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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **0475/22**

Paper 2 Drama **February/March 2025**

1 hour 30 minutes

4347553724

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:

GEOF: Do you want a cigarette?

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[*Music to black out.*]

(*from* Act 2, Scene 1)

How does Delaney movingly portray the relationship between Jo and Geof at this moment in the play?

Or **1 (b)** Explore how Delaney powerfully depicts the impact of poverty in the play.

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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:

YALOJA: Not we, but the very earth says No.

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As the girl kneels before IYALOJA*, lights fade out on the scene.*]

(*from* Scene 1)

In what ways does Soyinka make this moment in the play so ominous?

Or **2 (b)** How far does Soyinka encourage you to sympathise with Sergeant Amusa?

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:

[*More laughter and shouts of parting come from the men.*

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[*Her head falls on her arms.*]

(*from* Scene 1)

How does Williams create such vivid impressions of Stanley and Blanche at this moment in the play?

Or **3 (b)** To what extent does Williams portray Stella as a loyal sister to Blanche?

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: Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy
To be my henchman.

TITANIA: Set your heart at rest;
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a vot'ress of my order;
And in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side;
And, sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking th' embarked traders on the flood;
When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive,
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following – her womb then rich with my young squire –
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy;
And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON: How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA: Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.
If you will patiently dance in our round,
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

OBERON: Give me that boy and I will go with thee.

TITANIA: Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away.
We shall chide downright if I longer stay.

[*Exit* TITANIA *with her Train*.]

OBERON: Well, go thy way; thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.
My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememb'rest
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea-maid's music.

PUCK: I remember.

OBERON: That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth
Cupid, all arm'd; a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal, throned by the west,
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon;

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And the imperial vot'ress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell. *50*
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it Love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flow'r, the herb I showed thee once.

(*from* Act 2, Scene 1)

In what ways does Shakespeare strikingly portray Oberon and Titania at this moment in the play?

Or **4 (b)** How does Shakespeare make the rehearsals and performance of *Pyramus and Thisby* so amusing?

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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:

EROS: What would my lord?

ANTONY: Since Cleopatra died,
I have liv'd in such dishonour that the gods
Detest my baseness. I, that with my sword
Quarter'd the world, and o'er green Neptune's back
With ships made cities, condemn myself to lack
The courage of a woman; less noble mind
Than she which by her death our Caesar tells
'I am conqueror of myself'. Thou art sworn, Eros,
That, when the exigent should come – which now
Is come indeed – when I should see behind me
Th' inevitable prosecution of
Disgrace and horror, that, on my command,
Thou then wouldst kill me. Do't; the time is come.
Thou strik'st not me; 'tis Caesar thou defeat'st.
Put colour in thy cheek.

EROS: The gods withold me!
Shall I do that which all the Parthian darts,
Though enemy, lost aim and could not?

ANTONY: Eros,
Wouldst thou be window'd in great Rome and see
Thy master thus with pleach'd arms, bending down
His corrigible neck, his face subdu'd
To penetrative shame, whilst the wheel'd seat
Of fortunate Caesar, drawn before him, branded
His baseness that ensued?

EROS: I would not see't.

ANTONY: Come, then; for with a wound I must be cur'd.
Draw that thy honest sword, which thou hast worn
Most useful for thy country.

EROS: O, sir, pardon me!

ANTONY: When I did make thee free, swor'st thou not then
To do this when I bade thee? Do it at once,
Or thy precedent services are all
But accidents unpurpos'd. Draw, and come.

EROS: Turn from me then that noble countenance,
Wherein the worship of the whole world lies.

ANTONY: Lo thee! [*Turning from him.*]

EROS: My sword is drawn.

ANTONY: Then let it do at once
The thing why thou hast drawn it.

EROS: My dear master,
My captain and my emperor, let me say,
Before I strike this bloody stroke, farewell.

ANTONY: 'Tis said, man; and farewell.

EROS: Farewell, great chief. Shall I strike now?

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ANTONY: Now, Eros.

