Cambridge Assessment International Education

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **0475/21**

Paper 2 Drama **October/November 2025**

1 hour 30 minutes



You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

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

INFORMATION

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

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

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SHELAGH DELANEY: *A Taste of Honey*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

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

JO: Has your husband thrown you out?

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Living
like pigs in a pigsty.

(*from* Act 2, Scene 2)

In what ways does Delaney make this moment in the play so revealing?

Or **1(b)** How far does Delaney make Boy a likeable 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, and then answer the question that follows it:

[PILKINGS *returns with* IYALOJA.]

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No, you said, I am the hunter's dog and I shall eat
the entrails of the game and the faeces of the hunter.

(*from* Scene 5)

How does Soyinka vividly convey the characters' thoughts and feelings at this moment in the play?

Or **2(b)** To what extent does Soyinka's portrayal of Olunde encourage you to feel sympathy for him?

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 *opens the door and they enter.*]

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I'm sorry, but I haven't noticed the stamp of genius even on Stanley's forehead.

(*from* Scene 3)

In what ways does Williams make this moment in the play so revealing?

Or **3(b)** Explore how Williams dramatically portrays Blanche's breakdown in the play.

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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:

[*Enter* PYRAMUS.]

THESEUS: Pyramus draws near the wall; silence.

PYRAMUS: *O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!*
O night, which ever art when day is not!
O night, O night, alack, alack, alack,
I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot!
And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
That stand'st between her father's ground and mine;
Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne.

[WALL *holds up his fingers.*]

Thanks, courteous wall. Jove shield thee well for this!
But what see I? No Thisby do I see.
O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss;
Curs'd be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

THESEUS: The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

PYRAMUS: No, in truth, sir, he should not. *Deceiving me* is Thisby's cue. She is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see it will fall pat as I told you; yonder she comes.

[*Enter* THISBY.]

THISBY: *O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,*
For parting my fair Pyramus and me!
My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

PYRAMUS: *I see a voice, now will I to the chink,*
To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face. Thisby!

THISBY: *My love! thou art my love, I think.*

PYRAMUS: *Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace;*
And like Limander am I trusty still.

THISBY: *And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.*

PYRAMUS: *Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.*

THISBY: *As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.*

PYRAMUS: *O, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.*

THISBY: *I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.*

PYRAMUS: *Will thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?*

THISBY: *Tide life, tide death, I come without delay.*

[*Exeunt* PYRAMUS *and* THISBY.]

WALL: *Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so;*
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.

[*Exit* WALL.]

THESEUS: Now is the moon used between the two neighbours.

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DEMETRIUS: No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful to hear without warning.

HIPPOLYTA: This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

THESEUS: The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them. *45*

HIPPOLYTA: It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

THESEUS: If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men.

(*from* Act 5, Scene 1)

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

Or **4(b)** 'Oberon wants to be in control.'

In what ways does Shakespeare's portrayal of Oberon show this?

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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:

[*Enter a* SERVANT.]

SERVANT: A messenger from Caesar.

CLEOPATRA: What, no more ceremony? See, my women!
Against the blown rose may they stop their nose
That kneel'd unto the buds. Admit him, sir.

[*Exit* SERVANT.]

ENOBARBUS: [*Aside*] Mine honesty and I begin to square.
The loyalty well held to fools does make
Our faith mere folly. Yet he that can endure
To follow with allegiance a fall'n lord
Does conquer him that did his master conquer,
And earns a place i' th' story.

[*Enter* THYREUS.]

CLEOPATRA: Caesar's will?

THYREUS: Hear it apart.

CLEOPATRA: None but friends*:* say boldly.

THYREUS: So, happy, are they friends to Antony.

ENOBARBUS: He needs as many, sir, as Caesar has,
Or needs not us. If Caesar please, our master
Will leap to be his friend. For us, you know
Whose he is we are, and that is Caesar's.

