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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **0475/31**

Paper 3 Drama (Open Text) **May/June 2025**

45 minutes

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You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

Candidates may take their set texts into the exam room, but these must NOT contain personal annotations, highlighting or underlining.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **one** 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.
- You may take your set text into the exam room, but this must **not** contain personal annotations, highlighting or underlining.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 25.
- 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?

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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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Surname	StemUp Model Solution
Answer booklet	Write the question number in the left-hand margin at the start of each answer.

Question number

1b

Delaney portrays Helen as largely uncaring towards Jo, a mother who puts her own pleasures first and drifts in and out of her daughter's life. Yet I do not think she is presented as entirely heartless. Delaney gives her flashes of concern, humour and guilt, and the relationship between mother and daughter is so full of bickering affection that Helen seems careless and selfish rather than cold. The extent of her indifference is, in the end, a matter of how we weigh her neglect against these brief moments of feeling.

From the opening scene Delaney establishes Helen's carelessness. She brings Jo to a shabby, comfortless flat, announcing "Well! This is the place", while Jo replies "And I don't like it". The exchange is funny, but it reveals that Helen has made the decision with no thought for her daughter's comfort, and that this kind of move has happened many times before. Helen is more interested in her drink and her cold than in Jo's unhappiness, and she leaves Jo to cope with the practical problems of the room. Delaney's quick, sharp dialogue makes their quarrelling seem habitual, which suggests that neglect is simply the pattern of their lives.

Helen's selfishness becomes clearer with the arrival of Peter. She flirts with him in front of Jo, discusses marriage with him while her daughter is present, and allows him to mock and belittle Jo without defending her. When Jo asks about her own father, Helen answers flippantly, describing a man she barely knew and treating the subject as a joke. For Jo this is a question about her identity, but Helen cannot or will not take it seriously. The climax of the first act is Helen's departure to marry Peter, leaving Jo alone in the flat. Helen abandons her daughter for a man without any real thought for how she will manage, and Jo's loneliness is

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emphasised by Jimmie's departure too.

Delaney's use of direct address also shapes our view of Helen. She frequently turns to the audience with music-hall asides, commenting on Jo and on her own life. This makes her entertaining and lively, but it also distances her from her daughter, as though Jo's troubles are part of a comic routine rather than something she feels deeply. The audience may laugh with Helen even while recognising how little she gives Jo.

However, Delaney complicates the portrait. Helen shows concern for Jo's future, urging her at times to make something of her talent, and her anger when she learns of Jo's pregnancy suggests that she does care what becomes of her, even if that care is expressed through criticism. When Peter throws her out, she returns to the flat in the second act and takes charge of the preparations for the baby. Her return can be read as genuine maternal instinct, a wish to look after Jo when she is most vulnerable. Yet it is also self-interested, since she has nowhere else to go, and she quickly pushes out Geof, the one person who has truly cared for Jo. This makes her seem possessive rather than loving.

The ending is perhaps the strongest evidence of her uncaring nature. When Helen learns that the baby may be black, she is shocked, and she goes out for a drink, leaving Jo alone once more. Whether she will really come back is left uncertain, and everything we have seen of her makes us doubt it. The final image of Jo alone on stage, quietly singing a nursery rhyme, makes the absence of both Helen and Geof painfully clear.

Overall, Delaney portrays Helen as uncaring to a large extent: she neglects, mocks and repeatedly abandons her daughter. Yet the humour and occasional tenderness

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in their relationship, and Helen's own restless need for love, make her a more complex figure than a simple bad mother. I feel that Delaney presents her less as cruel than as someone who has never learned how to care for anyone, including herself.

2b

Soyinka encourages us to feel sorry for Elesin, but only up to a point. He is a man of enormous charm and vitality who is genuinely obstructed by colonial interference, and his final humiliation is painful to watch. Yet Soyinka also makes clear that Elesin's own love of life, his vanity and his weakness of will are the deepest causes of his failure. I think we end the play pitying him as a tragic figure while also accepting the judgement of his people that he has betrayed them.

