OXFORD
INTERNATIONAL
AQA EXAMINATIONS

INTERNATIONAL GCSE
ENGLISH LITERATURE

Paper 1 Prose and drama

Tuesday 25 October 2022 07:00 GMT Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

Materials
For this paper you must have:
- an Oxford International AQA Examinations 16-page answer book.

Instructions
- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Do **not** use pencil.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book.
- Answer **one** question from **Section A** and **one** question from **Section B**.

Information
- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- There are 30 marks available for each section.
- The maximum mark for this paper is 60.

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Section A: Prose

Answer **one** question from this section on your chosen text.

Either

Charles Dickens: *Great Expectations*

0 1 In this extract Pip has just met Herbert Pocket for the first time. Herbert invites Pip to fight.

> Although he did not look very healthy – having pimples on his face, and a breaking out at his mouth – these dreadful preparations quite appalled me. I judged him to be about my own age, but he was much taller, and he had a way of spinning himself about that was full of appearance. For the rest, he was a young gentleman in a grey suit (when not denuded for battle), with his elbows, knees, wrists, and heels, considerably in advance of the rest of him as to development.
>
> My heart failed me when I saw him squaring at me with every demonstration of mechanical nicety, and eyeing my anatomy as if he were minutely choosing his bone. I have never been so surprised in my life, as when I let out the first blow, and saw him lying on his back, looking up at me with a bloody nose and his face exceedingly fore-shortened.
>
> But he was on his feet directly, and after sponging himself with a great show of dexterity, began squaring again. The second greatest surprise I have ever had in my life was seeing him on his back again, looking up at me out of a black eye.
>
> His spirit inspired me with great respect. He seemed to have no strength, and he never once hit me hard, and he was always knocked down; but, he would be up again in a moment, sponging himself or drinking out of the water bottle, with the greatest satisfaction in seconding himself according to form, and then came at me with an air and a show that made me believe he really was going to do for me at last. He got heavily bruised, for I am sorry to record that the more I hit him, the harder I hit him; but, he came up again and again and again, until at last he got a bad fall with the back of his head against the wall. Even after that crisis in our affairs, he got up and turned round and round confusedly a few times, not knowing where I was; but finally went on his knees to his sponge and threw it up: at the same time panting out, 'That means you have won.'
>
> He seemed so brave and innocent, that although I had not proposed the contest, I felt but a gloomy satisfaction in my victory.

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens presents the relationship between Pip and Herbert Pocket in *Great Expectations.*

[30 marks]

or

0 2 How does Dickens present the character of Mr Jaggers in *Great Expectations*?

[30 marks]

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or

Harper Lee: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

0 3 In this extract some of the ladies of Maycomb are visiting Aunt Alexandra.

> The ladies were cool in fragile pastel prints: most of them were heavily powdered but unrouged; the only lipstick in the room was Tangee Natural. Cutex Natural sparkled on their fingernails, but some of the younger ladies wore Rose. They smelled heavenly. I sat quietly, having conquered my hands by tightly gripping the arms of the chair, and waited for someone to speak to me.
>
> Miss Maudie's gold bridgework twinkled. 'You're mighty dressed up, Miss Jean Louise,' she said. 'Where are your britches today?'
>
> 'Under my dress.'
>
> I hadn't meant to be funny, but the ladies laughed. My cheeks grew hot as I realized my mistake, but Miss Maudie looked gravely down at me. She never laughed at me unless I meant to be funny.
>
> In the sudden silence that followed, Miss Stephanie Crawford called from across the room, 'Watcha going to be when you grow up, Jean Louise? A lawyer?'
>
> 'Nome, I hadn't thought about it…' I answered, grateful that Miss Stephanie was kind enough to change the subject. Hurriedly, I began choosing my vocation. Nurse? Aviator? 'Well…'
>
> 'Why shoot, I thought you wanted to be a lawyer, you've already commenced going to court.'
>
> The ladies laughed again. 'That Stephanie's a card,' somebody said. Miss Stephanie was encouraged to pursue the subject: 'Don't you want to grow up to be a lawyer?'
>
> Miss Maudie's hand touched mine and I answered mildly enough, 'Nome, just a lady.'

Starting with this extract, explore how Lee presents the ladies of Maycomb in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

[30 marks]

or

0 4 How does Harper Lee present Bob Ewell in *To Kill a Mockingbird*?

[30 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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or

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Purple Hibiscus*

0 5 In this extract Ifeoma has taken the children to see a traditional Igbo procession of *mmuo*, or spirits.

> Papa had driven us past the crowds at Ezi Icheke once, some years ago, and he muttered about ignorant people participating in the ritual of pagan masquerades. He said that the stories about mmuo, that they were spirits who had climbed out of ant holes, that they could make chairs run and baskets hold water, were all devilish folklore. *Devilish Folklore*. It sounded dangerous the way Papa said it.
>
> "Look at this," Papa-Nnukwu said. "This is a woman spirit, and the women *mmuo* are harmless. They do not even go near the big ones at the festival." The mmuo he pointed to was small; its carved wooden face had angular, pretty features and rouged lips. It stopped often to dance, wiggling this way and that, so that the string of beads around its waist swayed and rippled. The crowds nearby cheered, and some people threw money towards it. Little boys – the followers of the mmuo who were playing music with metal ogenes and wooden ichakas – picked up the crumpled naira notes. They had hardly passed us when Papa-Nnukwu shouted, "Look away! Women cannot look at this one!"
>
> The mmuo making its way down the road was surrounded by a few elderly men who rang a shrill bell as the mmuo walked. Its mask was a real, grimacing human skull with shrunken eye sockets. A squirming tortoise was tied to its forehead. A snake and three dead chickens hung from its grass-covered body, swinging as the mmuo walked. The crowds near the road moved back quickly, fearfully. A few women turned and dashed into nearby compounds.
>
> Aunty Ifeoma looked amused, but she turned her head away. "Don't look, girls. Let's humour your grandfather," she said in English. Amaka had already looked away. I looked away, too, toward the crowd of people that pressed around the car. It was sinful, deferring to a heathen masquerade. But at least I had looked at it very briefly, so maybe it would technically not be deferring to a heathen masquerade.

