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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **0475/31**

Paper 3 Drama (Open Text) **October/November 2024**

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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LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

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

[ERMINA*'s leg stops twitching. She quickly approaches her father and throws her arms around his waist.*]

Ernestine: Ermina!

[ERMINA *reaches into her father's pocket and retrieves a cookie.*]

Ermina: WELL!

Godfrey: That's my girl … Had to clear my head, bring some order to things. I think everything's gonna be all right … I got someone for y'all to meet.

[GERTE*, wearing a haggard smile, steps into the apartment carrying a suitcase. She clears her throat.*]

Darling, Devout, this is Gerte.

[ERNESTINE *and* ERMINA *stare at* GERTE.]

My new wife.

[*The girls are dumbfounded, caught off guard by the declaration.* GERTE *gracefully extends her hand as if practiced.*]

Gerte [*By rote*]: I'm very pleased to meet you. I'm sure we will get on fondly. I've heard charming stories about you both. Devout, you are as pretty as your father said, and Darling, congratulations are in order for completing your studies this coming summer.

[*Both girls gasp.* GERTE *turns to* GODFREY *to ensure that she has produced the correct information; he nods affectionately.*]

Ermina: She white!

[*Awkward silence.*]

Godfrey: Well, should we all sit?

Ermina: Why? She won't be white if we sit down?

[GODFREY *clumsily fumbles for* GERTE*'s hand. The gesture is mechanical, the mark of unfamiliarity.*]

Gerte: It is a lovely apartment.

Godfrey: She won't bite. Will ya?

[GERTE *lets out a deep belly laugh. The girls continue to stare contemptuously at* GERTE*, who slaps* GODFREY*'s hand.*]

Gerte: I told you not to make me laugh.

[GERTE *continues to laugh heartily, without taking a breath for air.* ERNESTINE *and* ERMINA *stare at her.*]

Ernestine [*To audience*]: Oh God, did she have to be German? If he had to have a white lady, why not a French lady or an English lady like the demure Olivia de Havilland with her modest downward glance. But there she is like Marlene Dietrich, a cold bitter whore laughing in our doorway. She might as well be wearing a satin tuxedo and blowing smoke in our faces.

Godfrey: Ain't you going to say anything?

Ermina: Ya drunk? Ya all right?

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Godfrey: Don't stand there looking foolish, say something.

Ermina: Huh?

Godfrey: Darling.

[GERTE *extends her hand a second time.*]

Take her hand.

[ERNESTINE *reluctantly seizes* GERTE*'s hand, giving it a hard shake.*]

Ernestine: Mommy wouldn't like this one bit. Oh no! Mommy ain't even dead a year.

[GERTE *ceases to be amused.*]

Gerte: I'm sorry. I lost my mother when I was young.

[LILY *stands in the doorway.*]

Ernestine: I don't want you here!

Godfrey: Don't say that, Darling.

[ERMINA*'s leg begins to jerk uncontrollably.*]

Lily: What's this all about, Godfrey?

Godfrey [*Defensive*]: We met, we fell in love, we married.

[*Blackout*]

(*from* Act 1, Scene 6)

In what ways does Nottage make this such a shocking moment in the play?

Or **1(b)** How does Nottage make Lily such a dramatically compelling character?

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

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

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

Jane [*pokes her head round the door*]: Have you found him?

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Lights fade.]

(*from* Scene 2)

How does Soyinka create striking impressions of Jane and Simon Pilkings at this moment in the play?

Or **2(b)** In what ways does Soyinka's portrayal of the Praise-Singer contribute to the dramatic impact of the play?

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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 carefully, and then answer the question that follows it:

Mitch: You lied to me, Blanche.

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The distant piano is slow and blue.]

(*from* Scene 9)

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

Or **3(b)** Explore how Williams strikingly conveys Blanche's sense of her own superiority.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

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

Helena: Wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
And tender me, forsooth, affection,
But by your setting on, by your consent?
What though I be not so in grace as you,
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
But miserable most, to love unlov'd?
This you should pity rather than despise.

Hermia: I understand not what you mean by this.

Helena: Ay, do – persever, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,
Wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up;
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But fare ye well; 'tis partly my own fault,
Which death, or absence, soon shall remedy.

Lysander: Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse;
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

Helena: O excellent!

Hermia: Sweet, do not scorn her so.