THYREUS: So.
Thus then, thou most renown'd: Caesar entreats
Not to consider in what case thou stand'st
Further than he is Caesar.

CLEOPATRA: Go on. Right royal!

THYREUS: He knows that you embrace not Antony
As you did love, but as you fear'd him.

CLEOPATRA: O!

THYREUS: The scars upon your honour, therefore, he
Does pity, as constrained blemishes,
Not as deserv'd.

CLEOPATRA: He is a god, and knows
What is most right. Mine honour was not yielded,
But conquer'd merely.

ENOBARBUS: [*Aside*] To be sure of that,
I will ask Antony. Sir, sir, thou art so leaky
That we must leave thee to thy sinking, for
Thy dearest quit thee.

[*Exit.*]

THYREUS: Shall I say to Caesar
What you require of him? For he partly begs
To be desir'd to give. It much would please him

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That of his fortunes you should make a staff
To lean upon. But it would warm his spirits
To hear from me you had left Antony,
And put yourself under his shroud,
The universal landlord.

CLEOPATRA: What's your name?

THYREUS: My name is Thyreus.

CLEOPATRA: Most kind messenger,
Say to great Caesar this: in deputation
I kiss his conqu'ring hand. Tell him I am prompt
To lay my crown at's feet, and there to kneel.
Tell him from his all-obeying breath I hear
The doom of Egypt.

THYREUS: 'Tis your noblest course.
Wisdom and fortune combating together,
If that the former dare but what it can,
No chance may shake it. Give me grace to lay
My duty on your hand.

CLEOPATRA: Your Caesar's father oft,
When he hath mus'd of taking kingdoms in,
Bestow'd his lips on that unworthy place,
As it rain'd kisses.

[*Re-enter* ANTONY *and* ENOBARBUS.]

ANTONY: Favours, by Jove that thunders!
What art thou, fellow?

THYREUS: One that but performs
The bidding of the fullest man, and worthiest
To have command obey'd.

ENOBARBUS: [*Aside*]: You will be whipt.

ANTONY: Approach there. – Ah, you kite! – Now, gods and devils!
Authority melts from me. Of late, when I cried 'Ho!'
Like boys unto a muss, kings would start forth
And cry 'Your will?' Have you no ears? I am Antony yet.

[*Enter* SERVANTS.]

Take hence this Jack and whip him.

(*from* Act 3, Scene 13)

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

Or **5(b)** Explore **two** moments in the play which Shakespeare makes particularly moving for you.

Do **not** use the passage printed in **Question 5(a)** in answering this question.

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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 makes Boy likeable to a considerable extent, but only for a short time and only on the surface. He brings warmth, humour and tenderness into Jo's bleak world, and in his scenes the play feels lighter and more hopeful than anywhere else. Yet Delaney deliberately keeps him sketchy and transient, and his disappearance leaves the audience questioning how much his charm was ever worth. He is attractive as a moment of happiness rather than as a man to be trusted.

Part of Boy's appeal lies in the way Delaney contrasts him with the other adults in Jo's life. Helen is careless and sharp-tongued, Peter is crude and contemptuous of Jo, and the flat itself is cold and shabby. Against this background, Boy walks Jo home, teases her gently and treats her as someone worth listening to. Their dialogue is quick and playful, full of mock-serious banter, and Delaney's naturalistic, overlapping exchanges make the relationship feel spontaneous and genuine. Jo, who is guarded and mocking with almost everyone, relaxes with him, and we are likely to warm to anyone who can make her laugh.

Delaney also gives Boy moments of real tenderness. He proposes to Jo and gives her a ring, and her decision to wear it hidden round her neck turns the cheap gift into something precious and private. The fact that she keeps it from Helen suggests that Boy offers her something her mother never has: affection that is entirely hers. His willingness to spend Christmas with her while Helen goes off with Peter makes him seem, briefly, more of a family than her own mother. The audience may well feel that he gives Jo her only experience of being cherished.