Starting with this extract, explore the ways Adichie presents the traditional Igbo religion and culture in *Purple Hibiscus*.

[30 marks]

or

0 6 How does Adichie present Jaja as a character who changes in *Purple Hibiscus*?

[30 marks]

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or

Kazuo Ishiguro: *Never Let Me Go*

0 7 In this extract Tommy is telling Kathy about his conversation with Miss Lucy after he has been teased by the other students about his drawing.

The extract from Chapter 3, pages 29-30, of *Never Let Me Go* cannot be reproduced due to third party copyright constraints.

Starting with this extract, explore how Ishiguro presents education in *Never Let Me Go*.

[30 marks]

or

0 8 'Ruth is selfish and unkind.'

How far do you agree with this view of how Ruth is presented in *Never Let Me Go*?

[30 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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or

Markus Zusak: *The Book Thief*

0 9 This extract is from the beginning of the novel when Liesel has just arrived at the Hubermanns' house.

SOME FACTS ABOUT ROSA HUBERMANN
She was five foot one inch tall and wore her
browny-grey strands of elastic hair in a bun.
To supplement the Hubermann income, she did
the washing and ironing for five
of the wealthier households in Molching.
Her cooking was atrocious.
She possessed the unique ability to aggravate
almost anyone she ever met.
But she *did* love Liesel Meminger.
Her way of showing it just happened to be strange.
It involved bashing her with wooden spoons
and words, at various intervals.

Starting with this extract, explore how Zusak presents the character of Rosa Hubermann in *The Book Thief*.

[30 marks]

or

1 0 What is the importance of the settings of place and time in *The Book Thief*?

[30 marks]

or

Oxford AQA Short Stories Anthology

1 1 In this extract from *Mrs Vadnie Marlene Sevlon* by Jackie Kay, Vadnie is thinking about her imaginary husband.

> For instance, once, years ago, on the telephone, a man who was going to be coming to fix her electric sockets said, 'Is you Miss or Mrs?' And Vadnie answered Mrs. That was twenty years ago, when she was thirty, and was still thinking that the right man might come along. He never did but Vadnie kept the Mrs anyway. She put Mrs on her bank cards and Mrs on anything she had to sign. Mrs on her direct debits and Mrs on her television licence, Mrs on her water bill and Mrs on her gas and electric. It was Mrs Vadnie Sevlon and she felt she got more respect that way. Strange thing was, after a number of years, she believed it herself. She was no longer surprised at the amount of post that arrived with her whole name on it. The Mrs by then didn't give her the thrill of the early days; she took it quite for granted. So might she look back on the electric man and call that fate or luck or God? Did God want her to call herself Mrs to keep herself safe from men of disrepute? When people asked her what her husband did, she would tell them he was an electrician. She would picture him vividly, combining features of the electrician with the features of a man she once sat next to on a bus to the Lake District. She made a kind of composite husband out of the two, took the hair from one and gave it to the other so he wasn't balding, just receding, took two inches of height from one and gave it to her husband, made his skin a rich dark brown.

Starting with this extract, explore how isolation and loneliness are presented in the Oxford AQA Short Stories Anthology.

Write about *Mrs Vadnie Marlene Sevlon* and **one** other story from the Oxford AQA Anthology.

[30 marks]

or

1 2 Explore the ways changing relationships are presented in *Through the Tunnel* and **one** other story from the Oxford AQA Anthology.

[30 marks]

Turn over for Section B

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Section B: Drama

Answer **one** question from this section on your chosen text.

Either

William Shakespeare: *Julius Caesar*

1 3 In this extract Brutus is considering the reasons why Caesar must die.

BRUTUS It must be by his death. And for my part
I know no personal cause to spurn at him
But for the general. He would be crowned:
How that might change his nature, there's the question.
It is the bright day that brings forth the adder
And that craves wary walking. Crown him that,
And then I grant we put a sting in him
That at his will he may do danger with.
Th'abuse of greatness is when it disjoins
Remorse from power. And to speak truth of Caesar,
I have not known when his affections swayed
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may.
Then lest he may, prevent. And since the quarrel
Will bear no colour for the thing he is,
Fashion it thus: that what he is, augmented,
Would run to these and these extremities.
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
(Which, hatch'd, would as his kind grow mischievous)
And kill him in the shell.

Starting with this extract, explore how Shakespeare presents ideas about power in *Julius Caesar*.

[30 marks]

or

1 4 How does Shakespeare present different conflicts in *Julius Caesar*?

