Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (9–1)

Friday 24 November 2023

Morning (Time: 1 hour 30 minutes)

Paper reference **4ET1/02**

English Literature

PAPER 2: Modern Drama and Literary Heritage Texts

Question Booklet.
Do not return this Booklet with the answer booklet.
Clean copies of your set texts may be taken into the examination.

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Answer TWO questions:

Answer ONE question from Section A and ONE question from Section B.

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SECTION A

Modern Drama

Answer ONE question on ONE text from this section.

You should spend 45 minutes on your chosen question.

***A View from the Bridge*, Arthur Miller**

EITHER

1 'Many characters help others, or try to do so, in the play.'

Explore the theme of helping others in *A View from the Bridge*.

You must consider language, form and structure in your answer.

(Total for Question 1 = 30 marks)

OR

2 How does Miller present the relationship between Eddie and Rodolpho in the play?

You must consider language, form and structure in your answer.

(Total for Question 2 = 30 marks)

***An Inspector Calls*, J B Priestley**

EITHER

3 How does the character of Eric Birling change in *An Inspector Calls*?

You must consider language, form and structure in your answer.

(Total for Question 3 = 30 marks)

OR

4 'Things are not always what they appear to be in the Birling household.'

Explore the theme of appearance and reality in the play.

You must consider language, form and structure in your answer.

(Total for Question 4 = 30 marks)

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***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, Mark Haddon**
(adapted by Simon Stephens)

EITHER

5 How is the relationship between Ed and Judy Boone presented in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*?

You must consider language, form and structure in your answer.

(Total for Question 5 = 30 marks)

OR

6 'Christopher, Ed, Judy and Mrs Shears all try to cope with loss in different ways.'

Explore how different types of loss are dealt with in the play.

You must consider language, form and structure in your answer.

(Total for Question 6 = 30 marks)

***Kindertransport*, Diane Samuels**

EITHER

7 What kind of grandmother to Faith is Lil shown to be?

You must consider language, form and structure in your answer.

(Total for Question 7 = 30 marks)

OR

8 In what ways are secrets significant in *Kindertransport*?

You must consider language, form and structure in your answer.

(Total for Question 8 = 30 marks)

***Death and the King's Horseman*, Wole Soyinka**

EITHER

9 'Iyaloja is determined that things are carried out in accordance with Yoruba traditions.'

How is Iyaloja presented as a character who wants the right thing to be done in the play?

You must consider language, form and structure in your answer.

(Total for Question 9 = 30 marks)

OR

10 In what ways is the death ritual significant in *Death and the King's Horseman*?

You must consider language, form and structure in your answer.

(Total for Question 10 = 30 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 30 MARKS

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SECTION B

Literary Heritage Texts

Answer ONE question on ONE text from this section.

You should spend 45 minutes on your chosen question.

***Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare**

EITHER

11 Discuss the presentation of Mercutio in the play.

You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer.

(Total for Question 11 = 30 marks)

OR

12 'The tragic and dramatic events in the final scenes provide the audience with an effective ending to the play.'

How far do you agree with this view?

You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer.

(Total for Question 12 = 30 marks)

***Macbeth*, William Shakespeare**

EITHER

13 'Throughout the play there is a battle between good and evil.'

Explore the theme of good versus evil in *Macbeth*.

You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer.

(Total for Question 13 = 30 marks)

OR

14 How does Shakespeare present the character of Macbeth in the play?

You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer.

(Total for Question 14 = 30 marks)

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***The Merchant of Venice*, William Shakespeare**

EITHER

15 Discuss the presentation of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*.

You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer.

(Total for Question 15 = 30 marks)

OR

16 'Shylock's bond with Antonio is the main narrative strand in the play.'

Explore the significance of the bond in the play.

You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play in your answer.

(Total for Question 16 = 30 marks)

***Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen**

EITHER

17 How far do you agree with Elizabeth Bennet's view that Charlotte Lucas should not have married Mr Collins for convenience in *Pride and Prejudice*?

You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 17 = 30 marks)

OR

18 'At the time the novel was written, women were expected to behave in particular ways.'

In what ways do women go against how society expected them to act in the novel?

You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 18 = 30 marks)

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***Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens**

EITHER

19 How does Dickens present Mrs Joe Gargery, Pip's sister, in the novel?

You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 19 = 30 marks)

OR

20 'Pip wishes to become a gentleman so that he may marry Estella.'

Discuss the significance of marriage in *Great Expectations*.

You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 20 = 30 marks)

***The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne**

EITHER

21 How does Hawthorne present Pearl while she is a child in the novel?

You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 21 = 30 marks)

OR

22 Explore the significance of death in *The Scarlet Letter*.

You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 22 = 30 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION B = 30 MARKS
TOTAL FOR PAPER = 60 MARKS

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Please check the examination details below before entering your candidate information

Candidate surname	Other names

Centre Number | Candidate Number

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (9–1)

Friday 24 November 2023

Morning (Time: 1 hour 30 minutes)

Paper reference **4ET1/02**

English Literature

PAPER 2: Modern Drama and Literary Heritage Texts

You must have:
Question Booklet (enclosed)

Total Marks

Instructions

- Use **black** ink or ball-point pen.
- **Fill in the boxes** at the top of this page with your name, centre number and candidate number.
- Answer **ONE** question from each section.
- Answer the questions in the spaces provided
  – *there may be more space than you need.*

Information

- The total mark for this paper is 60.
- The marks for **each** question are shown in brackets
  – *use this as a guide as to how much time to spend on each question.*
- Copies of the *Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology* may **not** be brought into the examination.
- Dictionaries may **not** be used in this examination.
- Clean copies of your set texts may be taken into the examination.

Advice

- Read each question carefully before you start to answer it.
- Check your answers if you have time at the end.

Turn over ▶

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SECTION A

Modern Drama

Indicate which question you are answering by marking a cross in the box ☒. If you change your mind, put a line through the box ☒ and then indicate your new question with a cross ☒.

Chosen question number:

Question 1 ☒	**Question 2** ☒	**Question 3** ☒
Question 4 ☒	**Question 5** ☒	**Question 6** ☒
Question 7 ☒	**Question 8** ☒	**Question 9** ☒
Question 10 ☒		

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TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 30 MARKS

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SECTION B

Literary Heritage Texts

Indicate which question you are answering by marking a cross in the box ☒. If you change your mind, put a line through the box ☒ and then indicate your new question with a cross ☒.

Chosen question number:

Question 11 ☐	**Question 12** ☐	**Question 13** ☐
Question 14 ☐	**Question 15** ☐	**Question 16** ☐
Question 17 ☐	**Question 18** ☐	**Question 19** ☐
Question 20 ☐	**Question 21** ☐	**Question 22** ☐

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TOTAL FOR SECTION B = 30 MARKS
TOTAL FOR PAPER = 60 MARKS

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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

1

In A View from the Bridge, Miller presents helping others as both the moral glue of the Red Hook community and, paradoxically, the source of its tragedy. Almost every character tries to help someone, yet help in this play is rarely pure: it can be generous and selfless, as with Marco and Beatrice, or it can become possessive and controlling, as with Eddie. Miller suggests that the line between protecting someone and owning them is dangerously thin, and that once Eddie crosses it, no amount of help from others can save him.

At the start of the play, helping others seems to define the Carbone household. Eddie and Beatrice have raised Catherine since she was a baby, and Eddie frames this as a sacred duty: "Katie, I promised your mother on her deathbed. I'm responsible for you." The language of a deathbed promise gives his care an almost religious weight, and the audience initially sees a devoted guardian. Yet the next line, "You're a baby, you don't understand these things", reveals the problem. The noun "baby" keeps Catherine, now a young woman, in a state of permanent childhood, so his help becomes a way of keeping her dependent. Miller makes the audience uneasy: Eddie's protection already looks less like help and more like control.

The arrival of Marco and Rodolpho presents a more communal kind of help. Eddie is genuinely hospitable at first, asking Beatrice to imagine "suppose ... I was starving like them over there ... and I had people in America could keep me a couple of months?" The hypothetical question shows empathy, and the broken, hesitant rhythm of his speech suggests a man thinking his way into someone else's position. Marco, in turn, is helping his own family across the ocean, wanting

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to "send right away maybe twenty dollars" to his wife and children. Miller's stage direction that Marco approaches Eddie with a "certain stiffness" is telling: receiving help is uncomfortable for a proud man, and it hints that debts of gratitude in this community carry a cost.

Beatrice is the most consistently helpful character, and Miller uses her to show what selfless help looks like. When Catherine is offered the stenographer job, it is Beatrice who persuades Eddie to let her go and who tells her niece, "Be the way you are, Katie, don't listen to him." The imperative gives Catherine permission to grow up, which is the opposite of Eddie's help. Structurally, Beatrice remains calm throughout the play, repeatedly trying to reason with Eddie and to patch things up before the wedding. Her help is aimed at the other person's freedom, whereas Eddie's is aimed at his own needs.

Alfieri, the lawyer and chorus figure, tries to help Eddie more directly than anyone, yet he is powerless. Miller gives him the river image, warning that "a river will drown you if you buck it now". The natural imagery suggests that Eddie's feelings for Catherine are fighting against a current far stronger than himself, and the word "drown" foreshadows his death. When Eddie returns, Alfieri's warning becomes blunter: "You won't have a friend in the world, Eddie." The structure of these repeated visits creates painful dramatic irony, because the audience can see the help being offered and refused. In his opening speech Alfieri admits that all he could do was watch it "run its bloody course", so the play's form, as a tragedy narrated in retrospect, makes help feel doomed from the beginning.

Help also takes a physical form. When Eddie humiliates Rodolpho in the boxing lesson, Marco steps in to protect his brother by lifting the chair "like a weapon over Eddie's head". This is help as warning, and the simile shows how quickly

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protection in Red Hook turns into the threat of violence. Later, Alfieri arranges bail for Marco only after Marco promises not to harm Eddie, an attempt to use the law to help, which fails because Marco's code of honour matters more to him than legal promises.

The climax shows the final collapse of help. After Eddie's betrayal to the Immigration Bureau, the most destructive act in the play because it violates the community's code of shielding its own, the stage directions show that "The two women support him for a moment, calling his name again and again." The verb "support" is poignant: even after everything, Beatrice and Catherine try to help him, yet he dies in Beatrice's arms. Miller seems to suggest that love and help can soften a tragedy but cannot reverse it. Ultimately, the play presents help as a measure of character: those who help in order to free others are admirable, while Eddie, whose help was always a form of possession, destroys himself and almost everyone around him.

2 Miller presents the relationship between Eddie and Rodolpho as one that curdles from cautious hospitality into obsessive hostility, and it becomes the engine of the tragedy. Rodolpho never really does anything to Eddie; what changes is Eddie's perception of him. Through stage directions, Eddie's increasingly crude language and a carefully escalating structure, Miller shows that Eddie's hatred of Rodolpho is really a displaced expression of feelings for Catherine that he cannot admit, even to himself.

When the brothers first arrive, Eddie is welcoming and supports Beatrice in sheltering her cousins. However, Miller plants tension almost immediately. As Rodolpho chatters enthusiastically about singing and his plans in America, the

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stage directions note that Eddie "is coming more and more to address Marco only". This is a subtle piece of stagecraft: the audience watches Eddie physically turn away from the younger brother, so a rift opens before a word of criticism is spoken. When Rodolpho sings "Paper Doll", Eddie stops him with apparently friendly advice: "Look, kid; you don't want to be picked up, do ya?" The concern about immigration officers is plausible, yet the patronising "kid" diminishes Rodolpho, and the interruption comes just as Catherine is visibly enchanted. Miller makes us suspect that Eddie's protectiveness is really jealousy.