In the opening scene Soyinka makes Elesin magnetic rather than pitiable. He sweeps into the market surrounded by drummers and praise-singers, and his telling of the "Not-I bird" story is a dazzling performance. Each creature in the tale runs from Death, and Elesin presents himself as the one man who will not flee, so the audience is invited to admire his courage and his command of language. His energy, humour and flirtation with the market women show how much he loves the world he is about to leave. This is the first source of our sympathy: Soyinka makes us understand that what Elesin is giving up is precious.

Yet the same scene plants doubts. Elesin's sudden desire for the beautiful young girl, who is already betrothed to Iyaloja's son, reveals how strongly he is still bound to earthly pleasure. Iyaloja's warnings, and her uneasy agreement that the wishes of a man on the brink of the other world must be granted, create dramatic tension. The audience senses that his appetite for life may undermine his duty, so

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even as we admire him we begin to fear for him. Soyinka structures the play so that our sympathy is always shadowed by anxiety.

The intervention of Pilkings increases our pity, because Elesin is prevented from completing his ritual by men who do not understand it. In Scene 4 the ball at the Residency, with its dancing Europeans and the visiting Prince, is contrasted with the drumming that signals Elesin's trance in Scene 3, and the arrest is shown as an intrusion of one world into another. When Elesin is dragged in, it is easy to feel that he has been robbed of his honour by a colonial officer who sees the ritual only as barbarism. However, Soyinka complicates this. Olunde, who has studied in England, understands his father's duty better than the Pilkings do, and his horror at seeing his father alive is devastating. His words "I have no father" are among the cruellest in the play, and they make Elesin's shame unbearable, but they also show that Elesin's failure is real, not merely something imposed from outside.

In the final scene, Soyinka allows Elesin to speak of his own weakness. Chained in his cell, he admits to his young bride that his will was not strong enough, and he confesses that he first blamed the white man, then his gods, and is even tempted to blame her, before facing the mystery of his own sapped will. This honesty is moving, and his helplessness, a once proud man reduced to a prisoner, invites pity. Yet Iyaloja's scorn is relentless. She accuses him of having eaten the best of life and refused to pay for it, and the Praise-Singer laments that the world has been allowed to fall into chaos because of him. Soyinka gives these voices great authority, so we cannot simply excuse him.

The climax is the arrival of Olunde's body. The son has died in his father's place, and this sacrifice condemns Elesin more powerfully than any words. His sudden suicide with his chain is shocking and pitiful, but it comes too late to restore the

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	order he has broken. Iyaloja's closing command, "Now forget the dead, forget even the living. Turn your mind only to the unborn", turns attention away from Elesin entirely, suggesting that his tragedy has meaning only for the future.
	Overall, Soyinka encourages us to feel considerable sympathy for Elesin's charm, his humiliation and his anguish, but he balances this with a clear sense of his responsibility. To my mind, Elesin is most pitiable not as a victim of others but as a man who recognises, too late, that he loved life too much to leave it.
3a	Williams makes this such a tense moment because what begins as light, flirtatious small talk about star signs turns into a quiet interrogation. Stanley never openly accuses Blanche, but every apparently casual remark carries a threat, and the audience watches her composure crack under pressure she cannot escape. The tension lies in the gap between the playful surface of the dialogue and the danger beneath it.
	The astrology conversation seems harmless at first. Stella's fond remark that "Stanley was born just five minutes after Christmas" is affectionate, and Blanche seizes on it with her typical theatrical wit: "Capricorn", "the Goat". Calling him a goat is a sly insult, suggesting something lustful and animal, and it shows that even in banter she is trying to put him in his place. Yet Stanley turns the game against her. His question about her own sign leads to her answer that she was born under Virgo, and to her explanation, "Virgo is the Virgin". His single contemptuous "Hah!" is far more menacing than a long speech. It tells the audience that he knows something about her sexual past and finds her claim to purity laughable, and the brevity of the response leaves her, and us, uneasy about how much he knows.