[30 marks]

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or

William Shakespeare: *Macbeth*

1 5 In this extract Macbeth meets Banquo in the courtyard of his castle on the night of Duncan's murder.

BANQUO Who's there?

MACBETH A friend.

BANQUO What sir, not yet at rest? The king's abed.
He hath been in unusual pleasure
And sent forth great largess to your offices.
This diamond he greets your wife withal,

[*Gives* MACBETH *a diamond*]

By the name of most kind hostess, and shut up
In measureless content.

MACBETH Being unprepared,
Our will became the servant to defect,
Which else should free have wrought.

BANQUO All's well.
I dreamed last night of the three weird sisters;
To you they have showed some truth.

MACBETH I think not of them;
Yet when we can entreat an hour to serve,
We would spend it in some words upon that business,
If you would grant the time.

BANQUO At your kind'st leisure.

MACBETH If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,
It shall make honour for you.

BANQUO So I lose none
In seeking to augment it, but still keep
My bosom franchised and allegiance clear,
I shall be counselled.

Starting with this extract, explore how Shakespeare presents the changing relationship between Macbeth and Banquo in *Macbeth*.

[30 marks]

or

1 6 'The witches are completely to blame for Macbeth's downfall.'

How far do you agree with this view?

[30 marks]

Turn over ►

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or

JB Priestley: *An Inspector Calls*

1 7 In this extract Gerald is telling the Inspector and the Birling family about his relationship with Eva Smith, whom he knew as Daisy Renton.

SHEILA: *Were* you in love with her, Gerald?

GERALD [*hesitatingly*]**:** It's hard to say. I didn't feel about her as she felt about me.

SHEILA [*with sharp sarcasm*]**:** Of course not. You were the wonderful Fairy Prince. You must have adored it, Gerald.

GERALD: All right – I did for a time. Nearly all men would have done.

SHEILA: That's probably about the best thing you've said tonight. At least it's honest. Did you go and see her every night?

GERALD: No. I wasn't telling a complete lie when I said I'd been very busy at the works all that time. We were very busy. But of course I did see a good deal of her.

MRS BIRLING: I don't think we want any further details of this disgusting affair –

SHEILA: [*cutting in*] I do. And anyhow, we haven't had any details yet.

GERALD: And you're not going to have any. (To MRS BIRLING) You know, it wasn't disgusting.

MRS BIRLING: It's disgusting to me.

SHEILA: Yes, but after all, you didn't come into this, did you, Mother?

GERALD: Is there anything else you want to know – that you ought to know?

INSPECTOR: Yes. When did this affair end?

GERALD: I can tell you exactly. In the first week of September. I had to go away for several weeks then – on business – and by that time Daisy knew it was coming to an end. So I broke it off definitely before I went.

Starting with this extract, explore how Priestley presents Gerald's attitudes to women in *An Inspector Calls*.

[30 marks]

or

1 8 How does Priestley present Sheila as a character who changes in *An Inspector Calls*?

[30 marks]

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or

Arthur Miller: *The Crucible*

1 9 In this extract Hale is questioning John and Elizabeth Proctor about witches.

HALE [*quietly – it has impressed him*]: Proctor, let you open with me now, for I have a rumour that troubles me. It's said that you hold no belief that there may even be witches in the world. Is that true, sir?

PROCTOR: [*he knows this is critical, and is striving against his disgust with* HALE *and with himself for even answering*]: I know not what I have said, I may have said it. I have wondered if there be witches in the world – although I cannot believe they come among us now.

HALE: Then you do not believe –

PROCTOR: I have no knowledge of it; the Bible speaks of witches, and I will not deny them.

HALE: And you, woman?

ELIZABETH: I – I cannot believe it.

HALE [*shocked*]: You cannot!

PROCTOR: Elizabeth, you bewilder him!

ELIZABETH [*to* HALE]: I cannot think the Devil may own a woman's soul, Mr Hale, when she keeps an upright way, as I have. I am a good woman, I know it; and if you believe I may do only good work in the world, and yet be secretly bound to Satan, then I must tell you, sir, I do not believe it.

HALE: But, woman, you do believe there are witches in –

ELIZABETH: If you think that I am one, then I say there are none.

Starting with this extract, explore the ways Miller presents different attitudes to witchcraft in *The Crucible*.

[30 marks]

or

2 0 How does Miller present the relationship between John Proctor and Abigail Williams in *The Crucible*?

[30 marks]

Turn over ►

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or

Lorraine Hansberry: *A Raisin in the Sun*

2 1 This extract is the ending of the play.

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How do you respond to this extract as an ending to the play?

[30 marks]

or

2 2 How does Hansberry present the relationship between Walter and Ruth in *A Raisin in the Sun*?

[30 marks]

END OF QUESTIONS

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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

01

Dickens presents the relationship between Pip and Herbert Pocket as the one truly generous friendship in Great Expectations, a bond that begins in comic absurdity and grows into a moral education for Pip. Herbert's cheerful, unworldly goodness becomes a measure against which Pip's snobbery and self-interest are judged, and through their friendship Dickens suggests that real gentility is a matter of kindness and loyalty rather than money or manners.