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However, Delaney undercuts this likeability in subtle ways. Even in his warmest scenes there is something of the performer about Boy; his jokes and romantic gestures can feel rehearsed, as if he is playing a part he has played before. Jo herself seems half aware of this. She is sceptical about his promises and asks whether he means what he says, and her own sharpness hints that she does not quite believe in a happy ending. Delaney leaves it ambiguous whether Boy's proposal is sincere or simply part of a sailor's shore-leave romance. Because we never see him outside his time with Jo, we cannot judge his real intentions.

The most important structural choice is his absence. Boy leaves with his ship before the end of Act 1 and never returns. In Act 2 Jo is pregnant, alone and working, and his only presence is in her memories and in the child she carries. Delaney ensures that the consequences of the relationship fall entirely on Jo, while Boy walks away free. Our view of him inevitably darkens: the charm that seemed so appealing now looks careless, perhaps even exploitative. Yet Delaney avoids turning him into a villain. Jo rarely blames him directly, and her moods about him swing between longing and indifference, suggesting that she understood from the start that he might not come back.

It is also worth noticing how Delaney uses Boy to expose the attitudes of others. His race provokes Helen's shocked and prejudiced reaction when she learns that the baby's father is black, and Jo's fears that the child may be rejected reveal the hostility of the society around them. In this sense Boy is presented sympathetically as a victim of prejudice, which strengthens the audience's sense that he is not simply to be condemned. Delaney makes him human rather than either a romantic hero or a cad.

Overall, Delaney makes Boy likeable in his charm, humour and kindness, and his

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scenes provide some of the play's most tender moments. But his likeability is limited, because the structure of the play makes us judge him by his absence as much as by his presence. He is perhaps best seen as a brief light in Jo's life: genuinely attractive while he is there, but ultimately as unreliable as the other adults who leave her to cope alone. It is Geof, not Boy, who finally shows Jo what lasting care looks like.

2b

Soyinka's portrayal of Olunde invites a great deal of sympathy, though it is a sympathy mixed with admiration and, at times, unease. He is a young man caught between two worlds, treated with condescension by the colonial characters and betrayed by his own father, who in the end pays with his life for duties that were never meant to be his. Yet Soyinka makes him so composed and so certain that some audiences may find his calm harder to pity than to respect.

Our sympathy is prepared before he even appears. In the early scenes we learn that Olunde left for England to study medicine against his father's wishes, helped by Pilkings, and that Elesin regarded this as a kind of loss. When Olunde returns in Scene 4, he enters a world that does not understand him. At the masked ball, the Pilkingses are dressed in egungun costume, and Olunde's quiet disgust at this desecration of an ancestral mask is entirely understandable. Soyinka shows him being misread at every turn: the British see only a colonial subject who has been improved by education, and are puzzled that he still honours his father's duty. This repeated misjudgement makes the audience feel protective of him.

His conversation with Jane Pilkings is perhaps the most important scene for our response. Olunde is articulate, ironic and patient, and Soyinka gives him the sharpest arguments in the play. When Jane is horrified that he accepts his father's

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ritual death, he reminds her of the ship's captain who blew himself up to protect others, and suggests that the British call this heroic sacrifice while condemning the same impulse in Yoruba culture. He tells her that the English have no respect for what they do not understand. Here Soyinka makes us sympathise not because Olunde is weak, but because he is clear-sighted and yet surrounded by people who cannot hear him. The dramatic irony is painful: he speaks confidently of his father's death as already accomplished, while we suspect that Elesin has faltered.

The emotional climax of his role comes when Elesin is brought in, alive and in chains. Olunde's reaction is devastating. He refuses to recognise his father, saying "I have no father, eater of left-overs." The image of a man who eats scraps after the feast is brutal, suggesting that Elesin has dishonoured himself by clinging to life when others have already gone ahead. Some might find Olunde cruel here, as Elesin collapses in shame before him. However, Soyinka encourages us to see the depth of Olunde's grief: he has crossed an ocean to bury a father whom he believed to be a hero, only to find him disgraced. His harshness is the measure of his pain, and this makes him more tragic rather than less sympathetic.