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The tension sharpens with the sudden question about "somebody named Shaw". The abrupt change of subject mirrors Stanley's tactics throughout the play: he lets Blanche feel secure, then strikes. The stage directions suggest her faint shock, and her quick, bright reply that everybody knows somebody named Shaw sounds forced, an attempt to laugh off the danger. Stanley's explanation is coldly deliberate. By saying that Shaw must have confused her with some "other party" he met at the Flamingo, he gives her a way out while making clear that he does not believe it. This is a cat-and-mouse game, and the audience can see that Stanley is enjoying her discomfort.

Blanche's response shows her desperately defending her image. Her claim that the Hotel Flamingo is not a place she would dare be seen in is full of genteel indignation, but Stanley's dry question about whether she knows it traps her into the revealing reply that she has "seen it and smelled it". His response, that she must have got pretty close to smell it, is crude but sharp, exposing the slip. Her nervous shift into talk about expensive perfume and hints about her birthday is an attempt to restore her flirtatious, ladylike role, yet the audience senses that her performance is fragile. The dramatic irony is strong because we suspect, as Stanley does, that the Flamingo story is true.

Stanley's exit increases rather than relieves the tension. His refusal to kiss Stella "in front of your sister" is a small, pointed rejection of Blanche, reminding us that he sees her as an intruder in his marriage. Once he is gone, Blanche's mask slips completely. Her urgent questions to Stella about what she has heard reveal panic, and the short, broken exchange shows her struggling to stay calm. Her confession, "Honey, there was a good deal of talk in Laurel", is hesitant and evasive. The gentle endearment "Honey" tries to soften what she is about to admit, while the

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vague phrase "a good deal of talk" both reveals and conceals. The audience is left in suspense, aware that her past is catching up with her.

Overall, Williams creates tension through the contrast between playful dialogue and veiled threat, through Stanley's terse, controlled questions set against Blanche's increasingly nervous chatter, and through dramatic irony that lets us sense her secrets before they are revealed. I find the moment unsettling because it shows Stanley beginning to hunt Blanche in earnest, foreshadowing the cruelty to come and making her vulnerability painfully clear.

3b

Williams portrays Blanche as a victim in many senses: of loss, of her own past, of a brutal brother-in-law and finally of a world with no room for fragility. Yet he never makes her a simple, innocent martyr. Her lies, snobbery and self-deception help bring about her ruin, and I think the tragedy of the play lies in the way Williams makes us pity her even while we see her faults.

From her first entrance Blanche seems lost and displaced. Her account of being told to take "a street-car named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries" turns the New Orleans streetcar route into a grim allegory of her life: desire has led her towards death. The stage directions stress that her white clothes suggest "a moth", something delicate that will be destroyed by the harsh light of Elysian Fields. We soon learn that she has lost Belle Reve, and her painful speech about the deaths she watched in the family home, "the long parade to the graveyard", presents her as someone who has carried the burden of loss alone while Stella escaped. Her defensive anger when Stella seems to blame her makes her appear wounded rather than merely careless.

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Williams deepens our sense of her as a victim through the story of her young husband, Allan, which she tells Mitch in Scene 6. Her discovery of his secret, her cruel words to him on the dance floor, and his suicide are presented through memory and the haunting polka music, which returns throughout the play whenever she is under pressure. The image of a "searchlight" being switched off after his death suggests that her life has been lived in darkness ever since. Williams makes her both a victim of this trauma and partly its cause, since she blames herself, and her later promiscuity and drinking seem like desperate attempts to escape guilt and loneliness.