In the extract the relationship begins with a ridiculous mismatch. Herbert's "dreadful preparations" for the fight "quite appalled" Pip, yet the older narrator's description quickly deflates the threat. Herbert's "elbows, knees, wrists, and heels" are "considerably in advance of the rest of him as to development", a comic list that makes him a gangly boy playing at manhood. Dickens's mock-heroic language reinforces this: Herbert squares up "with every demonstration of mechanical nicety" and eyes Pip's "anatomy as if he were minutely choosing his bone". The pompous, Latinate phrasing parodies the gentlemanly code of boxing, and the humour suggests that Herbert's attachment to "form" is more about appearance than strength, a quality hinted at in his "way of spinning himself about that was full of appearance".

Yet what emerges from the comedy is respect. The structure of the fight is repetitive: Herbert is knocked down, then "on his feet directly", then down "again", and the tricolon "again and again and again" turns slapstick into something almost admirable. Pip admits that "His spirit inspired me with great respect", and the narrator's confession, "I am sorry to record that the more I hit him, the harder I hit him", carries the guilt of the mature Pip looking back on his own capacity for

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violence. Herbert's surrender is strikingly gracious. Even dazed, he throws up the sponge and pants, "That means you have won", accepting defeat with good humour. Pip's response, that Herbert seemed "so brave and innocent" and that he felt "but a gloomy satisfaction", foreshadows the whole relationship: Herbert's innocence will repeatedly make Pip feel the hollowness of his own victories.

When the two meet again at Barnard's Inn, Dickens develops this into friendship. Herbert recognises Pip as the boy who beat him and laughs about it, showing a lack of resentment that contrasts with the bitterness that rules Satis House. He renames Pip "Handel", which symbolically gives him a new identity as a London gentleman, and he gently corrects his table manners without ever humiliating him. This is significant because Pip has been mocked for his "coarse hands" by Estella; Herbert teaches him the codes of the class he wants to enter, but with tact and warmth. In a Victorian society obsessed with rank, Dickens shows that Herbert, a true gentleman by birth, values Pip for himself.

However, Dickens also uses Herbert to expose Pip's faults. Pip's extravagance draws his friend into debt, and the narrator acknowledges that his money did Herbert harm. Herbert, by contrast, is poor but hopeful, constantly "looking about" him for an opening in business, and his optimism is gently comic but never selfish. Pip's one wholly good action with his fortune is to secretly buy Herbert a place in Clarriker's firm with Wemmick's help. It is telling that Pip's most unselfish deed is done for Herbert, and done anonymously, mirroring the secret benefactor who has paid for Pip. The relationship therefore helps to redeem Pip morally before he understands the truth about Magwitch.

As the plot darkens, the friendship becomes one of mutual care. When Magwitch returns, Herbert does not reject Pip or the convict, but helps plan the escape down

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the river. After Pip's hands are burned rescuing Miss Havisham, Herbert dresses them and nurses him, a reversal of the extract in which Pip's fists injured Herbert. Dickens's structure thus moves from physical conflict to physical tenderness, suggesting how far both characters have travelled.

Finally, Herbert offers Pip a future. After Pip loses his expectations, he goes abroad to work as a clerk for Herbert's firm, living with Herbert and Clara, and eventually becomes a partner. The boy who was once knocked down repeatedly ends up giving Pip the honest work and home he needs. Dickens perhaps intends Herbert as a model of the Victorian virtue of steady, self-improving labour, in contrast to the "great expectations" of unearned wealth.

Overall, the extract's mixture of comedy and respect captures the essence of their relationship. Herbert's bravery, innocence and refusal to bear grudges make him the novel's moral touchstone, and Pip's growing gratitude towards him charts his own journey from snobbery to humility. Through this friendship, Dickens suggests that the qualities that make a true gentleman are loyalty, generosity and goodness of heart.

02 Dickens presents Mr Jaggers as the embodiment of the law in Great Expectations: powerful, intimidating and apparently without feeling, a man who deals in evidence rather than emotion. Yet Dickens gradually reveals that beneath his ruthless professional surface lies a buried conscience, so that Jaggers becomes both a critique of a corrupt Victorian legal system and a surprising agent of mercy.

From his first appearance, Jaggers is defined by power and menace. Pip meets him on the stairs at Satis House as a "burly man" with a large head and deep-set,

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suspicious eyes, and Jaggers, without knowing him, warns him sternly to behave himself, as if boys were guilty by nature. His habit of biting his large forefinger and then pointing it at people becomes his signature gesture. Dickens repeats this detail throughout the novel, turning the finger into a symbol of accusation, as if every person he meets is a witness in the dock. When he arrives at the Jolly Bargemen, he dismantles Mr Wopsle's theatrical reading of a murder case by cross-examining him, exposing his ignorance in front of the village. The scene is comic, but it also shows how Jaggers dominates any room through language, reducing others to silence.

Dickens develops this sense of control through Jaggers's refusal to commit himself. When he announces Pip's "great expectations", he insists on rules and conditions, and he repeatedly warns Pip not to ask who his benefactor is. His speech is clipped, legalistic and full of qualifications, as though he is always protecting himself from being held responsible. His central principle, "Take nothing on its looks; take everything on evidence", is ironic, because Pip does exactly the opposite, assuming from appearances that Miss Havisham is his benefactor. Dickens uses Jaggers to highlight the gap between what seems true and what is true, one of the novel's key ideas.

The setting of his office in Little Britain deepens this presentation. It stands near Newgate prison and Smithfield, and Pip finds it oppressive, with the two dreadful plaster casts of hanged men's faces staring from the shelf. These casts link Jaggers directly to death and punishment. Outside, desperate clients wait for him, and he treats them with contempt, refusing to hear anyone who has not paid Wemmick. Dickens suggests that the law is a business in which justice is bought, and his readers, aware of the brutality of Victorian courts and public executions, would recognise the satire.