Eddie then builds a case against Rodolpho by attacking his masculinity. Eddie is a longshoreman whose idea of a man is rooted in physical work and authority, and Rodolpho, who sings, cooks, could make dresses and has unusually blond hair, does not fit it. Eddie's verdict, "The guy ain't right", is repeated in various forms throughout the play, and its vagueness is revealing. He cannot name what is wrong because the real problem is not Rodolpho at all. Miller gives Eddie hyperbole and innuendo, such as the claim that "if you close the paper fast, you could blow him over", which reduces Rodolpho to something weightless and comic. The humour is cruel, and it shows Eddie trying to make Catherine see Rodolpho as he chooses to see him.

As Catherine's love for Rodolpho grows, Eddie's language shifts from mockery to accusations of theft. He insists "he's stealing from me!" and complains that Rodolpho "takes and puts his filthy hands on her like a god damn thief!" The verb "takes" and the simile of the thief imply that Catherine is Eddie's property, while the adjective "filthy" suggests disgust that sounds more like sexual jealousy than a guardian's concern. Alfieri can see this, but Eddie cannot, and the gap between what the audience understands and what Eddie admits creates powerful dramatic irony.

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The boxing scene at the end of Act One turns hostility into physical humiliation. Under the pretence of teaching Rodolpho to defend himself, Eddie lands a blow and the stage directions show that Rodolpho "staggers". The scene is staged as play, yet it is really a public assertion of dominance, and its structural placement is important because Marco responds by lifting the chair over Eddie's head. Eddie's attempt to shrink Rodolpho only exposes the stronger brother as a threat. Earlier, when Catherine pulls Rodolpho up to dance, he "stiffly rises, feeling Eddie's eyes on his back", a direction that captures how Eddie's gaze dominates the room even when he is silent.

In Act Two the relationship reaches its most disturbing point. Finding Rodolpho and Catherine together, Eddie kisses Catherine and then pins Rodolpho and kisses him on the lips. The shocking stage action is Eddie's crude attempt to "prove" that Rodolpho is not a real man, but it backfires, suggesting instead Eddie's own confusion and desperation. Significantly, Rodolpho now stands up to him: "Stop that! Have respect for her!" The exclamatives show a new firmness, and the focus of his defence is Catherine's dignity, which marks him as the more honourable man. Eddie, by contrast, goes to Alfieri again, still insisting "he ain't right", and then betrays both brothers to the Immigration Bureau.

Miller ends the relationship with Rodolpho attempting reconciliation. He apologises, saying "It is my fault, Eddie. Everything", taking blame that is not his in order to calm the situation before the wedding. The formal, slightly stilted English emphasises his sincerity and his outsider status. Eddie cannot accept this, because what he wants is his name back from Marco, not peace with Rodolpho. In the shape of a classical tragedy, Rodolpho functions as the catalyst for Eddie's fall: not a villain, but the person onto whom Eddie projects his forbidden feelings.

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Miller thus presents the relationship as tragic precisely because it is so one-sided, a conflict created almost entirely inside Eddie's mind.

3 Priestley presents Eric Birling as the character who changes most dramatically in An Inspector Calls, moving from an awkward, drunken boy on the edges of his family to a young man who accepts responsibility and turns his parents' judgement back on them. His change is not tidy or heroic: Eric's own behaviour towards Eva Smith is among the worst in the play. Yet Priestley uses him, alongside Sheila, to show that the younger generation is capable of learning, while their parents are not.

At the opening, Eric is defined by unease. The stage directions describe him as "not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive", and the balanced repetition of "half" suggests a character split between rebellion and dependence who has not yet found his own voice. His first significant action is that he "suddenly guffaws", an abrupt, unexplained laugh that marks him as socially out of place at a formal celebration. Interestingly, it comes just after Sheila teases Gerald about last summer, when he "never came near" her, which hints that Eric knows more about men like Gerald, and about himself, than he admits. His language at this stage is full of schoolboy slang such as "Steady the Buffs!" and "Good old Sheila!", which presents him as childish, and his attempt to cut short his father's speech, "We'll drink to their health and have done with it", is softened by the direction that he speaks "not too rudely". Eric can mock his father but cannot yet challenge him.

His parents treat him as a child, and Priestley makes the audience see why. Gerald's remark that he has heard Eric "drinks pretty hard" is met with denial, and Mrs Birling's blindness to her son's drinking becomes one of the play's ironies.

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However, there are early signs of a social conscience. When he hears why Birling sacked Eva for leading a strike, Eric asks, "Why shouldn't they try for higher wages?" The simple question cuts through Birling's capitalist logic, and it is significant that Eric speaks up before he knows his own part in the story. Priestley suggests that his moral instincts are present, but undeveloped.

The turning point comes in Act Three, when Eric is finally interrogated. His confession is deeply uncomfortable: he admits that he was "in that state when a chap easily turns nasty", a euphemism which implies that he forced himself on Eva. Calling her a "good sport" shows that, even now, he can reduce her to a type. Priestley does not allow the audience to admire Eric uncritically. What marks the change is not innocence but his willingness to face the truth. When he learns that his mother turned Eva away, he turns on her with "you killed her", and the family hierarchy begins to invert. The structure of the play, which saves Eric's story for last, makes his collapse the climax of the Inspector's chain of revelations.

After the Inspector leaves, Eric's change becomes clearer through contrast with his parents. As they rush to protect their reputation, he refuses to be comforted: "You lot may be letting yourselves out nicely, but I can't." The dismissive "You lot" separates him from his parents, while the blunt colloquialism of "We did her in all right" shows that he now uses plain language to face facts rather than to hide behind slang. He tells them "I'm ashamed of you" and accuses his father, "You're the one I blame for this", reversing the roles of parent and child. When Birling threatens him, Eric's short, abrupt reply, "I don't give a damn now whether I stay here or not", shows a new independence. Even the stage direction, "As Birling tries to interrupt", where Eric presses on regardless, shows him taking control of the conversation that he was once excluded from.

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Crucially, Eric's change survives Gerald's discovery that the Inspector may not be real. While his parents celebrate, Eric insists that "It's still the same rotten story whether it's been told to a police inspector or to somebody else." This is perhaps the clearest proof that his change is genuine, because it does not depend on fear of consequences. Mrs Birling's confident prediction that in the morning the young people will be "as amused as we are" is undercut by Priestley's final twist, the telephone call announcing that a girl has died and an inspector is on his way.

Overall, Priestley presents Eric's change as painful, incomplete and hard won. He remains a flawed character, but his transformation from a guffawing boy to a son who says "we all helped to kill her" makes him a mouthpiece for Priestley's message that responsibility must be accepted, and that hope lies with those willing to change.

4 In An Inspector Calls, Priestley builds the whole play on the gap between how the Birlings appear and what they really are. The family presents itself as prosperous, respectable and happy, but the Inspector's questioning peels away each layer of that image until the household is revealed as selfish, hypocritical and divided. Priestley uses setting, stage directions, dramatic irony and the mysterious figure of the Inspector himself to suggest that respectability can be a mask for moral failure.

The very first image of the play is a carefully constructed appearance. The family "have all had a good dinner, are celebrating a special occasion, and are pleased with themselves". The phrase "pleased with themselves" hints at complacency, and the dining room is described as "substantial and heavily comfortable, but not cosy and homelike". The conjunction "but" exposes the reality in a single turn: the house

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displays wealth without warmth. Priestley also asks for the lighting to be "pink and intimate" until the Inspector arrives, when it becomes "brighter and harder". This change is a theatrical metaphor for the whole play, as a rose-tinted surface gives way to an exposing glare.

Gerald's remark that the Birlings "seem to be a nice well-behaved family" is loaded with irony, because the verb "seem" is exactly the issue. Even the engagement shows cracks. Sheila is delighted by her ring and asks "Is it the one you wanted me to have?", yet she also refers, half playfully, to "last summer, when you never came near me". The audience senses that her teasing hides genuine suspicion, and the Inspector later confirms it, revealing Gerald's affair with Daisy Renton. Priestley adds a further twist: Sheila hands back the ring, but she respects Gerald more for his honesty. Here the reality, however painful, is presented as healthier than the pretence.

Mr Birling is the clearest example of a man whose public image conceals moral emptiness. He advertises his status as a former Lord Mayor with "a very good chance of a knighthood", and his long speeches present him as a confident, "hard-headed" businessman. Yet the audience already sees through him, because his predictions that war will not happen and that the Titanic is "unsinkable" are wrong, so his authority is undermined by dramatic irony before the Inspector arrives. When it emerges that he started Eva's decline by sacking her for asking for higher wages, his instinct is not remorse but concealment. His real concern is that the scandal will appear in the newspapers, showing that reputation matters more to him than truth.

Mrs Birling's hypocrisy is perhaps the sharpest example of appearance and reality. As a prominent member of the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation, she appears

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to be a guardian of vulnerable young women. In reality, she turned Eva away because the girl had used the Birling name, which Mrs Birling calls "gross impertinence". Priestley's structure creates devastating irony here: Mrs Birling insists the father of the child should be made an example of, and the audience realises, before she does, that she is describing her own son. Eric's entrance at the end of Act Two turns her self-righteousness against her, and the curtain falls on the collapse of her respectable image.

The younger Birlings are also not what they seem. Sheila, the charming fiancée, had Eva sacked from Milwards out of jealousy, and Eric, the awkward son, is revealed as a heavy drinker who took advantage of Eva and made her pregnant. Yet Priestley complicates the theme here, because Sheila and Eric are the characters who accept the reality about themselves, whereas their parents cling to appearances to the very end.

The Inspector himself is the most ambiguous blend of appearance and reality. He presents as an ordinary police officer, but his knowledge of events seems to go beyond any diary. His name, Goole, suggests "ghoul", hinting at something supernatural. Gerald's discovery that there is no Inspector Goole on the force allows Mr and Mrs Birling to relax, believing that if the Inspector was not real, then nothing really happened. Priestley also makes Eva herself uncertain: the Inspector shows the photograph to one person at a time, so the audience can never be sure it is the same girl, which perhaps suggests that Eva stands for many exploited working-class women. The opening description of how she "swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant. Burnt her inside out" brutally shatters the polite atmosphere, forcing the family and the audience to confront an ugly reality.

Priestley's final twist resolves the theme. Just as the parents return to their

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comfortable appearances, the telephone rings to announce that a girl has died and an inspector is on his way. The circular structure denies the Birlings their escape, suggesting that reality cannot be hidden forever. Priestley ultimately uses the theme to argue that a respectable surface is meaningless if it conceals a refusal to take responsibility for others.

5 In The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time, the relationship between Ed and Judy Boone is presented as a broken marriage whose damage shapes everything that happens to Christopher. The audience never sees the couple happy; we meet the relationship after it has collapsed, and we piece its story together through lies, letters and furious arguments. Stephens presents both parents sympathetically but critically, suggesting that the pressures of caring for Christopher strained a marriage that was already fragile, and that each parent's way of coping caused further harm.