The clearest way Williams presents Blanche as a victim is through Stanley. From the beginning he treats her as a rival and a fraud, invoking "the Napoleonic code" to claim a share of Belle Reve and rummaging through her trunk of clothes and letters. His investigation of her past in Laurel is relentless, and the cruel birthday present of a bus ticket back to Laurel shows his pleasure in exposing and expelling her. The rape in Scene 10 is the culmination of this. His line "We've had this date with each other from the beginning!" chillingly suggests that the attack was always his intention, and the expressionist effects, the "lurid reflections" and threatening shadows on the walls, show her world closing in. Here Blanche is unquestionably a victim, and Williams makes Stanley's brutality impossible to excuse.

She is also a victim of the people who should protect her. Mitch, who offered her a chance of safety, rejects her once he hears Stanley's gossip, and his harsh act of tearing the paper lantern off the bulb to look at her "in the light" strips her of her protective illusions. Her plea "I don't want realism. I want magic!" is self-deceiving, but it is also a moving defence of the kindness that others refuse her. Most painfully, Stella chooses not to believe her about the rape, because, as she admits

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to Eunice, she could not go on living with Stanley if she did. Blanche is sacrificed so that the household can continue.

The ending makes her victimhood complete. Led away by the Doctor, she tells him "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers", a line that is heartbreaking because those closest to her have shown her none. The Doctor's gentleness, in contrast to the Matron's roughness, briefly restores her dignity, yet the final image of the poker game continuing, with Stanley comforting Stella, suggests that the world simply carries on without her.

Overall, Williams portrays Blanche as a victim of loss, guilt, male violence and a family that abandons her. Her own deceptions make her flawed, but I believe Williams wants us to see that her real "crime" is fragility, and that the play condemns a society which destroys what it cannot understand.

4a Shakespeare makes this a dramatic moment by letting the audience watch a confrontation that the characters themselves completely misunderstand. Oberon and Puck stand by as hidden spectators, and we share their knowledge, so the fury between Hermia and Demetrius is at once painful, comic and full of suspense. What strikes me most is how quickly the scene moves from Oberon's smug satisfaction to a quarrel built on accusations of murder, all caused by a fairy's simple error.

The opening exchange sets up dramatic irony with real economy. Oberon's delighted "This falls out better than I could devise" suggests a puppet master enjoying his own plot, and Puck's casual "that is finish'd too" sounds like a job neatly completed. The stage direction then brings on exactly the wrong pair, and Puck's

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line "This is the woman, but not this the man" punctures Oberon's confidence in a neat, balanced phrase. The audience instantly realises that the love-juice has gone astray, so everything Hermia and Demetrius say afterwards is coloured by our knowledge that Lysander is not dead but enchanted. The tension lies in waiting for the characters to catch up with us.

Hermia's speech is dramatic because of its sudden violence. She begins in a restrained tone, "Now I but chide", yet threatens worse, and her imagination leaps to murder: "If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep". The grotesque image of Demetrius "o'er shoes in blood" makes the forest feel like a place of nightmare rather than romance. Her cosmic comparison, that she would sooner believe "the moon / May through the centre creep" than that Lysander would leave her, is hyperbolic, but it shows how absolute her faith in him is. This is especially poignant because the audience knows that Lysander has in fact abandoned her for Helena, so her loyalty is both admirable and heartbreaking.

Demetrius turns her language back on her, and the wordplay adds tension. When she calls him a murderer who looks "so dead, so grim", he replies "So should the murdered look", claiming that her "stern cruelty" has pierced his heart. The repetition of the structure creates a verbal duel in rhyming couplets, and the neatness of the rhyme contrasts sharply with the chaos of their emotions. His comparison of Hermia to "yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere" is conventional lovers' praise, absurdly out of place when she is accusing him of killing a man. I find this mismatch both funny and unsettling, as each speaker seems to be acting in a different play.