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One of the most memorable details is that Jaggers washes his hands with scented soap after seeing clients, as if scrubbing away their guilt. This ritual recalls Pontius Pilate, who washed his hands of responsibility, and it suggests that Jaggers tries to keep himself morally clean while profiting from crime. Yet the very need to wash hints that his work does stain him. In this way Dickens subtly implies that Jaggers is not as untouched as he pretends.

Jaggers's power over people is shown most disturbingly through his housekeeper, Molly. At his dinner party he forces her to display her scarred, unusually strong wrists, treating her like a tamed "wild beast". He enjoys the brutish Bentley Drummle, calling him "the Spider", perhaps because he recognises Drummle's predatory nature. These moments make Jaggers seem cold and manipulative, a man who sees people as cases to be handled.

However, the structure of the novel slowly reveals another side. We learn that Jaggers defended Molly against a charge of murder and arranged for her daughter, Estella, to be adopted by Miss Havisham. In his "put the case" speech to Pip, he describes the many children he has seen born into crime, neglected and destined for the gallows, and explains that he wanted to save one of them. This hypothetical, legalistic phrasing allows him to admit to compassion without confessing it directly. Dickens presents a man who has hardened himself to survive in a cruel system, but who once acted out of genuine humanity. His surprise on discovering that Wemmick has a private, affectionate life at Walworth further suggests that Jaggers has sacrificed his own capacity for warmth.

Ultimately, Dickens presents Jaggers as a complex figure. He is a frightening symbol of the law's coldness and the commercial nature of Victorian justice, yet he

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also helps to expose the novel's secrets and protect the vulnerable. Through him, Dickens suggests that institutions can harden even good instincts, and that the truth about people, like evidence, is rarely found on the surface.

03 Lee presents the ladies of Maycomb as polished guardians of a Southern ideal of femininity, whose sweetness and refinement often mask narrow-mindedness, gossip and racial hypocrisy. Seen through the eyes of Scout, who struggles to fit into their world, they become a way for Lee to question what it really means to be a "lady", and the novel ultimately suggests that true ladylike behaviour lies in courage and kindness rather than appearance.

The extract opens with a description that is almost entirely surface. The ladies are "cool in fragile pastel prints", "heavily powdered", and the brand names "Tangee Natural" and "Cutex Natural" give the scene a precise, almost catalogue-like quality. The repetition of "Natural" is ironic, since this is a carefully constructed artificial beauty. The adjective "fragile" suggests delicacy, perhaps hinting that their world is fragile too, and that their gentility could crack under pressure. Scout's flat comment that "They smelled heavenly" captures a child's simple admiration, yet the religious connotations are pointed, because these are members of a missionary circle whose Christianity, as the chapter reveals, is selective.

Lee contrasts this softness with Scout's discomfort. She has "conquered" her hands "by tightly gripping the arms of the chair", a military verb which shows that being ladylike is a battle for her. When Miss Maudie asks "Where are your britches today?", Scout's literal answer, "Under my dress", is a comic moment that makes the ladies laugh. Her "cheeks grew hot", and Lee shows how laughter becomes a form of social pressure, reminding Scout that she does not belong. Throughout the

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novel, Aunt Alexandra has insisted that Scout cannot become a lady while wearing breeches, so the trousers hidden under the dress neatly symbolise Scout's true identity concealed beneath an imposed role.

Not all the ladies are the same, however. Miss Stephanie Crawford, the town gossip, mocks Scout for having "commenced going to court", a barbed reference to the children's presence at Tom Robinson's trial. The ladies laugh again, and the throwaway remark "That Stephanie's a card" shows how cruelty is excused as wit in this society. By contrast, Miss Maudie "looked gravely down" and "never laughed at me unless I meant to be funny". Her touch on Scout's hand is a quiet act of solidarity, and it prompts Scout's reply, "Nome, just a lady". The answer is ambiguous: it may be a polite deflection, but it also hints that Scout is beginning to imagine a version of ladyhood shaped by women like Maudie rather than Miss Stephanie.

As the chapter continues, Lee exposes the ladies' hypocrisy more sharply. Mrs Merriweather speaks movingly about the suffering of the Mrunas in Africa, yet minutes later complains about the black servants in Maycomb who have been resentful since the trial. Lee's structure places compassion for distant strangers beside contempt for neighbours, revealing the moral blindness of a white Southern community in the 1930s that preached charity while upholding segregation. Miss Maudie's sharp rebuke of Mrs Merriweather shows that she alone is willing to challenge this. Much earlier, Scout notices a similar hypocrisy in her teacher, Miss Gates, who condemns Hitler's persecution of the Jews but was heard speaking of black people with contempt after the trial, so Lee suggests that this double standard runs through the town's respectable women.

The most powerful moment comes when Atticus brings news of Tom Robinson's

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death. Aunt Alexandra, usually so rigid, is shaken, and Miss Maudie speaks of the few people in Maycomb who believe in fair play for everyone. Yet both women return to the tea party and carry on serving the guests. Scout concludes, "if Aunty could be a lady at a time like this, so could I". Here Lee reshapes the idea of being a lady: it is no longer about powder and pastel dresses but about the dignity and self-control to endure grief without breaking. This links back to Mrs Dubose, whom Atticus calls the bravest person he knew because she fought her addiction, showing that courage can exist beneath an unpleasant exterior.