Olunde's death is the final source of sympathy, and Soyinka stages it with powerful restraint. We never see him die. Instead, Iyaloja and the women bring his body to the cell in Scene 5, wrapped in cloth, and it is unveiled before his father. The absence of any death scene makes the revelation more shocking: a young doctor trained to save lives has given his own in order to restore the order his father broke. The fact that Elesin then strangles himself with his chain, too late, adds to the sense of waste. Iyaloja's bitter words emphasise that the son has taken on the father's burden, so that the natural order of generations is reversed: the young man dies first, and the old man follows in shame.

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There are, however, ways in which Soyinka complicates our sympathy. Olunde's absolute certainty may seem chilling; he accepts death with such control that it is difficult to imagine him afraid. Some readers may feel more pity for Elesin, whose human weakness is more recognisable. Yet I would argue that this composure is precisely what makes Olunde so moving. Soyinka presents him as the most complete and dignified figure in the play, someone who understands both worlds and chooses responsibility over self-preservation. To a large extent, therefore, Soyinka's portrayal does encourage sympathy for Olunde, but it is a sympathy rooted in respect and grief: we mourn not a victim, but a young man whose courage and intelligence are lost because of the failures of those around him.

3b

Williams does not present Blanche's breakdown as a single event but as a gradual unravelling that the audience witnesses through sound, light and the slow collapse of her carefully built illusions. What makes it so powerful dramatically is that Williams lets us see inside her mind, turning private torment into something visible and audible on stage, so that by the final scene we share her fear as well as observing it.

Even in Scene 1 the cracks are present. Blanche arrives in a delicate white suit, with a fluttering uncertainty that the stage directions compare to a moth, in a setting of noise and heat that seems to threaten her. She drinks secretly, speaks too fast, and anxiously demands reassurance about her looks. When Stanley mentions her husband, Williams introduces the polka tune, the Varsouviana, heard only by her. This is a crucial device: music that the other characters cannot hear lets the audience enter her consciousness and signals that the past is breaking into her present. From the start, then, her stability is shown to be fragile.

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Light becomes the play's central symbol of her need to hide. In Scene 3 she covers the bare bulb with a paper lantern, saying that she cannot stand a naked light bulb. The gesture is both practical and psychological: soft light hides her age, but it also protects her from truth. In Scene 6 she tells Mitch about her young husband, Allan Grey, and how she discovered him with an older man and told him on the dance floor, "You disgust me", before he shot himself. Her image of a "searchlight" being turned off reveals that her guilt has haunted her ever since. Williams accompanies this speech with the polka and the imagined gunshot, so the audience hears the trauma replaying in her head. Her breakdown is rooted in this loss.

Williams then dismantles her illusions through structure and contrast. In Scene 7, Blanche sings "Paper Moon" in the bath, a song about make-believe, while Stanley tells Stella the truth about the Flamingo Hotel and her dismissal from her teaching post. The two sounds overlap, and the ironic juxtaposition shows fantasy and reality colliding. The birthday supper in Scene 8, where Mitch's empty seat and Stanley's cruel gift of a bus ticket back to Laurel humiliate her, deepens her isolation. By Scene 9, when Mitch confronts her and tears the paper lantern away, she defends herself with the defiant line "I don't want realism. I want magic!" The appearance of the Mexican woman selling "Flores para los muertos" adds an almost expressionist dimension, as if death itself is calling for her.