Demetrius: If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

Lysander: Thou canst compel no more than she entreat;
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.
Helen, I love thee, by my life I do;
I swear by that which I will lose for thee
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

Demetrius: I say I love thee more than he can do.

Lysander: If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

Demetrius: Quick, come.

Hermia: Lysander, whereto tends all this?

Lysander: Away, you Ethiope!

Demetrius: No, no, he will
Seem to break loose – take on as you would follow,
But yet come not. You are a tame man; go!

Lysander: Hang off, thou cat, thou burr; vile thing, let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

Hermia: Why are you grown so rude? What change is this,
Sweet love?

Lysander: Thy love! Out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed med'cine! O hated potion, hence!

Hermia: Do you not jest?

Helena: Yes, sooth; and so do you.

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Lysander: Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

Demetrius: I would I had your bond; for I perceive
A weak bond holds you; I'll not trust your word.

Lysander: What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

Hermia: What! Can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love?
Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.
Since night you lov'd me; yet since night you left me.
Why then, you left me – O, the gods forbid! –
In earnest, shall I say?

Lysander: Ay, by my life!
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;
Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

(*from* Act 3, Scene 2)

How does Shakespeare dramatically portray the characters' emotions at this moment in the play?

Or **4(b)** Explore how Shakespeare's portrayal of the mechanicals adds to your enjoyment of the play.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

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

Bianca: Wheresoever you had it, I'll take out no work on't.

Cassio: How now, my sweet Bianca! how now! how now!

Othello: By heaven, that should be my handkerchief!

Bianca: An you'll come to supper to-night, you may; an you will not, come when you are next prepar'd for.

[*Exit.*]

Iago: After her, after her.

Cassio: Faith, I must; she'll rail i' th' street else.

Iago: Will you sup there?

Cassio: Faith, I intend so.

Iago: Well, I may chance to see you; for I would very fain speak with you.

Cassio: Prithee come; will you?

Iago: Go to; say no more.

[*Exit* Cassio.]

Othello [*Coming forward*]: How shall I murder him, Iago?

Iago: Did you perceive how he laugh'd at his vice?

Othello: O Iago!

Iago: And did you see the handkerchief?

Othello: Was that mine?

Iago: Yours, by this hand. And to see how he prizes the foolish woman your wife! She gave it him, and he hath giv'n it his whore.

Othello: I would have him nine years a-killing. A fine woman! a fair woman! a sweet woman!

Iago: Nay, you must forget that.

Othello: Ay, let her rot, and perish, and be damn'd to-night; for she shall not live. No, my heart is turn'd to stone; I strike it, and it hurts my hand. O, the world hath not a sweeter creature; she might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks.

Iago: Nay, that's not your way.

Othello: Hang her! I do but say what she is: so delicate with her needle, an admirable musician – O, she will sing the savageness out of a bear! – of so high and plenteous wit and invention.

Iago: She's the worse for all this.

Othello: O, a thousand, a thousand times – and then of so gentle a condition.

Iago: Ay, too gentle.

Othello: Nay, that's certain. But yet the pity of it, Iago! O, Iago, the pity of it, Iago!

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Iago: If you be so fond over her iniquity, give her patent to offend; for, if it touch not you, it comes near nobody.

Othello: I will chop her into messes. Cuckold me!

Iago: O, 'tis foul in her.

Othello: With mine officer!

Iago: That's fouler.

Othello: Get me some poison, Iago – this night. I'll not expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again – this night, Iago.

Iago: Do it not with poison; strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated.

Othello: Good, good; the justice of it pleases; very good.

Iago: And for Cassio – let me be his undertaker. You shall hear more by midnight.

Othello: Excellent good.

(*from* Act 4, Scene 1)

How does Shakespeare make this moment in the play so distressing?

Or **5(b)** In what ways does Shakespeare make the ending of the play so powerful?

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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

1a

Nottage makes this a shocking moment by staging an ambush. Godfrey treats his announcement as the solution to the family's grief, "I think everything's gonna be all right", but to his daughters it is a betrayal, and Nottage builds the scene so that the audience feels the shock from both sides: the girls' disbelief, Gerte's discomfort and Godfrey's painful clumsiness.