Overall, Lee presents the ladies of Maycomb with a mixture of gentle humour and sharp criticism. Most are shallow, gossiping and complicit in racism, but through Miss Maudie, Aunt Alexandra in her moment of grief and Mrs Dubose, she suggests that some women embody a deeper moral strength. Scout's reluctant journey into this world shows her learning to distinguish between empty respectability and genuine goodness.

04 Harper Lee presents Bob Ewell as the novel's clearest embodiment of ignorance, cruelty and racial hatred: a man with no social standing whose only power comes from the colour of his skin. He functions as the antagonist of the plot, but he is also a symbol of everything that is rotten in Maycomb's social order, and Lee uses him to show how prejudice protects the worst people while destroying the innocent.

Before Bob Ewell even appears, Lee establishes him through setting and reputation. Scout explains that the Ewells have been "the disgrace of Maycomb" for generations, and Atticus notes that the authorities let them hunt out of season because the children would otherwise starve. Bob spends his relief cheques

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on whiskey while his children go hungry, so from the start Lee presents him as a neglectful father. The family's cabin behind the town dump, patched with scavenged rubbish, is a powerful image of moral as well as physical squalor. Yet Lee places one detail of beauty there, a row of red geraniums that Mayella tends, which suggests that Bob's daughter longs for something better than the life he has given her.

In the courtroom, Lee uses Scout's narration to make Bob both ridiculous and repulsive. She compares him to a "little bantam cock", an image of a small, strutting rooster that captures his self-importance. He plays to the gallery, uses crude language that shocks the court, and treats the trial as a performance. Scout observes that the only advantage he had over his poorest neighbours was that his skin was white once scrubbed, a bitterly ironic remark that exposes how Maycomb's racial hierarchy places even the lowest white man above a hardworking, decent black man like Tom Robinson. In the context of 1930s Alabama, where Jim Crow laws enforced segregation and black men accused by white women could not expect a fair trial, Bob's word is more powerful than the truth.

Lee's courtroom structure gradually strips Bob of credibility. Atticus's quiet questioning reveals that no doctor was called, and the simple act of asking Bob to write his name exposes that he is left-handed, consistent with the bruises on the right side of Mayella's face. This moment of dramatic irony allows the reader, and the jury, to see that Bob is the likely abuser. Mayella's own testimony, with its fear and hesitation, implies that he beats her and perhaps worse. Lee therefore presents Bob not only as a liar but as a man who sacrifices Tom to cover his own violence and his daughter's "crime" of desiring a black man.

After the trial, Bob's humiliation turns into revenge. He spits in Atticus's face at

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the post office and threatens him, but Atticus refuses to retaliate, explaining that he would rather Bob take out his anger on him than on Mayella's houseful of children. This contrast between Atticus's restraint and Bob's aggression reinforces Lee's moral framework: courage is shown through self-control, not violence. Bob's campaign continues as he harasses Tom's widow Helen and lurks around Judge Taylor's house. He even loses his WPA job, apparently the only man Scout has heard of to be fired from it for laziness during the Depression, which emphasises that his failures are of his own making, though he blames others.

The climax of Bob's presentation comes when he attacks Jem and Scout on Halloween night. Lee builds tension through Scout's limited perspective: trapped in her ham costume, she can only hear the shuffling footsteps and feel the struggle in the dark. Choosing to attack children shows the depth of Bob's cowardice, and links him to the novel's central symbol, since he tries to destroy innocence, the very thing a mockingbird represents. It is deeply significant that Boo Radley, the town's feared outsider, kills him to protect the children. Lee reverses the expectations of the opening chapters: the "monster" is the respectable white citizen, and the supposed phantom is the guardian.

Heck Tate's decision to say that Bob "fell on his knife" and to let the dead bury the dead brings a kind of rough justice that the courtroom could not deliver. Some readers find this troubling, as it bends the law, but Lee seems to suggest that Maycomb's legal system failed Tom so completely that a moral justice outside it is the only answer.

Overall, Lee presents Bob Ewell as a vile and pitiful figure, made dangerous by a society that values his whiteness over another man's goodness. Through him, she exposes the cruelty of racism and the way it protects the guilty, while also

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showing, through Atticus and Boo, the moral courage needed to resist it.

05 Adichie presents traditional Igbo religion and culture as vibrant, communal and rooted in the land, but also as something under threat in post-colonial Nigeria, condemned by Papa's rigid colonial Catholicism. Through Kambili's gradually changing perspective, the novel suggests that Igbo tradition and Christian faith need not be enemies, and that the real danger lies in an intolerant religion that teaches people to despise their own heritage.

The extract begins by filtering the festival through Papa's voice. Kambili remembers how he "muttered about ignorant people" and dismissed the mmuo stories as "devilish folklore". The repetition of "Devilish Folklore" as a separate, capitalised sentence shows how deeply his words have lodged in her mind, and her comment that "It sounded dangerous the way Papa said it" reveals that her fear comes from Papa's tone rather than from anything she has seen. Adichie suggests that Kambili's view of her own culture has been shaped by fear and repetition, much as her whole life is governed by Papa's schedules and punishments.