The climax of the exchange is Demetrius's brutal "I had rather give his carcass to my hounds". The harsh noun "carcass" reduces Lysander to dead meat, and it

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provokes Hermia's explosion: "Out, dog! out, cur!" The short exclamations and broken rhythm show her losing control, and she herself admits he has driven her "past the bounds / Of maiden's patience". Shakespeare then builds the imagery of the serpent: "Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?" and the pun on "doubler tongue" accuses Demetrius of being two-faced and venomous. The sly, sneaking killer she imagines, one who struck Lysander "sleeping", makes her contempt for his cowardice especially sharp in "O brave touch!", which is bitterly sarcastic.

Finally, Shakespeare deflates the tension in a way that keeps the drama alive. Demetrius's calm "You spend your passion on a mispris'd mood" tells Hermia, and reminds us, that she is mistaken, and "Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell" is almost comically flat after her torrent of abuse. Yet the quarrel leaves both characters more miserable than before, and Oberon's watching presence reminds us that the fairies' meddling has made the lovers' confusion worse.

Overall, Shakespeare makes this moment dramatic through dramatic irony, violent and cosmic imagery, the clash of rhyming verse with raw feeling, and the sudden swings between passion and bathos. The audience is invited to laugh at the lovers' confusion while also feeling the genuine pain of Hermia's fear, which is exactly the mixture of comedy and danger that makes the wood near Athens so compelling.

4b

Shakespeare persuades us to sympathise with Titania mainly by showing her as a figure of loyalty and dignity who is humiliated by a husband determined to win a quarrel at any cost. Although her infatuation with Bottom is one of the funniest parts of the play, I think Shakespeare makes sure that the joke is ultimately on Oberon's cruelty as much as on Titania's foolishness.

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Our first impression of Titania comes in Act 2 Scene I, and Shakespeare gives her powerful, eloquent verse that earns respect. Oberon greets her with "Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania", and the adjective "proud" frames her as arrogant, yet her response quickly shifts our sympathies. She dismisses his accusations as "the forgeries of jealousy", suggesting that Oberon is the petty and possessive one. Her long speech about the disordered seasons, in which "the seasons alter" and the natural world is thrown into chaos by their quarrel, shows that she takes the consequences of their conflict seriously. She speaks of the suffering of mortals and of the land, whereas Oberon seems interested only in getting what he wants. The breadth and beauty of her language make her seem the more responsible ruler.

Shakespeare's most moving appeal to our sympathy is Titania's reason for keeping the changeling boy. She explains that "His mother was a votaress of my order", and lovingly recalls their friendship by the sea before revealing that "she, being mortal, of that boy did die". The plain monosyllables of that line give it a quiet grief. The parallel structure of "And for her sake do I rear up her boy, / And for her sake I will not part with him" presents her refusal not as stubbornness but as loyalty to a dead friend. Oberon wants the boy as a "henchman", a possession or status symbol, so Shakespeare sets female friendship and duty against male ownership. Her defiance of her husband in "Not for thy fairy kingdom" makes her admirable rather than merely difficult.

Oberon's revenge is what turns admiration into pity. His spell is deliberately degrading: he hopes she will wake to love some "vile thing", and the list of beasts he imagines, including bears and apes, shows that he wants her to be ridiculous. The audience watches her vulnerability as she sleeps, which makes the trick feel invasive. When she wakes and asks "What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?" the dramatic irony is comic, since the "angel" is Bottom with an ass's head, but it

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is also uncomfortable because she has no choice in her feelings. Her tender words to him, praising him as wise and beautiful and promising to wind him in her arms, are delivered with complete sincerity. Bottom's bemused practicality only exaggerates how far she has been reduced. We laugh, but she is the butt of a joke she cannot see.

Shakespeare sharpens our sympathy by having Oberon reveal how he exploited her state. In Act 4 Scene 1 he admits that while she was doting he taunted her and she gave up the changeling child. Even Oberon says "Her dotage now I do begin to pity", but this pity arrives only once he has what he wants, which makes it seem rather hollow. When Titania wakes and says "Methought I was enamour'd of an ass", followed by "O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!", her horror and disgust show a proud queen realising she has been made a fool. Notably she is never told the full truth, nor that she has lost the boy through a trick, which may make an audience feel she has been cheated.