The play opens long after the breakdown, and Ed's response to it is concealment. He has told Christopher that Judy is dead, and his language is notably brief: "Christopher, I'm sorry your mother's died." The flat, clipped statement suggests a man who cannot bear to discuss the subject, and when Christopher asks for details Ed shuts him down with "Now isn't the moment Christopher to be asking questions like that". The lie is cruel, yet Stephens allows us to see it as a desperate attempt to avoid a scene with a son who struggles with change. The structure of the play keeps this secret from the audience too, so that when the truth emerges we experience something of Christopher's shock.

Ed's lingering pain about Judy surfaces through anger. When Christopher suggests Mr Shears may have killed Wellington, the stage direction "(shouts)" precedes Ed's

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furious "I will not have that man's name mentioned in my house". The possessive "my house" suggests that Ed is defending the territory Judy abandoned, and the disproportionate rage reveals jealousy that he never voices directly. Later, when Christopher learns from Mrs Alexander that his mother and Mr Shears were "very, very good friends", the euphemism, delivered gently by a stranger, emphasises how silent Ed has been. When Ed finally confesses, he admits he was "in such a mess" when Judy left, a rare moment of vulnerability that complicates our judgement of him.

Judy's side of the relationship comes to us mainly through her letters, which Christopher discovers hidden in Ed's wardrobe. This is a striking choice of form: the letters are spoken aloud in Judy's voice, so the audience hears her honest account of the past before she appears in the present action of the play. In one letter she contrasts herself with her husband: "I'm not like your father. Your father is a much more patient person." The comparison is generous to Ed, but it is also self-justifying, explaining her departure as the result of her own limitations. She describes watching Ed with Christopher and feeling that "it was like you didn't need me at all", which suggests that Christopher's calmness with his father isolated her, and that the marriage fractured partly along the lines of who could cope.

Christopher also remembers his mother saying that if she had not married Ed she would be living "in a little farmhouse in the South of France with someone called Jean". The playful fantasy hints at restlessness and a romantic dissatisfaction with ordinary married life. It foreshadows her decision to leave with Mr Shears, although that relationship also proves disappointing, which perhaps suggests that the problem was never simply Ed.

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When the parents finally meet again in London, their relationship is openly hostile. Judy demands, "What in God's name did you think you were playing at saying those things to him?", and the exclamatory question shows the full force of her anger at Ed's lie. Ed's reply exposes his resentment at being left alone to care for their son: "I cooked his meals. I cleaned his clothes ... And you?" The list of everyday tasks, followed by the short accusatory question, presents his lie as the product of years of unshared exhaustion. Stephens does not let either parent win the argument; both are hurt and both are partly in the wrong. Significantly, Christopher's response is to drum on a box, and the repetition in "He drums and drums and drums" shows him blocking out the noise of his parents' conflict. Their quarrel, staged around him, makes the audience feel its effect on the child caught in the middle.

Back in Swindon, the relationship remains volatile, and Ed's use of swearing shows that the wound is still raw. Yet the ending offers a fragile hope. When Christopher refuses to speak to his father about his maths exam, Judy encourages him to answer, acting as a mediator between them. This small gesture suggests that, although the marriage is over, the parents may be able to cooperate for Christopher's sake. Stephens therefore presents the relationship as a source of pain and betrayal, but also as a reminder that love for Christopher is the one thing they still share.

6 Loss runs through The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time in many forms: the loss of a pet, the loss of a marriage, the apparent loss of a mother and, most painfully, the loss of trust. Stephens shows that each character copes in a way that reflects who they are. Mrs Shears grieves openly, Ed hides and lashes out, Judy runs, and Christopher turns loss into a puzzle to be solved with facts

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and logic. The play suggests that no way of coping is entirely successful, but that honesty, however late, offers the only real chance of recovery.

The play begins with a death, and Stephens makes loss the trigger of the whole plot. Christopher's account is stark: "the dog was not running or asleep. The dog was dead." The repetition of "the dog" and the plain, logical structure, which rules out other possibilities before stating the truth, show Christopher's mind processing loss through order rather than emotion. Mrs Shears's response could not be more different: her repeated "Oh no. Oh no. Oh no" is raw, instinctive grief, and the repetition suggests that she cannot move beyond the shock. Her loss of Wellington is also, the audience later learns, tied up with the loss of her relationship with Ed.

Christopher copes with Wellington's death by turning it into a detective story. He tells Mrs Shears that he did not kill Wellington and wants "to find out who killed him", and this decision drives the structure of the play. To investigate, he must do things he usually finds very difficult, such as approaching strangers. His direct question to Mr Thompson's brother, "Do you know who killed Wellington?", has an almost comic bluntness, but it also shows courage: loss pushes him beyond his normal boundaries. For Christopher, solving the mystery is a way of restoring order to a world that has been disrupted.

Christopher's response to the supposed death of his mother is similarly unemotional. When Ed tells him she has had a heart attack, Christopher asks "What kind of heart attack was it?" and, without an answer, calmly concludes "It was probably an aneurysm". The scientific vocabulary may seem cold to an audience, yet Stephens invites us to see it as his way of making something unbearable manageable. The same matter-of-fact tone appears when he tells a policeman about the deaths of his grandparents, suggesting a consistent pattern in

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how he deals with loss.

Ed's loss is the collapse of his marriage, and his way of coping is to erase Judy from the family's life. His lie, "Christopher, I'm sorry your mother's died. She's had a heart attack", is clipped and final, as if he is closing a door. Structurally, Christopher's investigation into Wellington unexpectedly uncovers this deeper loss, so the detective plot turns into a family tragedy. Ed's grief also turns to violence: he admits killing Wellington when "the red mist" came down after his relationship with Mrs Shears failed. The metaphor suggests that unexpressed loss can explode into destruction. Christopher, who cannot read his father's lies as a coping mechanism, suffers a new loss of his own: trust. His reasoning, "Father killed Wellington who is a dog and so that meant that he could kill me", shows his literal logic, and its chilling conclusion leads him to flee. He explains simply that "I couldn't stay home any more", and his journey to London becomes his way of dealing with this betrayal.

The journey itself contains another small loss when Toby escapes onto the Underground track. Christopher's decision to climb down after him, ignoring the danger, shows that he copes with loss through immediate action rather than reflection. The incredulity of the Man with Socks, "I don't believe this is happening", highlights how strange his behaviour looks to others, while to Christopher it is entirely logical.

Judy, faced with the end of her relationship with Mr Shears, copes much as she did when she left Ed: by leaving. Her commands, "Come downstairs. Bring Toby. Get into the car", are short imperatives that show decisiveness but also a tendency to escape problems rather than resolve them.

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Stephens's form also shapes how loss is shown. Siobhan often speaks Christopher's words, narrating his book, and this device allows feelings he cannot express himself to reach the audience. The ending returns to loss with Toby's death, which Christopher rationalises with facts: he was "two years and seven months old which is very old for a rat". Ed, attempting to rebuild trust, gives Christopher a puppy, Sandy, "to say sorry". This gift answers the play's opening: a dog's death began the loss of trust, and a dog's life begins its repair. Stephens thus presents coping with loss as a slow, imperfect process, in which honesty and patience matter more than any single solution.

7 In Kindertransport, Samuels presents Lil as a warm, earthy and straight-talking grandmother to Faith, someone whose humour and affection make her a natural ally to her granddaughter. Yet Lil is also caught between two loyalties, to Faith's need for the truth and to Evelyn's need for secrecy, and the play shows her struggling with that tension. She is ultimately the kind of grandmother who chooses honesty, even at a cost to herself, but Samuels also suggests that her role in keeping the secret for so long has left her vulnerable.

From her first appearance in the attic, Lil is shown to be at ease with Faith and respected by her. Arriving from Manchester and sensing a disagreement between Faith and Evelyn, she remarks drily, "You two have the quietest arguments." The comic irony of "quietest" captures the brittle, buttoned-up atmosphere Evelyn creates, and Faith's immediate apology shows that she cares about her grandmother's opinion. Lil's humour is a way of noticing tension without inflaming it, which establishes her as a peacemaker within a strained household.

The shared jokes between Lil and Faith reveal a close bond built on mutual

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understanding. When Lil reports that Evelyn has "even got the stepladder out", Faith replies "What about the blue overall?" The quick, playful exchange shows that grandmother and granddaughter share a private, gently mocking view of Evelyn's obsessive cleaning. Samuels uses this rapport to suggest that Lil offers Faith a warmth and ease that her mother cannot. The affectionate address "love", used by Lil, and "Gran", used by Faith, reinforces this intimacy.

At the same time, Lil is a practical, no-nonsense grandmother who sets boundaries. She warns Faith that going through the boxes will cause trouble: "You'll make your mum even worse". When Faith promises "I will put the things away", Lil's dry retort, "You said that before", shows that she will not be fobbed off. Her down-to-earth commands, such as "Just get this lot boxed and neaten up the room. I'll do tea", combine instruction with care: the colloquial "this lot" and the offer to make tea present Lil as a figure of comforting routine. Even her coaxing when Faith refuses food, "Don't make me have it on my own", is affectionate rather than bossy, appealing to Faith's kindness instead of ordering her.

Samuels complicates this picture when Faith begins to ask about the "little Jewish girl" who stayed with Lil during the war. Lil at first evades the questions, and Faith's exasperated "Why are you being so cagey?" shows that she senses something hidden. Here Lil is shown to be a grandmother whose loyalty is divided: she has kept Evelyn's secret for decades, and her evasions protect her daughter as much as they frustrate her granddaughter. The structure builds dramatic tension through these dodged questions until Faith suddenly realises the truth: "Is she Mum?" The short, stark question marks a turning point for both characters.

Once the secret is out, Lil chooses honesty: "I'm not going to lie". This reveals a grandmother who believes Faith deserves the truth, even though she also asks her

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granddaughter to keep a secret in turn, telling her "You mustn't tell your mother I told you". The contradiction is revealing: Lil is honest but still protective of Evelyn, trying to manage the family's pain. Samuels also shows Lil's own fear. Her poignant question, "Aren't I real now?", exposes her anxiety that Faith may no longer see her as a true grandmother now that she knows there is no blood tie. The rhetorical question reverses their roles, because for a moment it is Lil who needs reassurance, and Faith's gentle "It's upset you, hasn't it?" shows that the love between them flows both ways.

Lil is also prepared to be blunt when Faith goes too far. When Faith focuses on how her mother's silence has affected her, Lil tells her "Don't be so bloody selfish". The mild swearing is characteristic of Lil's plain-speaking northern voice and shows that her love includes honest criticism. Later, when Faith says to Evelyn "I could kill you", Lil cuts in with "I'll bloody kill you first". The comic exaggeration defuses the moment while also making clear that Lil will defend her daughter. Her offer, "Let me sort it out", sums up her role as mediator.

Overall, Samuels presents Lil as a loving, humorous and grounded grandmother whose bond with Faith is genuine, regardless of blood. Her flaws, her long complicity in secrecy and her divided loyalties, make her more human rather than less, and suggest that being a good grandmother means telling difficult truths while holding a family together.

8 Secrets are at the heart of Kindertransport. Evelyn's concealment of her childhood as Eva, a Jewish refugee from Germany, is the central secret around which the whole play is built, and its discovery forces every relationship in the family to be renegotiated. Samuels presents secrecy as both a form of survival and a form of

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damage: Evelyn keeps her past hidden to build a "decent, ordinary life", but in doing so she cuts herself off from her mother, her daughter and herself.