In contrast, Papa-Nnukwu presents the procession with affection and authority. He guides the children with knowledge, explaining that "the women mmuo are harmless". Adichie's description of the female spirit is full of movement and pleasure: it stops "often to dance, wiggling this way and that", with beads that "swayed and rippled". The sibilant, rhythmic verbs make the procession feel joyful rather than demonic, and the image of the crowds cheering and throwing money shows that this is a shared communal celebration. Adichie also uses Igbo words such as "ogenes" and "ichakas" without translation, placing the reader inside the culture rather than viewing it as foreign. This choice resists the colonial

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assumption that Igbo life must be explained in English terms.

The second mmuo creates a different effect. Its mask is "a real, grimacing human skull with shrunken eye sockets", and the "squirming tortoise" and "three dead chickens" create a grotesque, powerful image. The crowd moves back "quickly, fearfully", which shows that this tradition commands genuine awe and respect. Adichie does not romanticise Igbo religion; it contains real power and danger, just as Catholicism in the novel contains both beauty and terror. Papa-Nnukwu's command "Women cannot look at this one!" shows that the tradition also has its own gender rules, and some readers may see a parallel with the patriarchal control Kambili experiences at home.

The ending of the extract is gently comic but revealing. Aunty Ifeoma is "amused" and tells the girls to "humour your grandfather", speaking "in English", perhaps so that he will not understand. Her tone shows a relaxed, respectful balance between her Catholic faith and her father's beliefs. Kambili, however, is torn. She thinks it "sinful" to defer to "a heathen masquerade", then convinces herself that because she looked briefly it would "technically" not count. The legalistic word "technically" exposes the absurd logic of the fear Papa has drilled into her, and the reader senses that her rigid categories are starting to crack.

Across the novel, Adichie develops this conflict through Papa-Nnukwu. Papa refuses to let his children spend more than a short time in their grandfather's house and calls him a heathen, even though he is his own father. When Kambili stays in Nsukka, she secretly watches Papa-Nnukwu's morning prayer to his gods. He thanks Chukwu and asks for blessings on all his children, including Eugene, the son who rejects him. Kambili is struck that he prays for good things for the man who treats him so cruelly, and this moment of generosity contrasts sharply with

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Papa's harsh piety. Ifeoma's insistence that her father is a traditionalist rather than a heathen captures Adichie's argument that Igbo religion deserves respect.

The painting Amaka makes of Papa-Nnukwu becomes a symbol of this inheritance. When Papa discovers Kambili and Jaja with it, he beats Kambili so severely that she is hospitalised. Adichie's structure makes the destruction of the painting a turning point: Papa's attack on an image of Igbo tradition is also an attack on his own children's identity. Meanwhile, Father Amadi blends faith with Igbo culture, singing Igbo hymns and playing football with local boys, which shows that Christianity can be inclusive rather than colonising.

The novel's opening line, "Things started to fall apart at home", deliberately echoes Achebe's Things Fall Apart, linking Kambili's family to the wider story of how colonialism disrupted Igbo society. Through the mmuo festival, Papa-Nnukwu's prayers and Amaka's art, Adichie presents traditional Igbo culture as a source of joy, wisdom and identity, and suggests that Kambili's freedom depends on learning to see it without Papa's fear.

06 Adichie presents Jaja as a character who changes from a silent, obedient son into a defiant young man who openly challenges his father's authority. However, his transformation is not a simple triumph. By the end of Purple Hibiscus his rebellion has cost him his freedom and much of his innocence, so Adichie presents change as both liberating and painful, mirroring Nigeria's own uncertain struggle for freedom.

At the start of the novel, Jaja's change is announced through the structure. The opening line, "Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not

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go to communion", places his defiance on Palm Sunday at the very beginning, before Adichie flashes back to show the life that produced it. This non-linear structure invites the reader to ask how such an obedient boy could reach this point. When Papa demands an explanation, Jaja calmly says that the wafer gives him bad breath, and his refusal to back down makes Papa throw his heavy missal, breaking Mama's figurines. The symbolism is clear: Jaja's resistance shatters the fragile order of the household.

In the flashback, Jaja is presented as trapped by fear. Like Kambili, he follows Papa's schedules and speaks in careful, formal phrases, and the siblings communicate with their eyes rather than their voices, showing how silence has become their only safe language. Adichie also reveals that Papa once mangled the little finger of Jaja's left hand as a punishment for getting questions wrong in his catechism. His deformed finger becomes a physical sign of his father's violence, a lasting mark of the control that shapes him.

The visit to Aunty Ifeoma's flat in Nsukka is the catalyst for his change. There, Jaja sees his cousin Obiora treated as the man of the house and encouraged to think and argue, and he begins to feel ashamed of his own powerlessness. He helps in the garden and becomes fascinated by Ifeoma's purple hibiscus, which are rare and experimental. Adichie develops this into the novel's central symbol. Kambili later describes Jaja's defiance as being like the purple hibiscus, "rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom". The image suggests that his rebellion is beautiful and natural, something grown rather than forced, in contrast to the red hibiscus that bloom in Papa's controlled compound. Ifeoma also tells him about his namesake, Jaja of Opobo, the king who defied the British, which links his personal rebellion to an anti-colonial tradition of resistance.