Scene 10 is where Williams's stage directions most vividly externalise her collapse. Blanche, dressed in a soiled, crumpled evening gown and a rhinestone tiara, talks to imaginary admirers and invents a telegram from Shep Huntleigh. As Stanley advances, the walls fill with "lurid reflections" and grotesque shadows, and the noises of the street sound like a jungle. Her mind and the set merge, so the audience experiences her terror rather than merely observing it. Stanley's claim

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that "We've had this date with each other from the beginning" makes the rape seem horribly inevitable, and the scene ends in darkness, a silence that suggests her sanity is finally broken.

In Scene II Williams presents the aftermath with painful restraint. Blanche bathes and insists on cleanliness, talking of dying at sea and of the cathedral bells. When the doctor and matron arrive, she panics, and the polka and distorted echoes return. The matron's brutality contrasts sharply with the doctor's gentleness, and Blanche's final line, "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers", is devastating. She accepts his arm with the grace of a Southern lady, yet the dignity is tragic because she no longer knows where she is going. The irony is bitter: those closest to her have failed her most.

Williams therefore portrays Blanche's breakdown through a blend of realism and expressionism: music only she hears, symbolic light, overlapping action and nightmarish staging. These methods draw the audience into her fractured mind, and the effect is not only to show her disintegration but to make us feel deep sympathy for a woman destroyed by guilt, cruelty and a world with no place for her dreams.

4a This moment is humorous on two levels at once. On stage, the mechanicals perform a tragedy of doomed love so clumsily that it collapses into farce; around them, the aristocratic audience mocks every slip. Shakespeare makes us laugh both at the performance and at the act of watching it, and by the end the joke turns gently back on the courtly spectators themselves.

Much of the comedy comes from Bottom's overblown verse as Pyramus. His

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opening apostrophe, "O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!", piles up exclamations until they lose all force. The line "O night, which ever art when day is not!" is a perfect piece of empty tautology: it sounds solemn but tells us only that night is not day. The triple "alack, alack, alack" stretches lament into something closer to a nursery chant, and the rhymes thud predictably into place. Shakespeare seems to parody the inflated style of old-fashioned tragedy, so that the harder Bottom strains for pathos, the funnier he becomes.

The treatment of Wall is perhaps the richest source of visual comedy. Snout is a man standing in for bricks, and Pyramus addresses him with absurd tenderness as "O sweet, O lovely wall", then repeats the praise almost word for word. When the stage direction tells us that Wall "holds up his fingers" to make the chink, the grand romantic obstacle is reduced to a pair of fingers, and the audience is invited to picture the lovers peering through them. Pyramus's swing from "courteous wall" to "O wicked wall" within a few lines adds to the joke: his emotions change with comic speed, as if the wall had personally offended him.

Shakespeare also exploits the breaking of theatrical illusion. When Theseus quips that the wall, "being sensible, should curse again", Bottom cannot resist stepping out of role to correct him: "No, in truth, sir, he should not." He then explains the plot like a stage manager, "Thisby's cue", and promises "it will fall pat as I told you". His earnest literal-mindedness is funny because he cannot grasp that Theseus is joking, and his confidence that everything is under control is undercut at once by the chaos that follows.

The dialogue between the lovers is comic through verbal blunders. Bottom's "I see a voice" and "To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face" muddle the senses, recalling his earlier confusion of eye and ear after waking in the wood. The classical

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allusions are garbled: "Limander" for Leander, "Shafalus to Procrus" for Cephalus and Procris, and Thisby's "like Helen", which unwittingly compares her fidelity to that of the most famous unfaithful woman of legend. The stichomythia, the quick exchange of single lines, should sound passionate but becomes a ping-pong of mistakes. Thisby's "I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all" is bathos of the most physical kind, with a bawdy undertone that an audience would hardly miss. Even her "cherry lips" kissing stones "with lime and hair knit up" turns a romantic image into a picture of crumbling plaster.