EROS: Why, there then! Thus do I escape the sorrow
Of Antony's death. [*Kills himself.*]

ANTONY: Thrice nobler than myself!
Thou teachest me, O valiant Eros, what
I should, and thou couldst not. My queen and Eros
Have, by their brave instruction, got upon me
A nobleness in record. But I will be
A bridegroom in my death, and run into't
As to a lover's bed. Come, then; and, Eros,
Thy master dies thy scholar. To do thus

[*Falling on his sword.*]

I learn'd of thee. How? not dead? not dead? –
The guard, ho! O, dispatch me!

[*Enter* DERCETAS *and a Guard.*]

1 GUARD: What's the noise?

ANTONY: I have done my work ill, friends. O, make an end
Of what I have begun.

2 GUARD: The star is fall'n.

1 GUARD: And time is at his period.

ALL: Alas, and woe!

ANTONY: Let him that loves me, strike me dead.

(*from* Act 4, Scene 14)

In what ways does Shakespeare make this such a tragic moment in the play?

Or **5 (b)** How does Shakespeare's portrayal of Pompey contribute to the dramatic impact of the play?

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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 depicts poverty not as a single dramatic event but as the constant background pressure that shapes every relationship in the play. It is there in the shabby flat, in the way Helen and Jo talk about money and men, and in the narrow choices available to Jo. What makes the portrayal powerful is that Delaney never sentimentalises it: her characters joke, bicker and dream, yet poverty quietly limits their lives and leaves Jo, at the end, in much the same place as her mother.

The opening establishes the setting immediately. Helen and Jo arrive at a comfortless rented flat, and the stage directions and dialogue draw attention to its cold, its damp and its lack of basic comforts. Jo's complaints about the place and Helen's weary acceptance of it suggest that this is only the latest in a long line of moves. The flat becomes a symbol of their instability: it is not a home but somewhere to stay until the next man or the next unpaid rent forces them out. Jo's remark that she is not frightened of the darkness outside, but of "the darkness inside houses", gives the setting a wider resonance, as if the cramped, gloomy rooms reflect the emotional neglect within them.

Poverty also shapes Helen's character. Her survival depends on men, and her relationship with Peter, the younger man with money and a car, is presented as a transaction as much as a romance. She leaves Jo to marry him, which suggests that the promise of comfort matters more to her than her daughter. Delaney's portrayal is complex, however. Helen's brash humour and her refusal to feel sorry for herself make her vivid rather than pitiable, and the music-hall asides she delivers to the audience turn her struggle into a kind of performance. We laugh, yet we also see that her cheerfulness is a defence against a life with very little

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security.

For Jo, poverty narrows the future. She is leaving school and must earn a living, and by the second act she is working long hours, including in a shoe shop. Her talent for drawing is clear, and Geof praises her work, but there is no sense that she could realistically study art: talent is a luxury she cannot afford. Her relationship with Jimmie offers a brief escape, and the dreamlike scene with the ring and the talk of marriage shows her longing for something better. When he sails away and she finds herself pregnant and alone, the cycle of her mother's life seems to begin again. Jo's outburst that she does not want to be a mother, or even a woman, is especially moving, because it shows how frightening adulthood looks when it arrives without money, support or choice.

Geof's arrival deepens Delaney's exploration. He too is an outsider, thrown out of his lodgings, and the two young people make a makeshift household out of very little. Geof cooks, cleans and prepares for the baby, and his bringing of a doll to help Jo practise is both comic and touching. Delaney suggests that warmth and kindness can exist in poverty, and these scenes are among the most tender in the play. Yet even this fragile home depends on Helen's absence, and it collapses when she returns.

The ending is powerful precisely because it resolves so little. Helen comes back, having been thrown over by Peter, and she drives Geof away. The play closes with Jo alone, singing a nursery rhyme, the baby still to come. The children's songs heard through the play, including the street rhymes, create a haunting contrast between innocence and the hard world those children will grow into. Delaney leaves the audience with the sense that poverty is not only a lack of money, but a lack of security and possibility that passes from one generation to the next.