Some readers may feel less sympathy, because the couple are reconciled, they dance together and bless the marriages at the end, and harmony is restored to nature. Titania's anger also caused real disorder. Yet I find this reconciliation troubling rather than purely joyful: peace is restored only because Titania has been manipulated into submission. Shakespeare therefore persuades us to sympathise with her through her eloquence, her loyalty to her friend, her helplessness under the spell, and the quiet injustice of a happy ending won by deception.

Sa

Shakespeare strikingly conveys Antony's anger here as the rage of a great man who feels his whole identity collapsing. His fury is directed at Cleopatra, but it is mixed with despair, wounded pride and self-pity, so that the speech is as much a

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lament for his own fall as an attack on her. What makes it so powerful is the way Shakespeare lets his language swing violently between bitter abuse and haunting, elegiac imagery.

Shakespeare prepares for the outburst through Scarus's ominous lines. The image of swallows nesting "In Cleopatra's sails" is a bad omen, and the augurers who "look grimly, / And dare not speak their knowledge" create a sense of dread. Scarus's description of Antony as "valiant and dejected" and tossed between "hope and fear" shows him already unstable, so when he re-enters crying "All is lost!" the short, blunt exclamation feels like the release of tension that has been building. The offstage "Alarum" and the sight of the fleet that has "yielded to the foe" make the betrayal immediate and public.

Antony's first response is savage name-calling. "This foul Egyptian" reduces Cleopatra to her nationality, as if she were simply a foreigner who could never be trusted, and "Triple-turn'd whore!" is shockingly crude. The compound adjective suggests endless betrayal, perhaps recalling that she has turned from Julius Caesar to Pompey to Antony and now, he believes, to Octavius. His contempt for the enemy as "this novice" shows wounded pride: it is humiliating to be beaten by a young man he despises. The repeated command "Bid them all fly" sounds desperate and fragmented, as though he can barely organise his thoughts.

Once Scarus leaves, the anger turns inward, and Shakespeare gives Antony some of his most striking imagery. "O sun, thy uprise shall I see no more!" suggests he already senses his death, and the personification of "Fortune and Antony" shaking hands makes his defeat seem like a farewell between old companions. The image of the followers who "spaniel'd me at heels" and now "discandy, melt their sweets / On blossoming Caesar" is brilliantly bitter. The verb "spaniel'd" presents them as

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fawning dogs, while "discandy" suggests sweetness dissolving into a sticky mess, implying their loyalty was only ever sugar-coating. Caesar is "blossoming", fresh and growing, while Antony is the "pine" that is "bark'd", stripped and dying, which links back to the pine tree he stood by at the start of the scene. This extended imagery makes his anger poignant: he is furious, but he also knows his time has passed.

The return to Cleopatra is full of contradiction. She is a "false soul of Egypt" and a "grave charm", and the word "charm" suggests both enchantment and witchcraft, as if she has bewitched him. Yet the lines "Whose eye beck'd forth my wars and call'd them home, / Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end" reveal how much he loved her: she was the reason for everything he did. The anaphora of "Whose" builds his sense of loss, and this makes the accusation that she has played "fast and loose" like "a right gipsy" all the more painful. His anger is so fierce precisely because his devotion was so complete.

The confrontation itself is strikingly cruel. Cleopatra's gentle question, "Why is my lord enrag'd against his love?", is met with "Ah, thou spell! Avaunt!" and a threat of violence. Antony then imagines her humiliation in vivid detail: being hoisted up before the "shouting plebeians", following Caesar's chariot, shown "most monster-like" for tiny coins, and having her face clawed by "Patient Octavia" with "her prepared nails". The vicious specificity of this fantasy reveals a wish to see her degraded, and the irony of "Patient" sneers at the wife he abandoned. Cleopatra's silent exit leaves his rage hanging in the air.