The final layer of humour comes from the onstage audience. Wall's solemn couplet announcing that "Wall away doth go" is so literal it hardly needs mocking, but Theseus and Demetrius cannot resist puns about walls "so wilful to hear". Hippolyta's blunt verdict, "This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard", gives voice to what we may be thinking. Yet Theseus answers with surprising generosity: "The best in this kind are but shadows", and the worst need only "imagination" to "amend them". Here the comedy deepens. Shakespeare reminds his own audience that all actors, including those playing Theseus and Hippolyta, are "shadows", and that we too have been supplying imagination throughout a play of fairies and magic.

There is also an irony we enjoy and the lovers on stage do not. Pyramus and Thisby, kept apart by a father's wall and fleeing to "Ninny's tomb", mirror Lysander and Hermia, who fled Egeus's authority so recently. Watching a ridiculous version of their own story, Demetrius and Lysander laugh, unaware of how near their own romance came to tragedy. Shakespeare therefore makes this moment humorous through absurd verse, physical farce and witty commentary, but the laughter carries a quiet, affectionate insight into love, theatre and the power of imagination.

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4b

Shakespeare certainly portrays Oberon as a king who needs to be in control: of his wife, of his servant, and of the confused mortals who stumble into his wood. Yet the play is more interesting than a simple study of power, because Oberon's control is constantly challenged, depends on an unreliable deputy, and is finally used to restore harmony rather than simply to dominate. His desire for mastery is clear; his actual mastery is far less secure.

From his very first entrance Oberon asserts authority. "Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania" is a greeting that is also an accusation: the adjective "proud" frames her independence as a fault. His question "am not I thy lord?" reveals what really troubles him. The dispute is nominally over "a little changeling boy" whom he wants as his "henchman", but the possessive language suggests that the boy is a symbol; what Oberon cannot bear is a wife who refuses him. Titania's long speech describing floods, rotting corn and confused seasons shows that their quarrel has thrown nature itself into disorder, so Oberon's struggle for control has cosmic consequences. When she leaves defiantly, his response, "Thou shalt not from this grove / Till I torment thee for this injury", is chillingly possessive. The word "torment" exposes a vindictive edge beneath his royal dignity.

Oberon's chosen method of regaining control is revealing. Rather than confront Titania, he works through magic and secrecy. His command to Puck, "Fetch me that flower", is brisk and imperative, and the plan he unfolds is designed to humiliate her: she is to fall for whatever she sees on waking, and his charm explicitly wishes that she "wake when some vile thing is near". The beautiful lyricism of "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows" sits uneasily beside this cruelty, and perhaps Shakespeare intends that contrast: Oberon's poetry is

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enchanting, but it serves a manipulative purpose. When Titania dotes on Bottom with an ass's head, Oberon's control seems complete, and he exults that events have fallen out better than he could have planned.

His wish for control also extends to the Athenians, though here it takes a kinder form. Watching Demetrius scorn Helena while he is "invisible", Oberon acts like a hidden director, deciding that Demetrius must be made to love her. His parting promise to Helena, that before she leaves the grove she shall flee and Demetrius pursue, shows him rearranging human feelings at will. This is control, but it is mixed with pity for a rejected lover.

Shakespeare undermines Oberon's authority, however, through Puck. The servant anoints the wrong Athenian, and the chaos that follows is far beyond anything Oberon designed. His furious "What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite" shows a ruler whose orders have gone wrong, and his suspicion that Puck commits his "knaveries wilfully" hints that even his own servant cannot be fully trusted. Puck's delighted "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" suggests that the mischief entertains him more than obedience does. Oberon must issue a further stream of instructions, to overcast the night, to lead the rivals astray and to apply a second herb, simply to repair the damage. His power, it seems, depends heavily on others.

Once he has the changeling boy, Oberon's need for control is satisfied, and his tone changes. He admits that "her dotage now I do begin to pity", and the incantation "Be as thou wast wont to be" releases Titania with gentle, almost tender rhythm. "Now, my Titania; wake you, my sweet queen" replaces the hostile "proud Titania" of Act 2, suggesting a reconciliation, though one achieved entirely on his terms. A modern audience may find it troubling that Titania never learns how she was tricked.