The opening is deceptively warm. Ermina's twitching leg stops, she throws her arms around her father and finds a cookie in his pocket, a little ritual of childish trust. Godfrey's "That's my girl" and his talk of bringing "order to things" lull us into expecting reconciliation. The stage direction then delivers the blow almost casually: Gerte "steps into the apartment carrying a suitcase". The suitcase is a brutal prop, because it tells the girls before any words do that she has come to stay. Even then Godfrey delays the key fact, giving "this is Gerte" and only after the stare "My new wife." The isolated three-word line, hanging after a silence, lands like a slap.

Gerte's speech heightens the shock rather than softening it. The direction "By rote" and her hand extended "as if practiced" make her greeting sound rehearsed, and her formal phrases, "get on fondly" and "charming stories", are absurdly polite for such a moment. Worse, she knows things about them. She addresses them as "Devout" and "Darling", the names Godfrey has given them, and congratulates Ernestine on finishing her studies, and both girls "gasp". It is shocking that a total stranger has been told these intimate details, as though she has been part of their lives behind their backs. When she turns to Godfrey "to ensure that she has produced the correct information", the marriage itself seems like a performance

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learned for the occasion.

Ermina then says aloud what everyone is thinking: "She white!" The bluntness of the dropped verb gives it the force of a child's honesty, and the stage direction "Awkward silence" lets the shock settle on the audience too. Godfrey's feeble "should we all sit?" is met by the brilliantly sardonic "She won't be white if we sit down?", which exposes how inadequate his attempts at normality are. Nottage also shows that the couple barely know each other: he "fumbles" for her hand in a gesture that is "mechanical, the mark of unfamiliarity". Gerte's "deep belly laugh", carrying on "without taking a breath", is grotesquely out of tune with the girls' contempt, and I find it one of the most uncomfortable moments in the scene.

Ernestine's direct address to the audience changes the rhythm. Time seems to freeze while she pours out her horror through the language of the cinema she loves. She wishes for someone like "the demure Olivia de Havilland", but sees instead Marlene Dietrich, "a cold bitter whore laughing in our doorway". The violent insult, and the image of Gerte "blowing smoke in our faces", reveal the depth of her hostility and the way her imagination turns the stranger into a villain. The shock is partly comic, but it is also wounded.

The second half drives the wound home. Godfrey's commands, "Don't stand there looking foolish" and "Take her hand", show how little he understands his daughters' feelings. Ernestine's "hard shake" is a gesture of defiance, and her cry that "Mommy ain't even dead a year" names the real injury: this marriage feels like an erasure of their mother. Gerte's quiet "I lost my mother when I was young" briefly gives her sympathy, complicating our response, but there is no time for it to grow. Ernestine's flat "I don't want you here!" is the rawest line in the passage.

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Finally, Lily's appearance in the doorway adds another layer of shock, since she is the dead mother's sister and an alternative presence in the home. Ermina's leg "begins to jerk uncontrollably", a physical sign that her fragile calm has been destroyed, bringing the scene full circle. Godfrey's defensive "We met, we fell in love, we married" compresses a whole courtship into a single breathless line, and the sudden "Blackout" refuses any resolution, leaving the audience as stunned as the girls.

2b

Soyinka's Praise-Singer is far more than an entertainer at Elesin's side. He is the voice of the community's memory and conscience, and his changing relationship with Elesin traces the whole tragic arc of the play: he begins as a flatterer and companion, becomes a guide at the threshold of death, and ends as an accuser. Much of the play's dramatic power comes from the way his words frame and finally judge Elesin's failure.

In the opening scene the Praise-Singer establishes the vibrant, celebratory world of the market. His exchanges with Elesin are playful and full of affectionate teasing, especially about Elesin's appetite for women, and the drummers and the rhythm of his chanting give the scene an energy that is almost musical. This matters dramatically because it makes the audience feel the richness of the life Elesin is about to leave. The Praise-Singer also draws out Elesin's great performance of the story of the Not-I bird, acting as a responsive partner, so that we see Elesin at his most confident and boastful. Soyinka is careful, however, to give the Praise-Singer an undertone of anxiety beneath the praise. He reminds Elesin of the importance of his duty, and in a series of images about the river-mussel and the tortoise, each with only one home, he insists that the race has only one world. His question about what will shelter them if that world smashes off course into the

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void is chilling, because it raises the stakes beyond Elesin himself: if the King's Horseman fails, the whole cosmic order is threatened. The audience leaves the first scene sensing how much rests on one man's will.