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In conclusion, Delaney depicts poverty powerfully through setting, character and structure. Its impact is visible in the cold flat, in Helen's dependence on men and in Jo's limited choices, but it is the humour and resilience of the characters that make that impact so affecting, because we see clearly what they might have been with a little more chance.

2b

Soyinka encourages a good deal of sympathy for Sergeant Amusa, but it is a complicated sympathy, mixed with laughter and some discomfort. Amusa is caught between two worlds: he serves the colonial authority loyally, yet he still fears and respects the beliefs he has supposedly left behind. Soyinka makes him comic, but he also makes him lonely, mocked by the women of his own people and barely noticed by the master he serves. I think we end up pitying him more than we laugh at him.

Our first sight of Amusa, in Scene 2, is shaped by a striking dramatic contrast. Pilkings and Jane are dressed in egungun costumes for the fancy dress ball, treating sacred garments as a novelty. Amusa, arriving to report Elesin's intended death, is horrified and cannot bring himself to speak to a man wearing what he calls something that belongs to a "dead cult, not for human being". His broken English could make him seem ridiculous, and Pilkings certainly treats it that way, but the audience may notice that Amusa is the only character on stage who takes the costume seriously. His fear reveals that his conversion and his uniform have not erased his upbringing. Soyinka invites us to feel that his distress is genuine, while Pilkings's impatience and mockery make the colonial officer look far less dignified than the frightened sergeant.

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Amusa's position is made more awkward by the way Pilkings speaks to him. He is ordered about, sent off to arrest Elesin and treated as a tool rather than as a man with understanding of his own community. Pilkings is irritated rather than grateful, and his dismissive tone shows how little he values Amusa's warning. Here our sympathy is strong: Amusa has done his duty by passing on important information, and he receives little but contempt.

The market scene, Scene 3, is the centre of the question. Amusa arrives with his constables to arrest Elesin, and he is completely outmanoeuvred by the market women and the young girls. They taunt him about his manhood, block his way and question what right he has to enter the market at such a time. The girls then seize the constables' batons and hats and stage a brilliant parody of the British officers, imitating their accents, their manners and their condescending small talk. This is the funniest part of the play, and Soyinka plainly wants us to enjoy the women's wit and energy. Amusa is the butt of the joke, and his blustering threats in pidgin only increase the comedy.

Yet the scene also exposes how isolated he is. The women see him as someone who has sold himself to the white man, and in their eyes his uniform makes him less than a man. At the same time, the colonial power he serves sees him as an inferior servant. He belongs fully to neither side. When he retreats, still promising to return and still holding on to the dignity of his office, the audience may feel that he is being humiliated by both worlds at once. Soyinka's handling of the scene allows us to laugh with the women while also recognising that Amusa is a victim of the colonial system rather than its cause.

Soyinka limits our sympathy in some ways. Amusa does choose to serve the authorities, and he is prepared to use force against his own people. His pompous

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self-importance at moments makes him an object of satire, and he is never given the tragic stature of Elesin or the moral clarity of Olunde. He is, in a sense, a minor comic figure. But I think this is exactly why he is sympathetic: he is an ordinary man trying to do his job, frightened by things he cannot entirely reject, and powerless before both the women's mockery and Pilkings's arrogance.

In conclusion, Soyinka encourages us to sympathise with Amusa to a considerable extent. He uses comedy, especially in the market scene, to make Amusa ridiculous, but he balances that comedy with moments that reveal his genuine fear and his isolation. Amusa becomes a small but telling portrait of a man divided against himself, and our laughter at him is always shadowed by pity.

3a

This is the first meeting between Stanley and Blanche, and Williams makes it vivid by setting two utterly different people in a small, hot room and letting the tension grow beneath apparently casual conversation. Stanley is physical, confident and watchful; Blanche is nervous, performing politeness and trying to hide her drinking and her past. By the end, Stanley's blunt questions have broken through her defences, and the scene closes with Blanche collapsing, a powerful foreshadowing of the conflict to come.