Samuels's structure makes secrets significant from the opening. The play moves between the present-day attic and Eva's past, so the audience gradually learns what Faith does not know. This creates sustained dramatic irony: we watch Evelyn guard a history that is literally being staged around her. The setting itself is symbolic. The attic, stuffed with boxes, is a physical image of the buried past, and the stage direction that "a key jangles in the door lock" suggests how carefully Evelyn has tried to lock her memories away. Perhaps unusually for an attic, it is a space that must be unlocked, as if Evelyn's past is guarded like a crime.

The secret comes to light through an ordinary event, Faith's preparations to leave home, which prompt her to explore the boxes. Samuels shows that secrets rarely stay buried when life moves forward. Lil, who has known the truth for decades, is complicit in keeping it. Her evasions make Faith suspicious, and Faith's challenge, "Why are you being so cagey?", shows how secrecy itself can provoke curiosity. The revelation then unsettles Lil too: her question "Aren't I real now?" suggests that secrets, once exposed, can make even loving bonds seem fragile, because Faith now knows that Lil is not her birth grandmother.

For Faith, the discovery is a betrayal that makes her question her own identity. If her mother was Eva, then Faith herself has Jewish heritage and relatives she has never known. Her urgent questions, "What else? What else do you remember?", contrast sharply with Evelyn's reluctance. The repetition conveys hunger for knowledge, while Evelyn's instinct is to minimise and tidy away. When she first realises what Faith has found, she says, "Darling, you really do not need to get so distressed about the smallest thing." The affectionate "Darling" sits uneasily beside

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the dismissive "smallest thing", showing how Evelyn uses polite language to shrink an enormous truth. Faith's anger, culminating in calling her a "terrible mother", shows the emotional cost of being shut out.

Evelyn's response to exposure is to destroy the evidence. She tears up the photographs and documents and calls this putting "an end to the trouble". The noun "trouble" is telling: her Jewish childhood, her parents and her escape are all reduced to a problem to be disposed of. When she does answer Faith's questions, she speaks in a flat, factual way: "My father was called Werner Schlesinger. My mother was called Helga." The simple declaratives suggest that she can recite facts but not feelings, as though the secret has been kept so long that it has frozen. Her question "Is it so wrong to want a decent, ordinary life?" reveals her motive. Samuels allows the audience to sympathise, because the secret was a way of surviving trauma and fitting in, yet it has also prevented her from ever mourning what she lost.

The significance of secrecy is most painfully expressed through Helga. When she finally finds her daughter after the war, Helga is devastated that Eva has rejected her identity and wants to stay in England. Her accusation, "Hitler started the job and you finished it", is shocking because it equates Eva's denial of her past with Nazi persecution. The brutal imagery of having her fingers cut off and her hair pulled out "one strand at a time" makes the emotional loss feel physical. Helga's question, "Why have you lost yourself, Eva?", sums up the cost of secrecy: in hiding her past, Eva has also lost herself. The stage direction that follows, "Ship's horn sounds out", connects this moment to the journey that began the separation, suggesting that the trauma of the Kindertransport lies beneath every secret Evelyn keeps.

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Finally, Samuels shows that secrets can be passed on or broken. Faith decides she wants to "find out what everything means" and contact her relatives, hoping the truth could "make us closer to each other". Evelyn's response, "I'd rather die than go back", shows how deeply her secret is tied to fear. The play ends without full reconciliation, which suggests that secrets kept for a lifetime cannot be undone in a single conversation. Through this, Samuels presents secrecy as a double-edged legacy of trauma: a shield that allowed survival, but also a wound that divides generations.

9

Soyinka presents Iyaloja as the moral centre of the play: a woman whose sense of "the right thing" is not personal preference but the will of the whole community, its ancestors and its unborn. Because she never wavers, she becomes the measure against which every other character is judged, and her changing attitude to Elesin charts his fall from honoured hero to "emptied bark". What makes her so compelling, I think, is that doing right is shown to cost her as much as anyone.

From her first appearance in the market, Iyaloja is presented as a figure of authority. As the "Mother" of the market she speaks for the women, and the way the others defer to her shows that tradition has a living voice in her. Her first test comes when Elesin demands the beautiful girl he has seen. The girl is already betrothed to Iyaloja's own son, yet she agrees, because to refuse the wish of a man about to die for his people would be to risk his departing with a curse. Her decision is chilling in its balance: "Now we must go prepare your bridal chamber. Then these same hands will lay your shroud." The parallel structure binds marriage and death together, and the image of "these same hands" suggests that Iyaloja sees both as sacred duties to be performed with the same care. Personally, I find this the clearest sign of her integrity: she sacrifices her family's claim for the sake

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of the ritual.

Yet Soyinka also gives her foresight. She warns Elesin that "Even at the narrow end of the passage, I know you will look back and sigh a last regret for the flesh that flashed past". The metaphor of the "passage" presents death as a journey through a narrowing gateway, and the alliteration of "flesh that flashed" captures how quickly worldly pleasure vanishes. Her warning is structurally important, because it foreshadows exactly the weakness that will destroy him. Iyaloja wants the right thing done, but she is not naive about human desire, and she agrees to the marriage only on the understanding that any seed he leaves must not be tainted.

Her determination is also expressed through scorn for those who would interfere. When Amusa arrives to arrest Elesin, she mocks him: "You ignorant man. It is not he who calls himself Elesin Oba, it is his blood that says it." The contrast between a title chosen and a destiny carried in the "blood" shows that for Iyaloja duty is inherited, not optional. Later she dismisses Simon Pilkings, the District Officer, as a "child", reversing the colonial hierarchy so that the powerful white official becomes an immature intruder in a world he cannot understand.

The dramatic turning point in her presentation comes in the final scene, when Elesin has failed. Her tone shifts from respect to devastating contempt: "Oh, you emptied bark that the world once saluted for a pith-laden being". The metaphor of a tree hollowed of its "pith" suggests that Elesin still looks like a man of substance, but the spirit that gave him meaning has gone. Equally cutting is the plain sorrow of "Now look at the spectacle of your life. I grieve for you." The word "spectacle" turns his life into a shameful show for others to watch. Her proverb "The river which fills up before our eyes does not sweep us away in its flood"

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implies that his weakness was visible all along, and the community should have guarded against it.

Iyaloja's cruellest act is also, arguably, her most principled. Announcing "Wait. I came with a burden", she deliberately delays revealing Olunde's body, building suspense so that Elesin feels the full weight of his betrayal. Uncomfortably, Soyinka suggests that shame is part of restoring order. After Elesin strangles himself with his chains, she refuses to let Pilkings touch the body: "Since when have strangers donned clothes of indigo before the bereaved cries out his loss?" The rhetorical question and the image of mourning "indigo" assert that the rituals of death belong to the Yoruba, not to strangers. She then makes sure the Bride performs her role, closing Elesin's eyes and pouring earth over each eyelid, so that even a failed ritual ends with dignity.

The play closes on Iyaloja's command: "Now forget the dead, forget even the living. Turn your mind only to the unborn." The repetition of "forget" and the movement from dead to living to unborn give the final line a forward momentum, as though her voice carries the community past tragedy. Structurally, it is significant that Soyinka gives her the last word rather than Elesin or Pilkings. Iyaloja is presented as the unbending guardian of what is right, and although her judgements can seem harsh, the play suggests that without her the world of the Yoruba would have no one left to hold it together.

10 The death ritual is the force that drives every part of Death and the King's Horseman. It gives the play its plot, its central dramatic tension and its tragic ending, but above all it carries Soyinka's idea that a whole community's survival can depend on one man's willingness to pass from the world of the living into the

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world of the ancestors. When the ritual is interrupted, the result is not only Elesin's personal shame but a rupture in the order of the universe.

Even the title signals this significance. By placing "Death" before "the King's Horseman", Soyinka gives death equal, perhaps greater, status than the hero himself, as though it were a character waiting in the wings. The play opens on the evening Elesin must die,, so the ritual frames the action from the very first scene. Elesin enters the market in full energy, surrounded by drummers and the Praise-Singer, and his confident words "We are already parted, the world and I" present death as a journey he has already begun. For the Yoruba, the ritual is not suicide in the Western sense but a passage: Elesin is to accompany his King through the gateway so that the King does not wander lost, and the world of the living remains connected to the ancestors.

However, Soyinka builds doubt into the ritual from the start. The "Not-I bird" story, in which everyone from the farmer to the hunter flees from Death, is told by Elesin to show that he alone will not run, but its very length suggests a man reassuring himself. More revealing is his sudden desire for the young girl in the market. His wish to marry on the eve of death can be read as a noble attempt to leave a seed behind, but the audience senses that his "earth-held limbs" are still attached to pleasure. The Praise-Singer's role is crucial here: he acts as Elesin's conscience and guide, and his warnings make us aware of how fragile the ritual is.

The colonial characters show how differently the ritual can be seen. Simon Pilkings dismisses it as "a barbaric custom", and his comment "We don't make our chiefs commit suicide to keep him company" reveals both ignorance and arrogance. Jane's shocked "How can you be so callous!" when Olunde calmly speaks of his father's death shows that she cannot imagine a culture in which death is honoured rather

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than feared. Soyinka sharpens the irony through Olunde, who reminds Jane of the captain who blew up his own ship to save others, and of the young men dying in the war. The ritual is thus used to expose the Europeans' double standard: they admire self-sacrifice when it serves the British Empire but condemn it when it serves the Yoruba.

Dramatically, the ritual reaches its climax at the end of Act 3, when Elesin dances into his trance. The stage direction that he "appears to feel for a direction of sound, subtly but he only slips deeper into his trance-dance" creates a hypnotic, poignant moment, and Soyinka uses drumming, chant and movement to make the audience feel that the boundary between worlds is thinning. The shift to the Residency ball in Act 4, where the Pilkingses parade in egungun costumes, is a deliberate structural contrast: while one world performs a sacred passage, the other treats the sacred as fancy dress. It is precisely their intervention that halts the ritual and causes the tragedy.

Elesin's failure is catastrophic. In his cell he admits that his "will was squelched in the spittle of an alien race", a vivid, disgusted image that blames the colonisers, yet he also confesses that "there was a longing on my earth-held limbs". This honesty shows that the ritual was undone as much by his own weakness as by outside force. The consequences fall on others: Olunde, who has studied medicine in England, completes the ritual in his father's place "Because he could not bear to let honour fly out of doors". The metaphor of honour as a bird escaping a house suggests that the family and the community would have been left exposed. When Elesin sees his son's body, he kills himself with his chains, a death that comes too late to have meaning.

Soyinka himself insisted that the colonial factor is only "a catalytic incident" and

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that the real confrontation is metaphysical. The ending supports this: Iyaloja's final instruction to "Turn your mind only to the unborn" shows that the ritual matters because it protects the future. In the end, the significance of the death ritual lies in what its failure reveals, that a culture's sense of order rests on sacrifice, and that when the sacrifice falters, the cost is paid by the young.

11 Shakespeare presents Mercutio as the play's most dazzling and most dangerous voice: a wit who mocks romance, a loyal friend who will not tolerate dishonour, and finally the victim whose death turns a comedy of young love into a tragedy. His name hints at his nature. Like the metal mercury, he is quick, brilliant and unstable, and Shakespeare uses this volatility to show how easily laughter in Verona can turn to bloodshed.