The Praise-Singer's most striking contribution comes in Scene 3, when Elesin dances towards death. Here Soyinka uses him almost as a medium. He chants to Elesin as he sinks into his trance, and at times speaks as though in the voice of the dead King, urging his horseman to follow him and asking whether he can still hear. The questions are repeated, and as Elesin's replies grow fainter, the dialogue itself seems to thin out, creating a hypnotic and solemn atmosphere. The effect on stage, with drums, movement and incantation, is of a man being carried across a boundary. Because the Praise-Singer is the one who describes what Elesin is experiencing, he also makes the audience part of the ritual. This is why the interruption by the colonial authorities later feels so violent: we have been drawn into a sacred moment through his poetry.

In the final scene the Praise-Singer's role is reversed with devastating effect. When he confronts Elesin in his cell, the praise has gone, replaced by bitter reproach. He reminds Elesin that the people had trusted him with the course of their world and that he allowed it to fall over the edge while strangers pushed it from its path. The imagery of the opening scene, the world careering out of its course, returns as accusation, so that the play's structure seems to close around Elesin like a trap. Elesin can offer only weak explanations, and the fact that his own former flatterer now condemns him makes his disgrace complete. Soon after, he takes his own life, too late to restore the order he has broken.

Throughout the play, the Praise-Singer's language is also a dramatic contrast to the clipped, dismissive prose of Pilkings and the other British characters. His

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speech is rich with proverb, metaphor and rhythm, and it gives dignity and depth to the Yoruba world that the colonial characters dismiss as nonsense. In this way the Praise-Singer helps Soyinka shape our sympathies.

I think the Praise-Singer is ultimately the moral centre of the play. He celebrates Elesin, guides him and finally judges him, and in doing so he makes the audience understand that Elesin's tragedy is not personal but communal. Without him, the play's sense of a whole world falling would be far less vivid.

3a

Williams makes this a dramatic moment because it is the point at which Blanche's last hope of rescue collapses. Mitch, the one man who offered her safety, has learned the truth about her past from Stanley, and the scene becomes a painful trial in which illusion and reality confront each other face to face. What makes it so gripping is that Blanche, at her most exposed, is also at her most honest.

The accusation is stark and simple: "You lied to me, Blanche." Mitch's plain, flat sentence contrasts sharply with the decorative language Blanche usually hides behind, and his angry repetition in "Lies, lies, inside and out, all lies" has the hammering rhythm of a verdict. Blanche's reply, "Never inside, I didn't lie in my heart", is one of the most revealing lines she speaks. She draws a distinction between surface facts and inner truth, suggesting that her deceptions were attempts to protect something genuine in herself. The audience may feel the justice of Mitch's anger while also sensing that Blanche is telling the truth in a deeper sense.

Williams then heightens the drama with the Mexican Woman selling flowers for the dead. Her chant, "Flores para los muertos", drifts in like a ghost from

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Blanche's past, and the flowers for the dead are an expressionist symbol of the deaths that haunt her and of her own approaching destruction. Blanche's horror at the voice shows that the boundary between memory and the present has broken down. Her speech about Belle Reve, the dying relatives and the soldiers on the lawn fuses these memories with the vendor's cries, so that the stage seems filled with the dead.

Blanche's confession is the emotional centre of the moment. She admits plainly that she had "many intimacies with strangers" after the death of her young husband, Allan, and explains that panic drove her from one to another, "hunting for some protection". The image of hunting makes her seem desperate rather than wicked, and the mention of the Tarantula Arms, named after a spider that traps its prey, suggests that she was both predator and victim. Her account of the seventeen-year-old boy that led to her dismissal is startling in its frankness. Yet Williams gives her a moment of tenderness too, when she says she thanked God for Mitch because he seemed gentle, "a cleft in the rock of the world". The biblical image of shelter shows how much she had invested in him, and makes his rejection all the more cruel.

That rejection comes in brutal stages. Mitch's clumsy attempt to take what he has "been missing all summer" exposes how quickly his respect has turned into crude desire, and Blanche's request that he marry her is met by refusal. His line "You're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother" is devastating. The word "clean" reduces her to something dirty and contaminating, and the reference to his mother reminds us of the respectable world she has tried so hard to enter and from which she is now shut out.