Williams creates an impression of Stanley before he says a word. The noise of the men parting after bowling gives his entrance a sense of rough male companionship, and the long stage direction that follows is one of the most striking in the play. He is described as strongly and compactly built, with an "Animal joy in his being" that is implicit in all his movements. The comparison of him to "a richly feathered male bird among hens" suggests vanity, sexual pride and dominance, as if women exist for him to display before and to judge. Williams adds that he sizes women up

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at a glance with sexual classifications. These directions are addressed to the reader and the actor, but they shape the whole performance: Stanley should fill the stage, and Blanche, as the directions indicate, should shrink from his gaze.

Stanley's speech is equally revealing. He is blunt and economical, with none of Blanche's elaborate courtesies. His observation about the whisky, "Liquor goes fast in hot weather", sounds casual, but it is a quiet signal that he has noticed the level in the bottle, and he follows it with the sly remark that some people "rarely touch it, but it touches them often". The chiasmus turns a joke into an accusation, and Blanche's nervous replies show that she feels caught. From the first minutes, Williams presents Stanley as an observer who sees through pretence, which makes him dangerous to someone whose survival depends on illusion.

His physicality is used deliberately. When he asks if she minds him making himself comfortable and begins to take off his shirt, complaining that his clothes are sticking to him, the action is both natural, given the heat, and provocative. Blanche's reply, with its flustered politeness, shows that she does not know how to react to such frank masculinity. Stanley's comment that he is the "unrefined type" sounds self-deprecating, but it is also a challenge, almost a boast, directly opposing Blanche's claim to refinement and the old Southern world of Belle Reve.

Blanche, by contrast, is presented through nervousness and self-consciousness. She laughs too readily, speaks in a slightly theatrical way and tries to control the conversation with charm. Williams also uses sound effects to expose her fragility: the sudden screech of a cat makes her start up in alarm, a small moment that shows how close to breaking point she already is. She is a woman playing a role, the gracious lady visiting her sister, but the role is wearing thin.

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The climax of the passage is Stanley's question about her marriage. When he asks whether she was married once, the tone of the scene changes completely. Her halting reply, revealing that the boy died, is broken and hesitant, and the pauses suggest that the memory is unbearable. Her final admission that she is going to be sick, followed by her head falling on her arms, is an extraordinary piece of theatre. Without intending cruelty, Stanley has touched the deepest wound in her past. The physical collapse at the end of the scene makes visible what her performance has been concealing.

Williams therefore creates vivid impressions of both characters through stage directions, dialogue, action and sound. Stanley emerges as earthy, perceptive and quietly threatening; Blanche as fragile, defensive and haunted. The scene is memorable because their brief, polite exchange already contains the whole conflict of the play: his determination to strip away illusions, and her desperate need to keep them.

3b

Williams portrays Stella as a sister who loves Blanche genuinely and tries hard to protect her, but whose loyalty is finally overpowered by her bond with Stanley. For much of the play she defends, excuses and comforts Blanche; at the crucial moment, however, she chooses her husband and her new life over her sister's truth. The result is not simple betrayal but something sadder: a loyalty that is real yet limited, and that ends in guilt.

At the start, Stella's loyalty is warm and affectionate. In Scene 1 she welcomes Blanche, tolerates her criticisms of the cramped apartment and of Stanley, and gently absorbs the news that Belle Reve has been lost. Although Blanche's accusations about the loss of the family home are unfair, Stella does not retaliate;

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she is patient and indulgent, treating her older sister almost as a fragile child. In Scene 2 she shows this protectiveness further, asking Stanley to be kind, to compliment Blanche and not to question her about Belle Reve. When he tears through Blanche's trunk, suspicious of her furs and jewellery, Stella calls him an idiot and leaves the apartment in irritation. Here Williams presents her clearly on Blanche's side, understanding her sister's need for flattery and illusion.