Interestingly, Mercutio does not appear in Arthur Brooke's poem in anything like this form; Shakespeare largely invented him. This suggests a deliberate dramatic purpose. Mercutio is a foil for Romeo. When Romeo moans about Rosaline in the language of courtly love, Mercutio replies, "If love be rough with you, be rough with love; / Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down." The repeated "prick" is a bawdy pun, reducing Romeo's idealised suffering to physical desire. For an Elizabethan audience familiar with Petrarchan sonnets, in which the lover sighs hopelessly for a cold mistress, Mercutio's crude realism would have been both funny and deflating. He exposes the artificiality of Romeo's love for Rosaline, and in doing so prepares us to see how different Romeo's love for Juliet will be.

The Queen Mab speech shows another side of him. It begins as a fanciful set piece about the "fairies' midwife" who drives over sleeping men, giving lovers dreams of love and soldiers dreams of "cutting foreign throats". The speech is

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written in fluent blank verse full of tiny, precise images, which shows Mercutio's extraordinary imagination. Yet as it continues, the dreams become darker and more violent, and Romeo has to interrupt: "Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace!" Mercutio then dismisses dreams as "the children of an idle brain, / Begot of nothing but vain fantasy". Structurally, this moment hints that his wit has an unstable edge, almost a manic energy that he cannot control. Personally, I find the speech the first sign that Mercutio's brilliance might be self-destructive.

Mercutio is also presented as a deeply loyal friend. It is he who encourages the gate-crashing of the Capulet feast to lift Romeo's spirits, and in Act 2 his teasing, "Alas poor Romeo, he is already dead, stabbed with a white wench's black eye", is affectionate as well as mocking. Ironically, the metaphor of Romeo as "already dead" foreshadows the tragedy. His comic sparring with the Nurse, whom he mocks with crude jokes, shows how freely he moves between social groups. As a kinsman of the Prince, Mercutio belongs to neither house, and this makes his later involvement in the feud especially tragic: he is drawn into a quarrel that is not his.

The climax of his role comes in Act 3 Scene 1. The heat of the day and his provocative wordplay create tension. He has already mocked Tybalt as "Prince of Cats", sneering at his fashionable, rule-bound fencing, and now he goads him again. Context is vital here. In Elizabethan England, duelling and honour codes were a real concern, and a man who refused a challenge risked being seen as a coward. When Romeo, newly married to Juliet, refuses to fight, Mercutio is horrified: "O calm, dishonourable, vile submission!" The triplet of adjectives shows how deeply he values masculine honour. His challenge, "Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?", turns insult into invitation, and the scene shifts from wit to violence in moments.

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His death scene is one of Shakespeare's most powerful moments of tragic irony. Even mortally wounded, Mercutio jokes: "Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man." The pun on "grave" captures his character perfectly, as he uses wit to face death, but beneath the humour is real bitterness. He belittles the wound as "not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door", yet insists "'twill serve". The repeated curse "A plague o' both your houses!" breaks the comic mood completely. The word "plague" would have resonated with audiences who lived through outbreaks that closed the London theatres, and his curse seems to come true, as both families lose their children. His bitter line "They have made worms' meat of me" shows his disgust that the feud he never belonged to has killed him.

Structurally, Mercutio's death is the turning point of the play. Romeo, enraged, kills Tybalt and is banished, and from here the tragedy accelerates. Shakespeare removes the play's most comic voice at its midpoint, as if to show that laughter cannot survive in a city ruled by hatred. Mercutio is therefore presented as both the play's life and its first real casualty: a brilliant, reckless figure whose death proves that the "ancient grudge" destroys even those who stand outside it.

12 I largely agree that the final scenes give the audience an effective ending, because Shakespeare fulfils the tragedy promised in the Prologue with intense drama, heartbreaking irony and a sense of moral resolution. However, the ending is not entirely comforting. The families' reconciliation is uneasy, and the Prince's "glooming peace" suggests that Shakespeare wants the audience to leave unsettled rather than satisfied, which arguably makes the ending more effective, not less.

The ending is effective first because it completes a structure the audience has

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known from the start. The Prologue tells us of "A pair of star-cross'd lovers" who "take their life", so the final scene is not a surprise but an inevitability. This creates tension of a different kind: we watch, powerless, as events move towards a conclusion we cannot prevent. The Friar's earlier warning that "These violent delights have violent ends" is now proven true. For an Elizabethan audience who believed that fate and the stars could shape human lives, the ending would seem a terrible confirmation of a destiny that the lovers could not escape.

The scene in the Capulet tomb is also highly dramatic. Paris, who has come to mourn Juliet, confronts Romeo, and the swift fight ends in Paris's death. Romeo's warning, "tempt not a desperate man", shows how far he has changed from the dreamy lover of Act I. The killing of Paris adds another innocent victim to the feud and heightens the atmosphere of violence even in a place of death. Some might feel this subplot distracts from the lovers, but I think it reinforces how hatred and haste corrupt everything in Verona.

The most powerful element is dramatic irony. The audience knows that Juliet is not dead but drugged, so every word Romeo speaks over her body is agonising. He marvels that "Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath, / Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty", and his image of her beauty making "This vault a feasting presence full of light" echoes his first sight of her as a jewel shining against the night. The light and dark imagery that has run through the play reaches its climax here: Juliet is still light in a place of darkness, and the audience is desperate for her to wake. His final words, "Thus with a kiss I die", link love and death in a single action. Juliet then wakes moments too late, and her line "O happy dagger, / This is thy sheath" transforms the weapon into an image of union. The contrast between her calm decisiveness and the Friar's panicked flight is striking; his "I dare no longer stay" shows the adult world failing the young once

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more.

Context deepens the effect. Suicide was considered a mortal sin in Shakespeare's time, so an Elizabethan audience might have been shocked that the lovers choose death. Yet Shakespeare encourages sympathy rather than condemnation, presenting their deaths as the result of a society that left them no other way to be together. Juliet's earlier soliloquy before taking the potion, in which she imagines waking among the dead, also gains terrible irony, as her fear of the tomb becomes reality. Misdiagnosed deaths were a genuine fear at the time, which would have made the feigned death plot seem horribly plausible.

The ending also brings a kind of resolution. The Prince condemns the fathers directly: "See what a scourge is laid upon your hate". The word "scourge" suggests divine punishment, and his summary "All are punished" includes himself, for having "winked at" their discords. Capulet's offer, "O brother Montague, give me thy hand", finally ends the "ancient grudge". This is the strongest argument that the ending is effective: the deaths have meaning, because they achieve the peace the Prince's threats never could.

Nevertheless, there are reasons to question this. The promise of statues in "pure gold" becomes a competition, as each father tries to outdo the other, suggesting that pride and rivalry have not truly disappeared. The Prince's description of "A glooming peace" and the pathetic fallacy of the sun refusing to "show his head" darken the mood further. The peace is real, but it is bought with the lives of the young, and Shakespeare does not allow it to feel like a happy ending.

Finally, the closing couplet, "For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo", gives the play a sense of completion, echoing the rhymed,

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sonnet-like voice of the Prologue. Placing Juliet's name first is perhaps a final honour to her courage. Overall, the ending is highly effective precisely because it combines dramatic climax with moral reflection, leaving the audience moved by the lovers and troubled by the cost of hatred.

13 In Macbeth, Shakespeare stages a battle between good and evil on three levels at once: in the supernatural world of the Witches, in the political struggle for Scotland's throne, and, most powerfully, inside Macbeth's own mind. Good does triumph in the end, as a Jacobean audience would have expected, but Shakespeare makes the victory hard-won and costly, suggesting that evil is not simply an outside force but something that grows from human choice.

The battle is announced in the very first scene. The Witches' chant "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" uses chiasmus to blur the boundary between good and evil, creating a world in which appearances cannot be trusted. Their trochaic rhythm, different from the iambic verse of the human characters, marks them as unnatural. For an audience living under King James I, who had written Daemonologie and believed witches were agents of the devil, these figures would have embodied genuine evil intent on corrupting the natural order.

At first, Macbeth stands firmly on the side of good. The Captain describes "brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name)", and his loyal violence in battle against the rebels and the Norwegians is praised. Duncan rewards him with the title of Thane of Cawdor and promises more, using the gardening metaphor "I have begun to plant thee, and will labour / To make thee full of growing". This image of natural growth presents Duncan's kingship as nurturing and divinely ordered. Yet the Witches' prophecy that Macbeth "shalt be King hereafter" plants a very

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different seed.

Shakespeare uses Banquo as a moral contrast. He hears the same prophecies but warns that "The instruments of darkness tell us truths; / Win us with honest trifles, to betray's / In deepest consequence". The metaphor of "instruments" suggests that the Witches are tools of a greater evil, and Banquo's caution shows that resisting temptation is possible. This is important: evil may tempt, but it cannot force. When Malcolm is named Prince of Cumberland, Macbeth's aside "Stars, hide your fires; / Let not light see my black and deep desires" reveals that the struggle has moved inside him. The imagery of light and darkness, which runs through the play, aligns good with light and evil with concealment.

The fiercest battle takes place in Macbeth's soliloquy in Act I Scene 7. He reminds himself that he is Duncan's "kinsman" and "host", and imagines Duncan's virtues pleading "like angels, trumpet-tongued" against the murder. The religious imagery of angels and judgement shows that his conscience understands the sin of regicide. In the context of the Divine Right of Kings, killing an anointed king was a sin against God as well as a crime. He decides, "We will proceed no further in this business", and for a moment good wins. However, Lady Macbeth's taunt, "When you durst do it, then you were a man", reframes evil as courage and masculinity, and Macbeth gives way. Shakespeare shows evil winning not through magic but through persuasion and pride.

Once Duncan is murdered, the natural world itself reflects the victory of evil. Ross observes that "by th'clock 'tis day, / And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp", and the verb "strangles" makes darkness a murderer of the sun. Duncan's horses are said to have eaten each other, and an owl kills a falcon. This pathetic fallacy reflects the Jacobean belief in the Great Chain of Being: when the rightful

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king is murdered, all of nature is thrown into disorder.

Good begins its counter-attack in Act 4 Scene 3 in England. Malcolm tests Macduff by pretending to be wicked, and Macduff's despairing "Bleed, bleed, poor country" proves his loyalty to Scotland rather than personal ambition. Shakespeare also introduces the saintly English king who cures the sick by his touch, a deliberate contrast with Macbeth, and a compliment to James, who also practised the royal touch. Malcolm's metaphor "Let's make us medicines of our great revenge" presents the coming war as a cure for a diseased nation.

Yet the battle is not entirely clear-cut. Macduff has left his family undefended, and they are slaughtered; Malcolm's goodness is shown partly through his skill at lying. Macbeth himself, hardened in tyranny, still shows flashes of the man he was, as in his weary "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" speech. Shakespeare seems to suggest that good and evil exist within the same people, not only on opposite sides.

In the end, the structure of the tragedy restores order. Macduff kills Macbeth and declares "The time is free", and Malcolm dismisses Macbeth and his wife as "this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen". The play closes with Malcolm planting a new age, echoing Duncan's gardening imagery. Good defeats evil, reassuring a king anxious after the Gunpowder Plot, but Shakespeare ensures that the audience remembers how easily a brave man was lost to it.