Blanche's response is one of the most theatrical moments in the play. She

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threatens to scream "Fire!" and then actually does, shrieking until Mitch flees. The cry is a desperate assertion of power by a woman who has none left, and it also suggests an inner blaze of panic. The scene closes with her collapsing to her knees while "The distant piano is slow and blue." Williams uses the blue piano throughout the play to express loneliness and loss, and here its slowness feels like a lament for her.

I find this moment intensely dramatic because Williams refuses to let us judge Blanche simply. Her lies are exposed, but so is her suffering, and Mitch, who seemed kind, is shown to be as unforgiving as Stanley in his own way. The scene marks the end of Blanche's hope and prepares us for her final destruction in the scenes that follow.

3b

Williams conveys Blanche's sense of her own superiority as both a defence and a weakness. She clings to an image of herself as a refined Southern lady from Belle Reve, cultured, delicate and above the rough world of Elysian Fields, and Williams makes this vivid through her language, her behaviour and the reactions of others. Yet he also reveals that her superiority is fragile, built on a vanished past, and it is precisely this that makes her so vulnerable to Stanley.

From her first entrance, Blanche is visually set apart. Williams dresses her in white, "daintily" dressed as if for a garden party, and compares her to a moth, so that she looks entirely out of place in the shabby street. Her first reaction to the flat is shock that Stella lives there at all, and she later describes it as a place only Edgar Allan Poe could do justice to. The literary allusion is typical: Blanche uses her education to place herself above her surroundings, reminding everyone that she is a teacher of English with a taste for poetry. Her request to Stella not

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to let her see the place by full light also hints, early on, that her superiority depends on concealment.

Her language is the most striking vehicle for her snobbery. She speaks in elaborate, theatrical phrases and frequently slips into French, as when she flirts with Mitch, knowing he cannot understand. Her treatment of Stanley is even more cutting. In Scene 4, after the poker night, she delivers her famous speech describing him as "common" and as an animal, comparing him to an ape and urging Stella not to "hang back with the brutes". The evolutionary imagery reveals her belief that she represents civilisation, art and tenderness, while Stanley belongs to a lower order. Williams makes the irony sharp because Stanley overhears this speech, and his grin at Stella afterwards suggests that her contempt has armed him against her.

Blanche's superiority is also rooted in her family's aristocratic past. She speaks proudly of Belle Reve, the "beautiful dream" of the plantation, even though it has been lost through what she calls the "epic fornications" of her ancestors. This phrase is revealing: she can describe her family's decadence with grand irony, but she still sees herself as the last representative of a nobler tradition. When Stanley demands the papers, she hands them over with disdain, treating his interest as vulgar, and calls him a Polack, a label he angrily rejects by insisting he is one hundred per cent American. The clash shows how her sense of class and ancestry collides with his modern, democratic pride.

Williams presents her superiority as most painful when it turns into fantasy. In Scene 10, alone and drinking, she dresses in a worn-out evening gown and a rhinestone tiara, and tells Stanley that Shep Huntleigh has invited her on a cruise. She insists that she has been cast aside by Mitch because of her refinement,

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claiming that physical beauty passes but that she has "beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit". The tiara becomes a pathetic crown for a queen without a kingdom. Stanley's mocking response, tearing apart her pretensions, exposes how hollow they have become, and the scene ends in her rape, the cruellest possible destruction of her claim to be untouchable.

Even in the final scene, Blanche keeps her air of a lady. She fusses over her appearance and is horrified at the thought of being touched by the Matron, but when the Doctor removes his hat and speaks gently, she takes his arm with grace. Her last line, that she has always depended on the kindness of strangers, preserves her dignity in a moment of total defeat, and is heartbreaking because those strangers have so often exploited her.

I think Williams makes Blanche's superiority strikingly double-edged. It is snobbish and often cruel, especially towards Stanley and Stella's life, yet it is also the only protection she has against a world that has stripped away her home, her husband and her youth. Her pride makes her infuriating, but it also makes her tragic.

4a Shakespeare dramatises the lovers' emotions here at boiling point. Because of Puck's mistake with the love-juice, both young men now adore Helena and despise Hermia, and the audience, knowing the cause, watches four people who each believe they are the victim of a cruel trick. The comedy lies in the misunderstanding, but Shakespeare also gives the emotions real force, so that the scene is both very funny and genuinely painful.