Overall, Shakespeare conveys Antony's anger through abrupt exclamations, crude insults, extended images of decay and betrayal, and a final, cruel fantasy of revenge. Yet the beauty of his lament makes me pity him even as he rages,

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because we glimpse a once-great soldier realising, too late, that he has lost everything.

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Shakespeare makes Octavius Caesar admirable in the way a well-run machine is admirable: disciplined, efficient and politically brilliant, yet so cold that the audience can respect him without ever warming to him. In a play that celebrates excess, his virtues of self-control and foresight begin to look like limitations, and by the end I think Shakespeare invites us to admire his success while feeling that something "paltry" lies at its heart.

Caesar's first appearance shows him at his most persuasive. Condemning Antony for choosing "to tumble on the bed of Ptolemy", he speaks with the moral authority of a man who takes duty seriously, and the contemptuous verb "tumble" reduces Antony's grand passion to undignified play. Yet his speech is not simply sneering. He recalls Antony's endurance in retreat, when he would "drink / The stale of horses and the gilded puddle / Which beasts would cough at", and the vivid, almost admiring detail suggests that Caesar values toughness and sacrifice. His appeal, "Antony, / Leave thy lascivious wassails", carries genuine frustration that a great soldier is wasting himself. Here he seems the voice of responsibility.

Shakespeare then complicates this through dramatic contrast. On Pompey's galley, while the triumvirs drink and dance, Caesar holds back, complaining that "It's monstrous labour when I wash my brain / And it grows fouler." His refusal to lose himself is sensible, but the scene's festive energy makes him look stiff and joyless beside Antony. The same restraint appears in his treatment of Octavia. He speaks tenderly of his love for his sister, and his outrage in Act 3 Scene 6 that she arrives in Rome without a proper train seems sincere. However, he has allowed her

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to be used as a political bond in the first place, and his angry claim that Antony "hath given his empire / Up to a whore" turns her humiliation into a useful reason for war. The audience is left unsure whether his tenderness is real or strategic.

His conduct towards his rivals is where admiration becomes hardest to sustain. The news, delivered almost in passing, that Lepidus has been deposed and imprisoned, and that Pompey has been killed, shows Caesar removing obstacles quietly and without ceremony. Shakespeare keeps these acts offstage, which makes Caesar's ruthlessness seem bureaucratic rather than heroic. In war he is undeniably effective: his order "Strike not by land" before Actium shows a clear tactical mind, and his dry dismissal of Antony's challenge to single combat, "Let the old ruffian know / I have many other ways to die", is witty and wise. Yet his decision to place Antony's deserters in the front line so that Antony seems to fight against himself is cunning to the point of cruelty, suggesting a leader who inspires obedience, not love.

Caesar's response to Antony's death is the moment Shakespeare comes closest to making him noble. His lines "The breaking of so great a thing should make / A greater crack" are among the most generous in the play, finding a cosmic scale for Antony's fall, and his tears seem to cost him something. Even so, the scene is quickly interrupted by business: he sends Proculeius to make sure Cleopatra does not kill herself, because her presence in Rome would make his triumph complete. Cleopatra sees through him exactly: "He words me, girls, he words me". Her judgement that "'Tis paltry to be Caesar" because he is merely "Fortune's knave" pierces his greatness. He controls events, but he never rises above them, and her final wish to hear him called "ass / Unpolicied" makes the audience share her pleasure in outwitting him.

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In the closing speech Caesar orders that Cleopatra "shall be buried by her Antony" and acknowledges that their story will be pitied as much as his own glory is praised. It is a dignified ending, and it shows that he understands the lovers' magnificence even if he cannot share it. To a large extent, then, Shakespeare does portray Caesar as admirable: rational, capable and the bringer of the "universal peace" he predicts. But admiration is not the same as sympathy. Shakespeare gives the world to Caesar and the poetry to Antony and Cleopatra, and in doing so he suggests that the man who wins history may still be the smaller figure on the stage.