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At the end of the play Oberon blesses the three marriages, promising that the couples shall "ever true in loving be". His final act of control is benevolent: he extends his power over the future, protecting the newlyweds and their children. Shakespeare therefore presents Oberon as a figure who undoubtedly wants to be in control, sometimes jealously and cruelly, but whose authority is fragile, comically dependent on Puck, and ultimately turned towards order and harmony rather than mere domination.

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This moment is intriguing because almost nobody on stage can be taken at face value. After Actium, Caesar's messenger offers Cleopatra a way out, and Shakespeare leaves us unsure whether she is betraying Antony, playing for time, or simply performing. At the same time Enobarbus wrestles openly with his own loyalty, and Antony arrives to find what looks like treachery. The scene invites us to watch, judge and doubt, much as the characters themselves do.

Cleopatra's first lines already show her sensitivity to shifting power. "What, no more ceremony?" reveals that she notices at once how Caesar's servant is treated as more important than the old formalities, and her image of the "blown rose", whose admirers now "stop their nose" though they once "kneel'd unto the buds", is a bitter metaphor for her own fading fortune. She seems painfully aware that she is no longer courted, which makes her subsequent behaviour harder to read: is she desperate, or calculating?

Enobarbus's asides add a second, private layer that the audience alone shares. "Mine honesty and I begin to square" is a striking personification: he is quarrelling with his own conscience. His reasoning is intriguingly divided. He fears that loyalty

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to "fools" turns "faith" into "mere folly", yet he also argues that a man who follows "a fall'n lord" wins a nobler victory and "earns a place i' th' story". Shakespeare lets us watch a loyal soldier argue himself towards desertion in real time, and his self-awareness about "the story" is almost metatheatrical, as if he knows he is part of a legend being written.

Thyreus is a smooth diplomat, and his language is full of polished euphemism. He claims that Caesar knows Cleopatra embraced Antony not out of love but because she "fear'd him", and he describes her lost honour as "constrained blemishes, / Not as deserv'd". This is a tempting excuse, and Cleopatra's response is the most intriguing part of the scene. Her single exclamation "O!" could be read as genuine shock, mock surprise, or a cue for theatrical relief. She then declares that Caesar "is a god" and that her honour "was not yielded, / But conquer'd merely". On the surface she accepts the lie; underneath, an audience familiar with her wit may hear irony. Enobarbus clearly hears betrayal, and his sharp aside, "I will ask Antony", followed by the image of Antony as a leaking ship deserted by "Thy dearest", gives the bleakest interpretation.

Cleopatra's message to Caesar is heavy with submissive imagery. She would "kiss his conqu'ring hand" and "lay my crown at's feet". Yet the phrase "in deputation" means that she kisses only through a messenger, and the extravagance of the language could be a performance designed to flatter Caesar while committing herself to nothing. When she allows Thyreus to kiss her hand and recalls how Julius Caesar "Bestow'd his lips on that unworthy place, / As it rain'd kisses", she reminds everyone of her history with great Romans. This is either a dangerous flirtation or a proud assertion that she has captivated mightier men than Octavius. Shakespeare refuses to settle the question, and that ambiguity is what makes her so fascinating.

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The timing of Antony's entrance is a brilliant dramatic stroke. He arrives at the precise moment of the kiss, and his outburst "Favours, by Jove that thunders!" turns suspicion into rage. Thyreus's arrogant description of Caesar as "the fullest man" provokes him further, while Enobarbus's dry aside, "You will be whipt", adds grim comedy. Antony's lines are fragmented by dashes and exclamations, and his admission that "Authority melts from me" is the most revealing moment of all. The verb "melts" recalls the play's imagery of dissolving Roman identity, and his memory of kings answering "Your will?" at a shout contrasts painfully with servants who now hesitate. "I am Antony yet" is both a defiant assertion and a plea, the insistence of a man who suspects he is no longer the figure he was.