Helena's emotions dominate the opening. She is convinced that the others are mocking her, and her bitter rhetorical question about why Lysander should "Deny

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your love" and "tender me, forsooth, affection" shows her suspicion that Hermia has set him on. The sarcastic "forsooth" sharpens her hurt into scorn. Her description of herself as "miserable most, to love unlov'd" uses a neat paradox and repetition to capture years of humiliation, and her plea that this "you should pity rather than despise" reveals how deeply she feels rejected. When Hermia answers simply, "I understand not what you mean by this", Helena's response becomes a torrent of imperatives: "persever, counterfeit sad looks, / Make mouths upon me". She imagines them winking behind her back and keeping "the sweet jest up", so that her emotion is not only sorrow but wounded pride. Her hint that "death, or absence" will soon remedy things reveals despair beneath her anger.

The young men's feelings, by contrast, are loud and competitive. Lysander's "My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!" is a rapid list of extravagant terms that sounds almost ridiculous after Helena's earnest speech, and her dry "O excellent!" deflates it. Demetrius and Lysander then compete in boasts, "I say I love thee more than he can do", and their quick, short exchanges, with "withdraw, and prove it too" and "Quick, come", turn love into a contest of masculine pride. Shakespeare makes their passion seem shallow, a product of the drug rather than of real feeling, which is why the audience laughs at them.

The most disturbing emotions, however, belong to the exchange between Lysander and Hermia. Lysander's insults are shockingly cruel: "Away, you Ethiope!", "thou cat, thou burr; vile thing", and "Out, tawny Tartar, out!" He mocks her darker colouring and her small size, and the animal imagery of the cat and the "serpent" he would shake off makes her seem like something clinging to him. Calling her a "loathed med'cine" and "hated potion" is especially ironic, since it is a potion that has changed him. Hermia's emotions move from bewilderment to anguish. Her questions, "Why are you grown so rude? What change is this, / Sweet love?", show

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that she still uses the language of love even as he insults her.

The climax of her grief comes in her later speech. The fragmented lines, "Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love?", are broken by exclamations, and Shakespeare uses this disordered syntax to show a mind struggling to grasp something unbearable. Her desperate questions "Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?" suggest that the change in him is so total it seems to destroy their very identities. The balanced line "Since night you lov'd me; yet since night you left me" captures the bewildering speed of the change. Lysander's final speech gives her no hope at all. The relentless list "of hope, of question, of doubt" and the insistence "'tis no jest / That I do hate thee and love Helena" are brutally certain, and ironically he is telling the truth only because of magic.

I think Shakespeare balances these emotions with great skill. The audience laughs at the confusion, the mirrored pairs of lovers and the absurd insults, yet Hermia's and Helena's pain feels real. The scene suggests how irrational and fragile love is, and how quickly it can turn into cruelty, while our knowledge that Oberon will put things right lets us enjoy the chaos.

4b The mechanicals add enormously to my enjoyment of the play because Shakespeare uses them to bring a different kind of comedy into the world of lovers, fairies and courtly ceremony. Their earnest attempts to stage a tragedy for the Duke's wedding create farce, warmth and clever reflections on theatre itself, and Bottom in particular becomes one of the most delightful characters in the play.

From their first scene, Shakespeare makes the mechanicals comic through their

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names, their speech and their enthusiasm. Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, Starveling and Bottom are named after their trades, and they speak in prose, which sets them apart from the verse of the lovers and the court. Their play is the "most lamentable comedy" of Pyramus and Thisbe, a title that contradicts itself and immediately signals that things will go wrong. Bottom's eagerness to play every part, including Thisbe and the lion, whom he promises to roar so gently that it will not frighten the ladies, is hilarious because it reveals his boundless self-confidence. Flute's protest that he has a beard coming makes the casting of a woman's part comic as well. I enjoy the way Shakespeare makes these men both ridiculous and likeable: they are anxious to please the Duke and fear being hanged if the ladies are scared.

The rehearsal in the wood develops this comedy. The mechanicals worry that the audience will believe the sword and the lion are real, so they decide on a prologue to explain that Pyramus is not really killed and that the lion is only Snug the joiner. They also decide to represent the moonshine and the wall with actors. Their solution to problems that no real audience has is absurdly literal, and Shakespeare gently mocks bad theatre while also inviting us to think about how drama depends on imagination.