Yet even early on, Williams hints at the limits of that loyalty. Stella's physical attachment to Stanley is shown to be overwhelming. After the violence of the poker night in Scene 3, when Stanley strikes her, she flees upstairs, but she soon returns to him as he bellows her name from the courtyard, and the stage directions present their reunion as intensely sensual. Blanche is left bewildered. In Scene 4, when Blanche urges her to leave and describes Stanley as an animal, Stella refuses, explaining that there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark that make everything else seem unimportant. Williams makes the dramatic irony sharp: Stanley has overheard Blanche's speech, and Stella embraces him in front of her sister. Her loyalty, we see, is divided, and her desire pulls her towards Stanley.

The middle of the play tests her loyalty more directly. In Scene 7, as Stanley reveals the stories of Blanche's past in Laurel, Stella defends her, insisting that Blanche had been badly hurt and explaining the tragedy of her young husband. This is one of her most loyal moments, as she tries to make Stanley understand Blanche rather than condemn her. When she learns that Stanley has told Mitch, and that he has bought Blanche a bus ticket back to Laurel as a birthday present, she is appalled at his cruelty. However, she still does not leave him or openly side with Blanche. Her labour pains, which begin at this point, push the crisis aside, and the birth of her baby binds her even more closely to Stanley.

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The final scene decides the question. Stella has arranged for Blanche to be taken to a mental institution, and she confesses to Eunice that she could not believe her sister's story and go on living with Stanley. This is the heart of her disloyalty: she chooses not to believe that Stanley raped Blanche because the truth would destroy her own life. Eunice's advice, "Don't ever believe it", shows that this self-deception is a kind of survival. Yet Williams does not let Stella escape lightly. As Blanche is led away, Stella cries out in anguish, "Oh, God, what have I done to my sister?", which shows that she knows she has betrayed her. The play ends with her sobbing as Stanley comforts her, his hand slipping inside her blouse, an image that suggests that desire and dependence have won over sisterly loyalty.

In conclusion, Williams portrays Stella as loyal to a considerable extent, but not completely. She loves, defends and pities Blanche throughout, and her final grief shows how deeply she feels the bond between them. However, when she must choose between her sister's truth and her own security with Stanley and the baby, she chooses Stanley. I find her more tragic than villainous: Williams shows that loyalty can be real yet still not strong enough, and that Stella's betrayal is the price of the life she has chosen.

4a

At this moment Shakespeare presents Oberon and Titania as a royal couple whose quarrel is both petty and grand: a domestic squabble over "a little changeling boy" that is dignified by some of the most lavish poetry in the play. What strikes me most is the contrast between them. Titania defends a bond of loyalty and memory, while Oberon, defeated in argument, turns to scheming and revenge, so that the scene shifts from open confrontation to secret plotting.

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Oberon begins with a question that sounds almost wounded: "Why should Titania cross her Oberon?" The possessive "her Oberon" suggests he expects obedience as a right, and the verb "cross" makes her refusal sound like a betrayal. Yet his request is oddly small. He wants the boy only "To be my henchman", and the casual "I do but beg" downplays his desire, which makes his later fury seem disproportionate and slightly ridiculous.

Titania's reply is crisp and final. "Set your heart at rest" is dismissive, almost mocking, and the blunt line "The fairy land buys not the child of me" turns the boy into something beyond price, rejecting Oberon's language of bargaining. Her speech then opens out into a tender memory of the boy's mother, "a vot'ress of my order". The images are warm and sensuous: "the spiced Indian air, by night", the "yellow sands", and the women who "laugh'd to see the sails conceive, / And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind". Shakespeare makes the ships pregnant, so the playful metaphor mirrors the mother "her womb then rich with my young squire", who would "imitate" the ships and "sail upon the land". The friendship is shown as intimate, female and joyful, full of laughter and "trifles". Then the mood falls in a single plain line: "But she, being mortal, of that boy did die". The monosyllables and the stark word "mortal" remind us of the gulf between fairy and human, and the repetition of "for her sake" in two consecutive lines gives Titania's refusal a moving moral weight. She keeps the child out of love and loyalty to a dead friend, which makes it hard to see her simply as defiant.

The exchange that follows is quick and combative, a battle of short speeches. Oberon's "Give me that boy and I will go with thee" is a bargain she scornfully rejects: "Not for thy fairy kingdom." Her exit line, "We shall chide downright if I longer stay", shows she is aware of how destructive their rows can be, and she leaves with her "Train", asserting her own authority as queen.