14 Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a tragic hero whose greatness becomes the source of his destruction. He begins as Scotland's most valiant soldier, a man with a vivid imagination and a living conscience, but ambition, the Witches' prophecies

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and his wife's persuasion lead him to murder, and each crime hardens him further. By the end he is a tyrant who has lost almost everything that made him human, yet Shakespeare never quite lets the audience stop seeing the man he might have been.

At the start, Macbeth is presented through the praise of others before he even appears. The Captain describes "brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name)" and tells how he "unseamed" the rebel Macdonwald "from the nave to th'chops". The brutal image shows that Macbeth's courage is inseparable from violence, and Ross's reference to him as "Bellona's bridegroom" makes him a partner of the goddess of war. In a Jacobean context, a loyal thane owed his king absolute allegiance, so Macbeth is shown as the ideal subject. The irony is that his greatest skill, killing, will soon be turned against the king.

His first meeting with the Witches reveals another side to him. Banquo notices that he seems "rapt", and in his aside Macbeth admits that the thought of murder makes his hair stand on end: "Why do I yield to that suggestion / Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair". The verb "yield" suggests that the temptation is already working on him, while his horror shows that his conscience is alive. Shakespeare uses asides and soliloquies throughout to give the audience direct access to Macbeth's mind, so we watch his corruption from the inside rather than simply judging it.

Before the murder, Macbeth is torn. In Act I Scene 7 he lists his reasons not to kill Duncan, as his "kinsman", his king and his "host", and admits that he has "no spur / To prick the sides of my intent, but only / Vaulting ambition". The horse-riding metaphor of ambition leaping too high and falling foreshadows his own fall. The sacred duty of hospitality was taken very seriously in Shakespeare's

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time, so murdering a guest would have doubled the horror. He decides, "We will proceed no further in this business", yet Lady Macbeth's attack on his manhood changes his mind. Shakespeare presents him as impressionable, but also as someone who already wants what she offers.

The dagger soliloquy shows a mind on the edge of breakdown. Macbeth sees a dagger "before me" and cannot tell whether it is real or "a dagger of the mind", and the dramatic form, a man speaking alone to an invisible object, makes his confusion vivid on stage. After the murder, his guilt is overwhelming: "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand?" The hyperbole suggests that no amount of water can cleanse him, a stark contrast to his wife's dismissive "A little water clears us of this deed".

Once king, Macbeth is presented as increasingly insecure. He realises, "To be thus is nothing, / But to be safely thus", and his fear of Banquo, whose sons are prophesied to be kings, drives him to murder his friend. He complains that he has "filed" his mind for "Banquo's issue", and his cry "O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!" shows that his crimes have poisoned his peace. At the banquet, the appearance of Banquo's ghost exposes his guilt publicly, as he cries "Never shake / Thy gory locks at me". The once fearless soldier is now terrified of a dead man.

As the play progresses, Macbeth's tyranny becomes more extreme. He orders the slaughter of Macduff's wife and children, an act of pointless cruelty that marks him as a true tyrant. He admits "I am in blood / Stepped in so far" that returning would be as hard as going on, showing a man who has given up on redemption. For a Jacobean audience, influenced by the Divine Right of Kings and the Great Chain of Being, this unnatural reign would explain the suffering of Scotland.

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In Act 5, Macbeth becomes a strangely tragic figure. On hearing of his wife's death, his "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" soliloquy presents life as "a walking shadow, a poor player", a metaphor from the theatre that reduces existence to meaningless performance. He claims he has "almost forgot the taste of fears", which suggests numbness rather than courage. Yet when he learns that Macduff was not "of woman born", he refuses to yield, and his final defiance, "Lay on, Macduff", recalls the brave warrior of Act 1.

Malcolm's verdict of "this dead butcher" is accurate but incomplete. Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a man destroyed by his hamartia, ambition, and his tragedy lies in the fact that he understands his own fall more clearly than anyone, yet cannot stop it.

15 Shakespeare presents Portia as the most intelligent and resourceful character in The Merchant of Venice, a woman who begins the play trapped by her dead father's will yet ends it controlling the fates of almost everyone around her. She is witty, loving and eloquent, but Shakespeare also makes her more complicated than a simple heroine: her prejudice, her manipulation of the law and her treatment of Shylock invite a modern audience to question how far she truly lives up to the mercy she preaches.

When we first meet Portia, she is presented as restless and constrained. Her opening line, "By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world", contrasts her "little body" with the "great world", suggesting a woman who feels small and powerless despite her wealth. She complains that she can neither choose a husband she likes nor refuse one she dislikes, because "the will of a living daughter" is "curbed by the will of a dead father". The pun on "will" as both desire

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and legal testament captures her situation exactly. In Elizabethan England, daughters were expected to obey their fathers, and a wealthy heiress was effectively a prize to be won. The casket test turns Portia into an object, locked inside a box, and the suitors' choices determine her future.

Yet Shakespeare immediately shows her sharp wit. In prose, she mocks each of her suitors in turn, from the drunken German to the Neapolitan prince who talks only of his horse. These comic sketches show her intelligence and independence of mind, and the use of prose makes her seem lively and natural. However, her wit has a darker side. Of the Prince of Morocco she says that if he has "the complexion of a devil" she would rather he should "shrive me than wive me", and when he leaves she says, "Let all of his complexion choose me so." Her prejudice reflects attitudes common in Shakespeare's England, but it also prepares us for her later treatment of Shylock.

Portia's love for Bassanio reveals a gentler side. Before he chooses, she is openly anxious, and she arranges for music to be played while he deliberates. When he chooses the lead casket, her speech is full of submission: she calls herself "an unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised" and gives herself to him as "her lord, her governor, her king". The rising triplet shows her placing her husband at the head of a patriarchal order, and she transfers everything she owns: "Myself, and what is mine, to you and yours / Is now converted." For an Elizabethan audience, this would seem a proper wifely humility. However, the audience soon sees that this modesty is partly a performance, because Portia is far from "unschooled".

Her true power emerges in the trial scene. Disguised as Balthazar, a young doctor of law, Portia enters a male world she would otherwise be barred from, since women could not practise law in Shakespeare's time. The dramatic irony is rich:

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the audience knows the "young doctor" is a woman, and the role would have been played by a boy actor, adding another layer of disguise. Her speech beginning "The quality of mercy is not strained; / It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven" is one of the most beautiful in the play. The simile connects mercy with natural, divine gifts, and its calm blank verse contrasts with Shylock's insistent demands. She presents mercy as a quality greater than kingship, "an attribute to God himself".

Structurally, Portia's victory depends on her patience. She allows Shylock to sharpen his knife and seem triumphant, then reverses everything: "Tarry a little, there is something else. / This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood". The simple monosyllables make the turning point devastatingly clear. Yet Portia then shows little of the mercy she has praised. She insists that Shylock "shall have merely justice and his bond", and the punishments that follow strip him of his wealth and force him to become a Christian. A modern audience, aware of the anti-Semitism of Elizabethan England, from which Jews had been expelled since 1290, may find her triumph troubling.

The ring plot in Act 5 shows Portia regaining control within her marriage. By tricking Bassanio into giving away his ring, she tests his promise and proves that she, not he, holds the power in their relationship. Her lyrical image "How far that little candle throws his beams! / So shines a good deed in a naughty world" presents her as a source of light returning to Belmont.

Overall, Portia is presented as a brilliant woman who escapes the limits placed on her sex, and Shakespeare clearly admires her intelligence. Nevertheless, her prejudice and her selective mercy make her a more ambiguous figure, reflecting both the values of her time and the uncomfortable questions the play raises about

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justice.

16 The bond between Shylock and Antonio is the spine of The Merchant of Venice. It sets the plot in motion, generates almost all of its tension and leads to its climax in the trial scene. Yet Shakespeare uses the bond for more than plot. Through it he explores the conflict between law and mercy, the bitterness of religious hatred, and the different kinds of "bonds" that tie people together, from loans and contracts to friendship and marriage.

The bond arises from love rather than business. Bassanio needs three thousand ducats to court Portia, and Antonio, whose wealth is all at sea in his ships, borrows the money from Shylock for his friend. Shylock's repetition of "Three thousand ducats" at the start of Act 1 Scene 3 shows him weighing the sum slowly, enjoying the power he suddenly holds. In an aside he reveals his true feelings: "If I can catch him once upon the hip, / I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him." The wrestling metaphor and the image of feeding suggest an appetite for revenge, and the "ancient grudge" links his hatred to years of mistreatment as a Jew and to Antonio's habit of lending money without interest, which undercuts Shylock's trade.

The terms of the bond are presented with chilling understatement. Shylock proposes it as a "merry sport": if the money is not repaid, "the forfeit / Be nominated for an equal pound / Of your fair flesh". The adjective "fair" is ironic, praising the body he hopes to cut. Antonio, confident his ships will return, agrees, despite Bassanio's anxiety. In context, Christians were forbidden to practise usury, so Jewish moneylenders in Venice filled a necessary but despised role. Antonio's contempt is clear when he calls Shylock "a villain with a smiling cheek", yet his

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decision to sign shows his overconfidence and perhaps a willingness to suffer for his friend.

Structurally, the bond hangs over the rest of the play. Shylock's plan to go to dinner "to feed upon the prodigal Christian" foreshadows his later demand for flesh, keeping the threat alive in the audience's mind. Jessica's elopement with Lorenzo, taking her father's money and jewels, intensifies Shylock's desire for revenge. His speech "Hath not a Jew eyes?" is one of the most powerful in the play: the rhetorical questions insist on a shared humanity, but they end in a justification of vengeance: "The villainy you teach me I will execute". Shakespeare makes us understand, even sympathise with, Shylock's hatred, while also fearing what it will lead to.

When Antonio's ships are reported lost, the bond becomes deadly. Shylock's refrain "I'll have my bond" shows that he now cares more about the forfeit than about money, and Antonio accepts that "The Duke cannot deny the course of law". Venice depended on trade with foreigners, so its laws had to be seen as fair to all; if the bond were simply cancelled, the reputation of the city would suffer. This makes the bond legally unbreakable and raises the tension to its height.

The trial scene forms the climax of the whole play. Shylock insists, "The pound of flesh which I demand of him / Is dearly bought; 'tis mine, and I will have it". The possessive "mine" and the blunt monosyllables show his absolute determination. He declares "I stand here for law", setting himself against the Christian appeals to mercy. Portia admits that by law "the Jew may claim / A pound of flesh", and then turns the letter of the law against him, since the bond grants "no jot of blood". Shakespeare uses the bond to show that strict law, without mercy, can be turned into a weapon for either side. Shylock is stripped of his wealth and forced

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to convert, and his anguished "you take my life / When you do take the means whereby I live" shows that the bond has destroyed him rather than Antonio.

However, it could be argued that the bond is not the only important strand. The casket plot in Belmont, the romance of Bassanio and Portia, and Jessica's elopement run alongside it, and the play ends not in Venice but in Belmont, with the comic ring plot. Yet even these strands echo the bond. The rings are themselves pledges, and when Bassanio gives his away, Portia's teasing shows that a promise of love must be kept as strictly as a legal contract. Antonio offers to be bound again, this time with his "soul" as surety for Bassanio's faithfulness, neatly mirroring the flesh bond.

Overall, I agree that Shylock's bond is the main narrative strand. It drives the plot from Act 1 to the climax of Act 4, and its themes shape the whole play. Its significance lies in how it exposes the hatred beneath Venetian society, and in how it forces both characters and audience to weigh justice against mercy.

