgust at the fickleness of everyone who once adored him.

Even in fury, his language betrays how much he loved her. She is a "grave charm", a "spell", a "gipsy" who played "fast and loose", all words of enchantment and trickery, and yet he remembers her as the one "Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end". The tenderness of that line, set inside an attack, suggests that his anger is so intense precisely because his devotion was total. The line "Beguil'd me

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to the very heart of loss" makes his defeat sound like a wound to the heart.

When Cleopatra enters, the language becomes vicious. Her gentle question, "Why is my lord enrag'd against his love?", is answered with "Ah, thou spell! Avaunt!" and a terrible vision of her humiliation in Rome: hoisted up "to the shouting plebeians", shown "most monster-like" for "doits", and attacked by "Patient Octavia" with "her prepared nails". The grotesque, physical detail and the bitter irony of "Patient" show him wishing on her the very shame he dreads for himself. Shakespeare gives Cleopatra no reply but an exit, so the scene ends with his rage unanswered. I find this the most striking quality of the moment: Antony's anger is magnificent and ugly at once, and its violence measures the greatness of both the love and the loss.

Sb

Shakespeare makes Octavius Caesar admirable only in a narrow, chilly sense. He is disciplined, far-sighted and, by the end, completely successful, yet the play keeps inviting us to compare him with Antony and Cleopatra, and next to their generosity and passion his virtues start to look like calculation. I think Shakespeare wants us to respect Caesar while finding it very hard to like him.

His first appearance establishes both sides. Complaining that Antony "fishes, drinks, and wastes / The lamps of night in revel", Caesar speaks with a moral seriousness that seems justified: Rome is threatened by Pompey and its triumvir is feasting in Egypt. The list of verbs sounds like an accountant's record of waste, and the phrase "wastes / The lamps of night" shows how much Caesar values time and order. There is even admiration in his memory of Antony's endurance as a soldier, when he could drink "the stale of horses". Yet the scornful tone, and his insistence that Antony is no more "manlike" than Cleopatra, also reveal a coldness

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that cannot imagine why anyone would give up power for love.

The marriage to Octavia complicates our sympathy. Caesar calls his sister a "piece of virtue" and the "cement" of his bond with Antony, and these images are revealing. However sincere his affection, Octavia becomes a material, a building block in a political structure. Shakespeare makes his love seem real but always tied to policy: when she later arrives in Rome without a great escort, he is less upset by her suffering than by the fact that she comes like a "market-maid", lacking the public show that his status demands. Even his grief is partly about reputation.

The scene on Pompey's galley is where Shakespeare most clearly sets Caesar apart. While Antony and the others drink and dance, Caesar complains that the more he washes his brain with wine "it grows fouler" and hurries to leave. His sobriety is sensible, yet it also makes him look joyless, an outsider to the warmth that Shakespeare associates with Egypt and with Antony. His control is also quietly ruthless offstage: we hear that he has deposed Lepidus and made war on Pompey once both have served their purpose. Antony's dismissal of him as "the boy" suggests youth, but it is precisely this unsentimental efficiency that wins.

In war Caesar is a skilled strategist rather than a heroic fighter. He dismisses Antony's challenge to single combat with the contemptuous "old ruffian", knowing he has no need to risk himself, and he coolly places Antony's deserters in the front line so that Antony seems to fight against himself. His claim that "The time of universal peace is near" is grand and may be true, but it sounds like a slogan, the language of a man writing history before it has happened.

Shakespeare gives Caesar his most moving moment when he hears of Antony's death. "The breaking of so great a thing should make / A greater crack" is a

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genuinely powerful image: the world itself ought to split. His tears suggest real feeling for a former partner and rival. However, he almost immediately turns to showing his followers documents to prove "How hardly I was drawn into this war", and this rush to justify himself makes us question how pure his grief was.

His treatment of Cleopatra confirms the doubt. He sends gentle messages while privately planning that her life in Rome would be "eternal in our triumph", and Cleopatra sees through him at once: "He words me, girls, he words me". Her suicide makes him, in her own scornful phrase, an "ass / Unpolicied", outwitted at the very game he plays best. Still, Shakespeare allows him a gracious ending. He admits she was "Bravest at the last" and orders that no grave shall hold "A pair so famous". This generosity is admirable, but it is also the generosity of the victor who can afford it.

To a large extent, then, Caesar is admirable as a ruler: rational, controlled and effective. Yet Shakespeare never lets us feel the admiration we feel for Antony at his most magnanimous. Caesar wins the world, but the play suggests that something greater has been lost, and Cleopatra's line that it is "paltry to be Caesar" leaves the final judgement with the lovers.