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Once alone, Oberon is revealed as vengeful. "Thou shalt not from this grove / Till I torment thee for this injury" is threatening, and the word "injury" shows how wounded his pride is. Yet Shakespeare surprises us, because the plotter immediately becomes a poet. His memory of the mermaid "on a dolphin's back" whose song was so "dulcet and harmonious" that "the rude sea grew civil" and "certain stars shot madly from their spheres" creates a magical, cosmic vision. This beauty contrasts with his petty motive, making him seem both majestic and manipulative.

The story of Cupid's arrow is equally rich. Cupid, "all arm'd", aims at "a fair vestal", but the "fiery shaft" is "Quench'd in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon", so fire and water, desire and chastity, are set against one another. The vestal walks on "In maiden meditation, fancy-free", the soft alliteration capturing her untroubled calm. The arrow falls instead on "a little western flower, / Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound". The colour change suggests that love is a kind of injury, which is significant because Oberon intends to use the flower to wound Titania. The ironic name "Love-in-idleness" hints at how foolish and random love will become in the wood.

The scene ends with a terse command: "Fetch me that flow'r". After all the lyrical beauty, Oberon's purpose is control. Shakespeare therefore portrays the fairy rulers strikingly as figures of power and poetry whose very human jealousy and stubbornness will set the chaos of the play in motion.

4b

Shakespeare makes the mechanicals' play amusing not by mocking ordinary men cruelly, but by letting their earnestness collide with their complete

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misunderstanding of how theatre works. The comedy grows from rehearsal to performance: we laugh at their worries and their inventions in the wood, and then, in Act 5, we laugh at the finished disaster and at the courtly audience's reactions to it. Underneath, there is affection, which makes the humour warm rather than bitter.

The first casting scene in Act 1 Scene 2 establishes the characters. Quince's title, "the most lamentable comedy" of Pyramus and Thisby, is a comic contradiction that promises confusion. Bottom dominates at once, wanting to play every role. Having been cast as the lover, he wants to be the lion too, boasting that he will roar so well the Duke will cry "Let him roar again". When told the ladies would be frightened, he promises to roar "as gently as any sucking dove", an absurd image that sums up his blend of vanity and good nature.

The rehearsal in Act 3 Scene 1 is funny because the mechanicals take their audience far too literally. They fear the ladies will be terrified by Pyramus's sword and the lion, so Bottom proposes a prologue explaining that Pyramus is not really killed and that he is "not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver". Their solutions to staging problems are wonderfully literal: someone must "present" Moonshine with a lantern, and someone must play Wall. Shakespeare also creates comedy from language, as Bottom confuses "odious" for "odours" and Flute speaks all his lines at once, including the cue, and mispronounces "Ninus' tomb" as "Ninny's tomb". The rehearsal then collapses into a different comedy entirely, as Puck gives Bottom an ass's head and his friends flee. Quince's cry "Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated" is funny because "translated" is so inadequate for what has happened, and Bottom's cheerful singing, unaware of his own head, makes the joke land.

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The performance in Act 5 develops the humour further by adding an onstage audience. Before it begins, the playbill promises "A tedious brief scene" of "very tragical mirth", and Theseus wonders how to find "the concord of this discord", which prepares us for a glorious failure. Quince's prologue is a triumph of bad punctuation: by pausing in the wrong places, "If we offend, it is with our good will" comes out as an insult. Then the literal staging is enacted. Snout's Wall stands with plaster and stones, and holds up his fingers for the "chink", so that Pyramus says "I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all". The physical comedy of lovers whispering through a man's fingers is ridiculous, and the bathos is heightened by Pyramus cursing the wall that he has just thanked.