17 I agree with Elizabeth only in part. Austen allows her heroine to voice a romantic ideal of marriage, yet she structures the novel so that Charlotte's choice looks less like a betrayal of principle and more like a rational response to a society that left women "of small fortune" with almost no alternatives. Elizabeth is right that the marriage sacrifices feeling, but Austen invites us to question whether Elizabeth, who has never had to face Charlotte's position, is entitled to judge it so harshly.

Elizabeth's reaction is instinctive and emphatic. Her exclamation, "Engaged to Mr. Collins! My dear Charlotte, impossible!", reveals shock rather than reflection, and her private verdict that Charlotte "the wife of Mr. Collins was a most humiliating

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picture" shows that she feels the match as a personal humiliation, as if her friend has lowered herself. Later, defending her view to Jane, she insists that Jane must not persuade herself "that selfishness is prudence". The antithesis between "selfishness" and "prudence" is revealing: Elizabeth will not allow that a calculated marriage could ever be sensible. In one sense she is clearly right. Austen's narrator is witheringly honest that Mr Collins was "neither sensible nor agreeable", and since he proposed to Elizabeth only days earlier, Charlotte is accepting a man whose affection is entirely interchangeable. The comedy of his pompous speeches makes the reader share Elizabeth's distaste.

However, Austen gives Charlotte a clear and dignified voice. Her explanation, "I am not romantic, you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home", is built from short, plain sentences that contrast with Elizabeth's outbursts, suggesting self-knowledge rather than weakness. The narrator's free indirect style also enters Charlotte's mind and reveals that marriage was "the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune". The adjective "honourable" is crucial: in Regency England, an unmarried gentlewoman without money had almost no respectable way to support herself, and could become a dependent burden on her family. Charlotte is twenty-seven and plain, and Austen notes, with dry irony, that her brothers are relieved of the fear that she would die an old maid. The entail on Longbourn, which will pass to Mr Collins himself, constantly reminds the reader that women could not secure property in their own right. Seen against this context, Charlotte's choice looks less like selfishness and more like survival.

Austen also hints that Elizabeth's judgement is not as consistent as she believes. When Wickham transfers his attentions to Miss King and her fortune, Elizabeth excuses him, asking her aunt what is "the difference in matrimonial affairs, between the mercenary and the prudent motive". This is exactly the question

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raised by Charlotte's marriage, yet Elizabeth answers it differently for a charming young man she likes. Austen's title is relevant here: Elizabeth's prejudice affects how she reads others, and her condemnation of Charlotte belongs to the same quick, confident judgement that leads her to misjudge Darcy and Wickham. The novel's structure, in which Elizabeth must later admit "Till this moment I never knew myself", encourages the reader to treat her earlier certainties with caution.

When Elizabeth visits Hunsford, Austen shows the marriage in practice, and the picture is mixed. Charlotte manages her husband skilfully, encouraging him to work in his garden and choosing a sitting room at the back of the house so that he will be in it less often. Her ability to apparently not hear his embarrassing remarks shows a kind of quiet strategy. Earlier she had claimed that "Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance", and her life at Hunsford seems to prove her cynical realism: she has made herself comfortable, if not happy. Yet the very need for these evasions supports Elizabeth's view. A marriage that depends on spending as little time as possible with one's husband is hardly the ideal Austen celebrates in the union of Elizabeth and Darcy, which is founded on respect, growth and mutual understanding.

Structurally, then, Charlotte's marriage functions as one point on a spectrum. It is wiser than Lydia's reckless elopement and more stable than the Bennets' unequal match, where Mr Bennet was captivated by youth and beauty and now treats his wife with contempt. It is far less fulfilling than Elizabeth's. Austen, who herself accepted and then withdrew from a proposal from a wealthy man she did not love, seems to share Elizabeth's belief that marriage without affection is a loss. However, she never condemns Charlotte outright.

Ultimately, I agree that Charlotte gives up something important, but I do not fully

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share Elizabeth's view that she "should not" have married. Austen presents Charlotte's decision as understandable within a society that offered women security only through marriage, and she uses Elizabeth's harshness to expose the privilege of a heroine who can afford to wait for love.

18 In Pride and Prejudice, Austen presents a society in which women of the gentry were expected to be decorous, accomplished, deferential and, above all, to marry well. Several women break these expectations, but Austen draws a sharp moral distinction between them. Elizabeth's departures from convention are presented as signs of intelligence and integrity, while Lydia's and Mrs Bennet's are shown as failures of judgement that threaten the whole family. Austen seems less interested in whether women obey the rules than in whether their defiance is guided by reason and feeling.

Elizabeth first challenges expectation through her body and movement. When Jane falls ill at Netherfield, Elizabeth walks three miles alone, "crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles". The energetic verbs "jumping" and "springing" give her a physical freedom unusual for a heroine of the period, and the listing structure suggests impatience with obstacles. Miss Bingley's sneer that her petticoat is "six inches deep in mud" shows how polite society read such behaviour as vulgar. Yet Austen lets the reader see that Elizabeth's real motive is love for her sister, and Darcy notices that her eyes are brightened by the exercise. Austen therefore turns a breach of decorum into evidence of warmth and vitality.

More significantly, Elizabeth defies the expectation that a woman without fortune should accept any respectable proposal. Mr Collins, assuming that ladies reject men

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they "secretly mean to accept", cannot believe her refusal, and she has to insist on being treated as "a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart". The phrase "rational creature" echoes the language of Mary Wollstonecraft's arguments for women's reason in the 1790s, and positions Elizabeth as a woman claiming the right to think for herself. Her rejection of Darcy is even more daring, since he is rich and powerful. Telling him he was "the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry", she uses a superlative that leaves no room for negotiation. In a period when an unmarried woman faced genteel poverty, this was a real risk, and Austen makes the reader admire her courage.

Elizabeth's most direct challenge comes near the end, when Lady Catherine demands that she promise never to marry Darcy. Elizabeth replies that she will act in the way that will "constitute my happiness, without reference to you". The calm, measured syntax contrasts with Lady Catherine's furious questions, so that the younger, poorer woman appears the more dignified. Interestingly, Lady Catherine herself also breaks expectations of female behaviour: she is domineering, interfering and treats men such as Mr Collins as servants. Austen satirises her because her power comes from rank, not merit.

Lydia, by contrast, rebels without thought. Austen describes her as "untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and fearless", and the asyndetic list, building in intensity, makes her sound almost like an animal that has escaped. Her elopement with Wickham is the novel's central crisis. In Regency society, a young woman living with a man outside marriage could be ruined, and her disgrace would damage her sisters' chances too, which is why Mr Collins coldly suggests that it would have been better if she had died. Lydia's letter to Harriet, written as if the elopement were a joke, shows her complete lack of awareness. Structurally, her defiance tests Darcy's love, since he secretly pays Wickham to marry her, and it brings Elizabeth

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and Darcy together. Austen therefore uses Lydia to show the real dangers of ignoring social rules.

Mrs Bennet also fails to behave as a lady should. Her loud boasting at the Netherfield ball about Jane's prospects, within Darcy's hearing, humiliates Elizabeth and helps persuade Darcy to separate Bingley from Jane. Her lack of restraint is ironic, since her one aim in life is to marry her daughters, yet her vulgarity is the very thing that endangers their matches. Even Charlotte Lucas, who appears conventional, quietly takes control of her future by encouraging Mr Collins's attentions, a kind of pragmatic agency in a society that expected women to wait to be chosen.

Overall, Austen suggests that a woman's worth lies not in obedience but in good judgement. Writing at a time when she published anonymously as "a Lady", she created in Elizabeth a heroine whose independence is rewarded with both love and security, while warning, through Lydia and Mrs Bennet, that defiance without sense brings shame.

19

Dickens presents Mrs Joe as a grotesque and tyrannical figure who inverts every Victorian ideal of the gentle, nurturing woman. Through the older Pip's comic yet bitter retrospective narration, she becomes both a source of humour and a disturbing portrait of domestic cruelty. Yet Dickens also gives her a structural purpose: her frustrated ambition and harshness help to drive Pip away from the forge, and her eventual suffering complicates our response to her.

From her first appearance, Dickens defines Mrs Joe through hardness. She is "tall and bony", and her apron has a "square impregnable bib in front, that was stuck

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full of pins and needles". The adjective "impregnable" makes her body sound like a fortress, closed against affection, and the pins and needles suggest that any contact with her will hurt. Dickens turns this into a running joke when she cuts bread by jamming the loaf against her bib, so that pins occasionally end up in Pip's food. Even her motherly role is described in violent terms. She has built a great reputation with the neighbours for bringing Pip up "by hand", a phrase that, as Pip realises, refers less to bottle-feeding than to the hand she lays upon him. The pun exposes the gap between her public image of self-sacrifice and the private reality of beatings.

Her violence is given a name, which makes it almost a member of the household. "Tickler" is a "wax-ended piece of cane, worn smooth by collision with my tickled frame". The comic euphemism of "tickled" and the polysyllabic "collision" are typical of Dickens's narrative irony: the adult Pip uses inflated language to make the child's pain bearable, but the reader feels the cruelty underneath. Joe warns Pip that she has "Ram-paged out" with Tickler, and the hyphenated verb suggests something animal and uncontrollable. Mrs Joe's constant complaint that it is bad enough to be a blacksmith's wife "(and him a Gargery) without being your mother" reveals her resentment. The parenthesis sounds like an afterthought, but it shows her contempt for her husband and her sense that she has married beneath her expectations.

Dickens uses Mrs Joe to explore social ambition and pretension. She is obsessively clean, yet Pip comments that she had an "exquisite art of making her cleanliness more uncomfortable and unacceptable than dirt itself", a paradox that shows that her housekeeping is about display rather than comfort. At the Christmas dinner she fawns over Pumblechook, whose modest success as a corn-chandler impresses her, and she is delighted when Miss Havisham sends for Pip, imagining that the

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boy's fortune will be made. In this way she anticipates Pip's own snobbery. Her desire to rise beyond the forge is a darker, harsher version of the "great expectations" that will later corrupt him, and Dickens may be suggesting that such ambition grows from dissatisfaction in the home.

Context makes her characterisation even more striking. Victorian ideology, captured in Coventry Patmore's image of "The Angel in the House", expected wives to be submissive and gentle. Mrs Joe inverts this completely: she rules Joe physically, while Joe refuses to fight back because, as he tells Pip, he saw his own father beat his mother and would rather be put upon than repeat that cruelty. Dickens thus uses the reversal of gender roles to criticise domestic violence in general, and to present Joe as a model of Christian patience. Notably, she never has a first name of her own; she is defined entirely as "Mrs Joe", as if marriage is the only identity available to her, perhaps a hint of why she is so bitter.

Structurally, Dickens transforms her after Orlick's brutal attack with a leg-iron, the very iron that Pip's convict filed off. Her punishment is shockingly violent, and it links her to the novel's themes of guilt and crime. Afterwards she is silent, gentle and patient, drawing a "T" on her slate to ask for Orlick and treating him with strange humility. Her dying words, simply "Joe", "Pardon" and "Pip", are brief and broken, but they suggest a longing for reconciliation. Joe's reluctance after her death to finish his sentence about her being "a fine figure of a" woman shows, through the unfinished line, both his loyalty and his honesty.

Overall, Dickens presents Mrs Joe as a comic monster, yet not simply a villain. She embodies the frustrations of a poor woman with no outlet for her ambition, and her late softening invites a measure of pity, reminding the reader that suffering can change even the hardest character.