Shakespeare makes this moment intriguing, then, through layered perspectives: Cleopatra's unreadable performance, Enobarbus's divided asides, Thyreus's slippery flattery and Antony's explosive fury. We are left asking whether Cleopatra is false or merely surviving, and whether Antony's rage expresses strength or the collapse of his authority. That uncertainty draws us deeper into the play's central question of who can be trusted.

Sb

For me, the most moving moments in Antony and Cleopatra are not the great public scenes of battle and politics but the private moments when characters face the cost of their own choices. Shakespeare makes the death of Enobarbus, the cynical soldier who deserts Antony for Caesar, and the death of Cleopatra particularly affecting, though in very different ways: the first moves me through shame and lonely remorse, the second through a strange mixture of grief, tenderness and triumph.

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The death of Enobarbus is moving partly because Shakespeare prepares it so carefully. What breaks him is Antony's generosity. Rather than cursing him, Antony sends his treasure after him and blames himself: "O, my fortunes have / Corrupted honest men!" The word "honest" is painfully kind, since Antony still thinks the best of the man who has betrayed him. When Enobarbus hears this, his response is devastating in its simplicity: "I am alone the villain of the earth". The word "alone" isolates him completely, and the hyperbole shows a man who has always mocked excess suddenly speaking in absolutes. His admission "This blows my heart" uses an image of physical swelling, as if guilt is literally bursting him from within, and it foreshadows his death.

Shakespeare then gives Enobarbus a solitary death at night, away from either army. He calls on the moon as the "sovereign mistress of true melancholy", and the regal title suggests that grief has become the only ruler he now serves. His final plea, "O Antony, / Nobler than my revolt is infamous, / Forgive me", is especially moving because Antony is not there to hear it. The balanced comparison of "Nobler" and "infamous" shows him measuring himself against his master and finding himself worthless. I find it poignant that the most clear-sighted character in the play dies of something as unreasonable as a broken heart, and that the sentries who find him think at first he is merely asleep.

Cleopatra's death in Act 5 moves me in a completely different way, because Shakespeare turns what could be a defeat into an act of ceremony and love. Having learned that Caesar plans to lead her through Rome in triumph, she chooses death, and she stages it like a coronation: "Give me my robe, put on my crown, I have / Immortal longings in me." Most movingly, she claims Antony in a way she never did while he lived: "Husband, I come". After a play full of jealousy, games and betrayal, this simple word "Husband" suggests that she has at last

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chosen loyalty, and her wish that her "courage prove my title" implies that she must earn the name through her death.

Shakespeare also fills the scene with surprising gentleness. Cleopatra imagines herself as "fire and air", leaving her "other elements" to "baser life", as if she is shedding her heavy, earthly body. When Iras dies first, Cleopatra describes death as "a lover's pinch, / Which hurts, and is desir'd", an image that blends pain and desire and makes death seem almost sensual. The most tender moment is her picture of the asp as "my baby at my breast, / That sucks the nurse asleep". The poison becomes a child and death becomes sleep, so that the killing is disguised as motherhood, a softer side of Cleopatra that is still, perhaps, a performance.

The reactions of others deepen the effect. Charmian's tribute to "A lass unparallel'd" is striking because "lass" is such a homely word for a queen, suggesting the warmth of her women's love. Even Caesar, who has only ever seen her as a prize, admits that she looks "like sleep, / As she would catch another Antony / In her strong toil of grace." The oxymoron of a "strong toil", a powerful trap, made of "grace" captures the paradox of Cleopatra perfectly.

Both moments are moving because they show characters finding their truest selves only at the point of death. Enobarbus's ending is quiet and full of shame, while Cleopatra's is theatrical and full of glory, but in each case Shakespeare makes us feel that love and loyalty, so often mocked or betrayed in the play, finally prove stronger than politics.