Shakespeare parodies the tragic style of his own time. Pyramus's lament, "O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!", piles up exclamations and repetitions until passion becomes nonsense. Snug reassures the ladies that he is "Snug the joiner", not a real lion, and Starveling's Moonshine, with his lantern, thorn-bush and dog, gives up explaining and simply insists that he is the man in the moon. Pyramus's death, "Now die, die, die, die, die", stretches dying into a comic routine, while Thisby's grief praises "These lily lips, / This cherry nose", mixing up the conventional comparisons so that the blazon becomes absurd.

The courtly commentary adds another layer. Demetrius and Lysander mock the actors with puns, and Hippolyta calls it "the silliest stuff that ever I heard". Yet Theseus replies that "The best in this kind are but shadows", which gently suggests that all plays, including the one we are watching, depend on imagination. There is irony here, because the lovers mocking a play about lovers lost in the dark have themselves just been through something equally ridiculous in the wood.

Overall, Shakespeare makes Pyramus and Thisby amusing through literal-minded

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staging, comic language and the contrast between tragic material and incompetent performance. What makes it most enjoyable, I think, is that the mechanicals are so sincere: we laugh at them, but we also like them, and Bottom's eagerness to offer a "Bergomask" dance at the end leaves the audience smiling rather than sneering.

Sa

This moment is tragic because Antony's final attempt to recover his greatness is undermined at every step. He tries to die nobly, like a Roman, yet his servant dies more bravely than he does, his own sword fails him, and the death he imagines as heroic becomes clumsy and painful. Shakespeare makes us feel both the size of what is being lost and the humiliation of its loss.

Antony opens with self-condemnation. "Since Cleopatra died, / I have liv'd in such dishonour that the gods / Detest my baseness." The tragic irony is acute, because the audience knows Cleopatra is not dead: her false message has driven him to this. His sense of "baseness" is heightened by the memory of past glory. The hyperbole "I, that with my sword / Quarter'd the world" and the image of making "cities" of ships "o'er green Neptune's back" recall a godlike conqueror, so his fall feels enormous. He now believes he lacks "The courage of a woman", and he quotes her imagined words, "I am conqueror of myself", as if suicide were the last victory left to him.

Shakespeare then turns to Eros, whose loyalty deepens the pathos. Antony reminds him of his oath and asks him to strike, insisting "Thou strik'st not me; 'tis Caesar thou defeat'st." He is trying to make his death a defeat for Caesar, a final act of defiance. His picture of being displayed "window'd in great Rome", "with pleach'd arms, bending down / His corrigible neck", is vivid and painful: the folded arms and

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bowed neck show a proud man reduced to a captive. Eros's reply, "I would not see't", is simple and loving.

The dialogue becomes a series of gentle, broken farewells. Eros asks his master to turn away "that noble countenance, / Wherein the worship of the whole world lies", and the build-up of titles, "My dear master, / My captain and my emperor", sounds almost like a prayer. The short, shared lines and the repeated "farewell" slow the action and make the audience wait in dread. Then Shakespeare springs a shock. Eros turns the sword on himself, explaining "Thus do I escape the sorrow / Of Antony's death". His choice is the purest act of devotion in the scene, and Antony recognises it at once: "Thrice nobler than myself!"

This is where the tragedy cuts deepest. Antony admits that Eros and Cleopatra "Have, by their brave instruction" taught him nobility, and the striking phrase "Thy master dies thy scholar" reverses their roles: the great general must learn from a freed servant. Yet his imagination still transforms death into something romantic. "I will be / A bridegroom in my death, and run into't / As to a lover's bed" joins love and death, Rome and Egypt, in a single image, and it is the most beautiful moment of the passage. The audience may feel that, in this image, Antony finally unites the two sides of himself.

Shakespeare immediately undercuts the beauty. Falling on his sword, Antony fails to die: "How? not dead? not dead?" The broken questions and repetition convey bewilderment and pain, and his cry "The guard, ho! O, dispatch me!" turns the heroic gesture into a desperate plea. "I have done my work ill, friends" is heartbreakingly plain, a soldier admitting he has bungled the last task of his life.