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The statement is true of the young Pip, but Dickens uses marriage for far more than romantic motivation. Across Great Expectations, marriages and failed marriages become a measure of character: those based on money, status or revenge bring misery, while those founded on loyalty and love bring the novel's rare moments of happiness. In a society where marriage was still treated as a lifelong economic contract, Dickens suggests that its true value lies in kindness rather than class.

Pip's desire to marry Estella is the engine of the plot. After his first visit to Satis House, Estella's contempt for his "coarse hands" and "thick boots" makes him ashamed of the forge, and his longing to be a gentleman is inseparable from his longing to be worthy of her. When his expectations arrive, he assumes Miss Havisham intends Estella for him, so marriage becomes the reward that will complete his transformation. Dickens exposes the flaw in this fantasy: Pip's love is bound up with social climbing, and it makes him ashamed of Joe. Pip even admits that he loved her against reason and hope, which suggests desire rather than understanding.

At the centre of the novel stands a marriage that never happened. Miss Havisham, jilted by Compeyson on her wedding day, has stopped every clock at "twenty minutes to nine" and still wears her yellowing wedding dress, while the rotting wedding cake is overrun with spiders. The decaying wedding feast is a powerful Gothic symbol of a life frozen at the moment of betrayal. Her bitterness turns marriage into a weapon, as she raises Estella to break men's hearts. Her command to Pip to "Love her, love her, love her!" is chilling because the repetition sounds like a curse rather than a blessing, and her definition of love as "blind devotion,

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unquestioning self-humiliation" reveals how her experience has poisoned the idea. In Victorian society, being jilted at the altar was a public humiliation for a woman, and Dickens uses this to explore how pride turns grief into destruction.

Estella's marriage to Bentley Drummle completes Miss Havisham's revenge, but on Estella herself. She coldly tells Pip that his declarations mean nothing to her beyond "a form of words", and she chooses Drummle, a wealthy brute whom Jaggers nicknames "the Spider". The nickname links him to the spiders in the wedding cake, so Dickens structurally connects Estella's loveless marriage to Miss Havisham's ruined one. Drummle treats her cruelly, and at the time the novel was written a wife had very limited legal protection: the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 had only just made divorce possible through the courts, and it remained expensive and unequal for women. Estella's suffering therefore reflects real anxieties about women trapped in abusive marriages.

Dickens contrasts these failures with marriages built on love. Joe's first marriage to Mrs Joe is a comic but grim reversal of the expected order, with the wife as tyrant, and Joe endures it with patience because he would never repeat his own father's violence. His second marriage, to Biddy, is presented as the reward for goodness. Structurally, Dickens times it cruelly for Pip: he returns to the forge planning to propose to Biddy, only to find that she has married Joe that very day. Pip's assumption that Biddy would be waiting for him exposes his lingering arrogance, and the humbling moment is an important part of his moral growth. The birth of their son, also named Pip, symbolises a second chance and a happier version of Pip's childhood.

Minor marriages reinforce this pattern. Wemmick's comically secret wedding to Miss Skiffins, which he pretends happens by chance on a walk, shows warmth

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flourishing in private, away from the hard world of Jaggers's office. Herbert's love for Clara, whose father is a former purser, crosses class boundaries and is based entirely on affection, and Herbert's family would consider it beneath him. These quiet, unglamorous unions suggest that Dickens values sincerity over social advancement, which is the opposite of what Pip once believed.

Finally, Dickens leaves Pip himself unmarried. The revised ending, in which Pip and a "bent and broken" Estella meet in the ruins of Satis House, ends with Pip seeing "no shadow of another parting from her". The negative phrasing is deliberately ambiguous: a marriage is hinted at but never confirmed. Dickens, whose own unhappy marriage had collapsed in 1858, seems wary of presenting marriage as a simple happy ending. Instead, he suggests that it is significant only when both partners have been changed by suffering into people capable of genuine love.

21

Hawthorne presents the child Pearl as far more than a character: she is a living symbol of Hester's sin, a mystery her mother cannot fully understand, and a strangely perceptive moral force who keeps pressing the truth upon the adults around her. Through her, Hawthorne questions the harsh Puritan belief that a child born of sin must be sinful, suggesting instead that she is both punishment and blessing.

From the outset, Hawthorne makes Pearl inseparable from the scarlet letter. When she first appears, as a baby in Hester's arms on the scaffold, she is held against the embroidered "A", and later Hester dresses her in crimson and gold, so that the narrator calls her "the scarlet letter in another form; the scarlet letter endowed with life!" The semi-colon and exclamation create a sense of horrified revelation, and the phrase "endowed with life" suggests that sin, which the Puritans wished

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to fix as a static mark on Hester's breast, has instead become active and growing. Her name deepens this symbolism. Hester calls her Pearl "as being of great price", alluding to the parable in Matthew's Gospel of the pearl for which a merchant sold everything. The allusion is ironic: in Puritan Boston the child is seen as a badge of shame, yet to her mother she is the treasure for which she has paid with her reputation.

Hawthorne repeatedly describes Pearl in supernatural terms. She is called an "elf-child" and an "imp", and the narrator dwells on her wild beauty and unpredictable moods. Even Hester wonders whether she is a human child at all, asking herself what being she has brought into the world. This language reflects Puritan belief in witchcraft and the devil, and Hawthorne, whose ancestor was a judge at the Salem witch trials, is aware of how readily that society saw evil in anything it could not control. The Puritan children taunt Pearl and she responds with fierce, almost frightening anger, flinging stones and screaming at them. Her isolation is therefore partly created by the community's judgement; she becomes the outsider they imagine her to be.

Pearl's fixation on the letter is one of Hawthorne's key structural devices. As an infant she reaches for it, and later she throws wildflowers at it, each hit making Hester flinch. When Hester tells her that her Heavenly Father sent her, Pearl declares, "I have no Heavenly Father!" The exclamation is shocking in a Puritan setting, but it is also, in a sense, true, since her earthly father has not acknowledged her. In the Governor's hall, Hawthorne uses the convex breastplate of a suit of armour to reflect the scarlet letter in hugely exaggerated form, with Pearl pointing to it. The image suggests that Pearl constantly magnifies her mother's guilt, keeping it visible. When she claims she was plucked from the wild rose bush by the prison door, she ties herself to the rose that the narrator, in the opening

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chapter, offers as a symbol of nature's mercy towards the condemned.

Most significantly, Pearl acts as a conscience for Dimmesdale. During the midnight scene on the scaffold she asks him, "Wilt thou stand here with mother and me, tomorrow noontide?" The archaic second person and the specific time reveal her simple demand for public honesty, which he refuses. In the forest, when Hester removes the letter, Pearl will not cross the brook to her mother until she fastens it back on. The brook acts as a boundary between Hester's moment of freedom and the moral reality Pearl insists on. Pearl then washes off Dimmesdale's kiss in the stream, rejecting a father who loves her only in secret. Hawthorne implies that the child's instinctive sense of truth is more reliable than the elaborate concealments of the adults.

Hawthorne resolves this presentation at the climax. When Dimmesdale finally confesses on the scaffold, Pearl kisses him, and the narrator suggests that a spell has been broken, as her tears show that she will grow up as a human woman rather than a strange, half-wild spirit. This suggests that her wildness as a child was the result of the secret, not of an inherently sinful nature.

Overall, Hawthorne presents the young Pearl as a complex blend of symbol and child. Through her, he critiques the Puritan conviction that sin is passed on and fixed, showing instead that the real distortion lies in the adults' concealment and the community's cruelty.

22 Death shadows The Scarlet Letter from its first page to its final line. Hawthorne uses it not simply as an ending for characters but as a moral test: in a Puritan world that believed in sin, judgement and the afterlife, the way a character

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approaches death reveals whether they have faced the truth. For Dimmesdale death becomes release and redemption, for Chillingworth it is the empty conclusion of revenge, and for Hester it finally unites her with the man she loved.

Hawthorne establishes death as part of the colony's foundation. In the opening chapter, the narrator observes that the founders of any new colony soon set aside one portion of land for a cemetery and another for a prison. The pairing is significant: the Puritans, who came to build a godly society, quickly needed places for both the dead and the sinful, suggesting that human weakness and mortality cannot be escaped by idealism. The prison door, with its wild rose bush, stands as a threshold between punishment and mercy, and the novel ends near that same spot, in the burial ground beside it, giving the narrative a circular structure.

Death also lies beneath the community's harsh judgement of Hester. One of the women watching her on the scaffold declares that she "ought to die", insisting that there is a law for it in scripture and statute. The language reveals how the Puritans fused religious and civil authority; indeed, adultery was legally punishable by death in early Massachusetts. Hester's sentence, to wear the letter for life, is presented ironically as mercy, yet Hawthorne suggests it is a living death, a public erasure of her identity. Hawthorne's own guilt about his ancestors, one of whom judged the Salem witch trials, gives this condemnation of Puritan cruelty added personal weight.

Chillingworth turns death into a slow process. As Dimmesdale's physician, he lives in the same house and studies him closely, and the townsfolk call him a "leech", the term then used for doctors. The pun is pointed, since instead of drawing out disease he drains the minister's life. Hester accuses him of making Dimmesdale "die daily a living death", and the oxymoron captures Hawthorne's idea that hidden

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sin is itself a kind of dying. In one striking scene, Chillingworth shows Dimmesdale herbs he found growing on an unmarked grave, suggesting they sprang from a secret buried with the dead man's heart. The symbol is aimed directly at Dimmesdale: unconfessed sin, Hawthorne implies, rots inside a person and eventually forces its way out.

Dimmesdale's death is the novel's climax and its moral resolution. After his triumphant Election Sermon, he climbs the scaffold, confesses before the people and dies in Hester's arms. Chillingworth's repeated cry, "Thou hast escaped me!", shows that death has removed the minister from his power, and it frames the death as a victory rather than a defeat. Structurally, Hawthorne has delayed this confession across seven years, building tension through the three scaffold scenes, so that death and truth arrive together. Pearl's kiss at this moment breaks the spell over her, suggesting that one death can liberate others.

Death in the novel is also shaped by Puritan superstition. During the midnight scaffold scene, a meteor seems to trace a great letter in the sky, and the townspeople interpret it as "A" for "Angel", since Governor Winthrop has died that night. The same sign Dimmesdale reads as a mark of guilt is read by the community as a sign of holiness, revealing Hawthorne's interest in how people project meaning onto death. Mistress Hibbins, the Governor's sister, is later executed as a witch, which reflects real seventeenth century Boston, where a woman named Ann Hibbins was hanged for witchcraft in 1656.

Chillingworth's own death is the logical end of revenge. With no victim left, he withers and dies within a year, as though his life had been entirely sustained by hatred. Surprisingly, he leaves his fortune to Pearl, perhaps a final, ambiguous gesture of redemption. Hester's death, by contrast, is quiet. She returns to Boston

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and becomes a counsellor to troubled women, and is buried near Dimmesdale under a shared tombstone. The heraldic inscription, "On a field, sable, the letter A, gules", is the novel's final line: the black background and red letter make the "A" permanent, yet it now marks a shared grave.

Ultimately, Hawthorne presents death as the moment when concealment ends and truth is revealed. Death punishes, but it also releases and reconciles, suggesting that only beyond the rigid judgements of Puritan society can sin be fully understood.