The greatest pleasure comes from the meeting of Bottom and the fairy world. Puck gives him an ass's head, and his friends flee in terror, but Bottom, assuming they are trying to frighten him, sings to show he is not afraid. Titania, under the spell of the love-juice, wakes and falls in love with him. The contrast between her lyrical verse and his down-to-earth prose is wonderfully funny: she promises to purge his mortal grossness, while he is more interested in scratching his head and asking for hay. His polite conversations with the fairies Peaseblossom, Cobweb and Mustardseed, treating them like new acquaintances, show his unshakeable good

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humour. The image of the queen of the fairies doting on a weaver with an ass's head is one of Shakespeare's best comic contrasts, but it also mocks the irrationality of love that the lovers experience. When Bottom wakes, his confused speech about his "most rare vision" mixes up the senses, saying that the eye of man has not heard and the ear has not seen, in a garbled echo of the Bible, and his idea of turning it into a ballad called "Bottom's Dream" is charming.

The performance of Pyramus and Thisbe in Act 5 is the comic climax. Quince's prologue is spoken with the punctuation in all the wrong places, so that it says the opposite of what he means. The Wall parts his fingers to make a chink for the lovers, the Lion explains that he is not really a lion, and Moonshine is mocked until he gives up and simply lists his props. Bottom's melodramatic death, repeating "die" again and again, is a ridiculous parody of tragic language, and Flute's lament as Thisbe is full of absurd comparisons. The courtly audience's witty comments add another layer, though Theseus also shows kindness, saying that the best of this kind are but shadows.

What adds most to my enjoyment is that the play within the play mirrors the main plot. Pyramus and Thisbe are lovers forbidden by their parents, just like Hermia and Lysander, but their story ends in death. By turning it into farce, Shakespeare reminds the audience how close the lovers came to tragedy, and lets laughter win. The mechanicals make the play feel generous, joyful and playful about its own art.

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Shakespeare makes this moment deeply distressing because we watch Othello, once a figure of noble self-control, being led by Iago from love into a desire for murder. The handkerchief, a trivial object, becomes "proof" of an adultery that never

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happened, and the audience, knowing Desdemona's innocence, is forced to witness her husband plotting her death on the basis of a staged scene he has misread.

The passage opens with dramatic irony. Bianca's angry return of the handkerchief, refusing to "take out" any work from a love-token she suspects came from another woman, is innocent in itself, but Othello's aside, "By heaven, that should be my handkerchief!", shows him seizing on it as evidence. The audience knows that Emilia found it and Iago planted it, so the trap closing around Othello is painful to watch. Iago's brisk, practical exchanges with Cassio about supper contrast chillingly with what Othello is thinking. When Cassio leaves, Othello's first words on coming forward are "How shall I murder him, Iago?" The bluntness of the question, without any hesitation, is shocking: his trust in Iago is now so complete that he asks him for advice on killing.

Iago's technique is distressing in its efficiency. His questions, "Did you perceive how he laugh'd at his vice?" and "And did you see the handkerchief?", force Othello to reinterpret what he has just seen. Of course Cassio was laughing about Bianca, not Desdemona, but Iago leaves no space for doubt. His crude claim that Desdemona gave it to Cassio, "and he hath giv'n it his whore", degrades her completely, and the word "whore" infects Othello's language from here on.

What makes the passage most distressing is Othello's divided state. He swings violently between hatred and tenderness. "I would have him nine years a-killing" reveals a monstrous cruelty, yet in the same breath he cries "A fine woman! a fair woman! a sweet woman!", the triple repetition showing that he cannot stop loving her. Iago immediately checks him with "Nay, you must forget that." Othello's next speech moves from "let her rot, and perish, and be damn'd to-night" to a vision of her lying "by an emperor's side". The image "my heart is turn'd to stone; I strike

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it, and it hurts my hand" is powerful because it shows him forcing himself to become hard, and the pain of the blow suggests that his love still resists. He recalls her gifts with her needle and her music, how "she will sing the savageness out of a bear", an image that is especially poignant because it suggests she once tamed his own nature.

Iago twists every memory of goodness into a sign of guilt. To "so gentle a condition" he answers "Ay, too gentle", turning her kindness into looseness. Othello's cry "But yet the pity of it, Iago! O, Iago, the pity of it, Iago!" is the most heart-breaking line in the passage. The repetition of Iago's name shows how pathetically he depends on his tormentor, and for a moment we glimpse the noble man he was, grieving for what he believes he has lost.