The guards' responses give the moment its cosmic scale. "The star is fall'n" and

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"time is at his period" suggest that the world itself is ending with Antony, and the choral "Alas, and woe!" gives a ritual lament. Yet none of them will kill him, and the scene closes with his isolated plea, "Let him that loves me, strike me dead." The irony is that the one man who loved him enough has already died. Shakespeare therefore makes this moment tragic not through a glorious end, but through the gap between Antony's noble vision of himself and the painful, lonely reality.

Sb

Pompey is on stage for only a handful of scenes, yet Shakespeare uses him to powerful dramatic effect. He is the threat that drags Antony out of Egypt, the occasion for the uneasy Roman alliance, and above all a mirror in which the play's central conflict between honour and ruthless success is played out in miniature. When Pompey chooses honour and loses everything, the audience glimpses in advance the shape of Antony's own fall.

At first Pompey is felt as a pressure rather than a presence. In the opening act news arrives that he has "given the dare to Caesar" and commands the sea, and Antony uses this danger to justify leaving Cleopatra. Caesar, meanwhile, describes how the fickle people have begun to transfer their love for Pompey's famous father to the son. Shakespeare therefore makes Pompey the catalyst of the plot: without him there would be no return to Rome, no reconciliation with Caesar and no marriage to Octavia, the political bargain that will later wreck the alliance. He also widens the play's sense of scale, reminding us that the "world" Antony neglects in Egypt is real and contested.

When Pompey finally appears, Shakespeare undercuts his confidence with dramatic irony. He trusts that the gods will "assist / The deeds of justest men" and

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gleefully imagines Antony still trapped by Cleopatra's "witchcraft" and "lust", only to learn at once that Antony is on his way to Rome. His startled admission that he could have heard less important news more happily is almost comic, and it reveals his respect for Antony as a soldier. Pompey sees himself as a righteous avenger of his father, and later he invokes "pale Cassius" and Brutus to argue that he fights for Roman liberty. Yet his readiness to accept Sicily and Sardinia in exchange for peace suggests that his idealism is softer and more negotiable than his rhetoric.

The dramatic heart of his role is the feast on his galley in Act 2 Scene 7. Shakespeare stages the three rulers of the world drinking themselves into confusion: Lepidus is reduced to foolish questions about the crocodile and is carried off, a servant bearing, as Enobarbus jokes, "the third part of the world". The image is both farcical and sinister, exposing how fragile the triumvirate's power really is. Into this Bacchanalian scene Menas whispers his offer to cut the cable and murder "these three world-sharers". The phrase is chillingly simple, and Pompey's reply is one of the most revealing moments in the play: "Ah, this thou shouldst have done, / And not have spoke on't!" The exclamation shows genuine temptation, and the antithesis of "In me 'tis villainy; / In thee't had been good service" exposes the strange logic of his honour. He will not order a crime, but he would gladly have profited from one. Shakespeare leaves us unsure whether this is nobility or moral cowardice, and that ambiguity is precisely what makes the moment so dramatically rich.

Menas's bitter aside that whoever refuses fortune when it is offered will never find it again acts almost as a prophecy, and his decision to abandon Pompey's fortunes foreshadows Enobarbus's desertion of Antony. Both great men are left by followers who calculate that loyalty no longer pays. In this way Pompey's story becomes a

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structural rehearsal for the tragedy to come.

Shakespeare's final treatment of Pompey is notably brief and cold. In Act 3 he is defeated and murdered offstage, his death reported in passing by Eros along with the news that Caesar has used Lepidus and then imprisoned him. Antony's fury at the officer who killed Pompey suggests a flicker of fellow feeling, as though he recognises a kindred spirit. The casualness of the report is itself the dramatic point: once the common enemy is removed, the alliance collapses and the world narrows to a contest between Antony and Caesar.

Ultimately, Pompey contributes to the play by embodying, in a smaller and less glamorous figure, the choice that destroys Antony. Caesar would surely have let Menas cut the cable; Pompey and Antony are men of a fading code who cannot act with such efficiency. Shakespeare makes us admire Pompey's scruples and pity his naivety in the same moment, so that his quiet disappearance deepens our sense that the future belongs not to the honourable but to the coldly pragmatic.