The pity, however, is crushed. "I will chop her into messes" is horrifyingly violent, reducing Desdemona to pieces of meat, and the broken exclamations "Cuckold me!" and "With mine officer!" show his pride and reason collapsing into short bursts of rage. Iago feeds each one with a matching phrase: "O, 'tis foul in her" and "That's fouler". Othello wants poison because he fears her "body and beauty" will "unprovide my mind again", an admission that her presence might restore his sense. Iago's suggestion that he strangle her "in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated" gives the murder a grotesque poetic logic, and Othello's delighted "Good, good; the justice of it pleases" shows that he now believes himself to be a judge rather than a murderer.

The scene ends with Iago offering to be Cassio's "undertaker" and Othello's "Excellent good". This chilling agreement, almost businesslike, distresses the audience because we know how easily the tragedy could still be stopped, and yet Othello, the man who once commanded armies, has surrendered his judgement

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entirely to Iago.

5b The ending of Othello is powerful because Shakespeare makes us watch a man of real nobility destroy the thing he loves most, while we know all along that the cause is a lie. The final scene is painful not only for its violence but for its terrible closeness: the whole tragedy shrinks into one bedroom and one bed, and the dramatic irony built up through the play is released in shocking reversals.

Shakespeare opens the scene with Othello alone, speaking to the sleeping Desdemona, and this quiet start is more disturbing than any outburst. The repetition of "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul" shows him trying to persuade himself that the murder is an act of justice rather than jealousy. His language has recovered its earlier music: he will not "scar that whiter skin of hers than snow, / And smooth as monumental alabaster". Alabaster is the stone of tomb effigies, so he is already turning her into a corpse. The wordplay of "Put out the light, and then put out the light" links the candle to her life, and his recognition that he cannot relight it shows he understands exactly what he is about to lose. I find this the most powerful moment of all, because Othello is not a monster here; he kisses her and weeps, which makes the coming murder feel like a tragedy rather than a crime.

Desdemona's waking deepens the pain. Her pleading is simple and human, "Kill me tomorrow; let me live tonight", and the short, desperate bargaining contrasts with Othello's grand certainty. Shakespeare gives her a moment of near resurrection after she is smothered, so that the audience briefly hopes, and then her last words, "Nobody; I myself", show a loyalty so complete that she tries to protect her murderer. This is overwhelming because it proves her innocence at the very

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moment Othello is most convinced of her guilt.

The arrival of Emilia turns the scene from private grief into public exposure. Her stunned repetition of "My husband?" lets the truth dawn slowly, and the audience, who have known about Iago from the start, watch the dramatic irony finally collapse. Emilia's language is fierce and plain: she calls Othello "O gull! O dolt! / As ignorant as dirt!", stripping away his heroic status in a way no one else has dared. Her refusal to be silenced, "Let heaven and men and devils, let them all, / All, all, cry shame against me, yet I'll speak", makes her the moral voice of the ending, and her death at Iago's hand adds a second innocent woman to the bed.

Iago's response is perhaps the most chilling element. After a play in which he has controlled everyone through speech, he chooses silence: "Demand me nothing: what you know, you know". Shakespeare denies us any full explanation of his motives, which leaves his evil unexplained and therefore more frightening.

Othello's final speech restores some of his dignity, and this mixture of horror and nobility is what makes the ending so complex. "Soft you; a word or two before you go" recalls the calm authority he showed in the first act, and he asks to be remembered as "one that lov'd not wisely but too well". Some may feel this is self-justification, since he still places himself at the centre of the story, yet the image of the man who "threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe" shows that he finally sees Desdemona's true worth. His suicide is staged as a story within a story, as he describes striking down an enemy of the state and then turns the blade on himself, so that he becomes both the judge and the condemned. The closing couplet, "I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee: no way but this, / Killing myself, to die upon a kiss", joins love and death in a single gesture.

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Finally, Lodovico's instruction to look on "the tragic loading of this bed" forces the audience to look too. The ending is powerful because Shakespeare refuses to let us look away: from the tender opening to the bodies on the bed, he makes us feel both the beauty of what was lost and the horror of how easily it was destroyed.