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When the children return home, Jaja brings hibiscus stalks to plant, and his growing confidence becomes visible. He begins to refuse Papa's demands, locks himself away in his room rather than obey and insists on returning to Nsukka. His language becomes more direct, and the dynamic between father and son shifts: Papa seems less certain how to control him. Adichie suggests that Papa's authority depended on fear, and once Jaja stops being afraid, the power of the household begins to collapse.

However, Adichie complicates any idea of simple liberation. When Mama reveals that she has poisoned Papa, Jaja immediately confesses to the murder himself. This sacrifice shows how much he has changed, since he now acts to protect his mother and sister, perhaps to make up for the guilt he feels about failing to protect them before. He tells Kambili that he should have done something about Papa, and this sense of responsibility drives his decision. Yet the consequence is imprisonment. In the final section, set nearly three years later, Kambili notices how prison has changed him, suggesting he has become harder and more withdrawn. The defiant boy of Palm Sunday has become a man scarred by prison, which suggests that the freedom he found has been bought at a high price.

Adichie's ending, however, is cautiously hopeful. Kambili plans to take Jaja to Nsukka then to visit Aunty Ifeoma in America and to plant orange trees, and she imagines new rains coming soon. The image of rain suggests renewal and growth, linking back to the hibiscus. Jaja's change has broken the cycle of Papa's tyranny, even if he himself is wounded by it.

Overall, Adichie presents Jaja's transformation as a journey from fear to courage. His rebellion, symbolised by the purple hibiscus, frees the family from Papa's domination, but the suffering he endures reflects the costs of resisting oppression,

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both in the home and in a Nigeria ruled by military violence. Through Jaja, Adichie suggests that freedom is precious precisely because it is so hard to win.

07 Ishiguro presents education in Never Let Me Go as something deeply ambiguous: Hailsham appears to offer a privileged, nurturing schooling, yet its lessons are carefully designed to keep the students from understanding their own fate. Through Tommy's conversation with Miss Lucy, and through the novel as a whole, Ishiguro suggests that education can be both a gift and a form of control, and he asks what learning is for when a life has already been decided.

In this extract, Tommy's account of Miss Lucy marks the first crack in Hailsham's official system of education. The school places enormous value on creativity, rewarding the students with tokens at the Exchanges and choosing the best work for Madame's mysterious Gallery. Tommy, who cannot draw well, has been mocked and has responded with violent tantrums. Miss Lucy, however, tells him that it does not matter if he is not creative, and that it is perfectly all right not to be. For Tommy this is a revelation, but for the reader it is unsettling. A teacher telling a child that the subject everyone values most is unimportant suggests that she knows something the system is hiding. Ishiguro uses Tommy's reported speech, filtered through Kathy's narration, to create layers of uncertainty: we hear Miss Lucy's words second hand, and Kathy herself is unsure what they mean.

Ishiguro's narrative method makes the extract feel like a puzzle. Kathy, looking back as an adult carer, repeatedly signals that she did not grasp the significance of things at the time, and her hesitant, conversational voice draws the reader into the same state of partial knowledge as the children. Tommy's impression that Miss Lucy was shaking suggests that her emotion is directed not at him, but at the

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institution itself. This is the first hint that some of the guardians are troubled by what they are doing.

That idea is developed later in the novel through Miss Lucy's outburst at the pavilion, when she tells the students that the problem is that they have "been told and not told". This paradox captures Ishiguro's presentation of education at Hailsham perfectly. The students learn about donations and completing, but always just before they are old enough to understand, so that the knowledge settles in without its full horror. Miss Lucy goes on to state plainly that none of them will have ordinary futures and that their lives have been set out for them. Ishiguro's structure is significant here: this blunt truth is surrounded by the students' gossip and confusion, and Kathy admits that her classmates reacted with surprisingly little shock. Education has worked so effectively that the truth no longer disturbs them.

Hailsham's curriculum also includes subtle forms of conditioning. The guardians give lessons warning the students that smoking is far worse for them than for others, and sex education emphasises that they cannot have children. The students are even given role-play lessons in ordinary tasks such as ordering in a café, as if rehearsing a world they will never really enter. Ishiguro presents these details in Kathy's calm, matter-of-fact tone, and it is precisely this lack of protest that unsettles the reader. Education here seems designed to produce compliant, contented young people who accept their purpose.

The ending reveals the purpose behind Hailsham's emphasis on art. Miss Emily explains to Kathy and Tommy that the Gallery existed to prove that the students had souls at all, and that Hailsham was an experiment in humane treatment within a cruel system. She believes the guardians gave them their childhoods by

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sheltering them from the truth. Ishiguro leaves the reader to judge whether this was kindness or a deeper betrayal. Miss Lucy's approach, telling the truth, seems more honest, yet she is dismissed for it. Tommy's furious screaming in the dark after the meeting with Madame recalls his childhood tantrums, suggesting that, in the end, no education could prepare him for his fate.

Overall, Ishiguro presents education as both precious and manipulative. Hailsham gives the students art, literature and friendship, and Kathy treasures these memories. Yet its lessons conceal more than they reveal, ensuring that the students never truly rebel. Through Miss Lucy's quiet words to Tommy, Ishiguro raises a disturbing question about whether education that hides the truth can ever truly be called education at all.

08 For much of Never Let Me Go, Ruth is presented as selfish and unkind: she manipulates her friends, lies to protect her image and deliberately keeps Kathy and Tommy apart. However, I would only partly agree with the view. Ishiguro, filtering her through Kathy's memory, presents Ruth's cruelty as a product of deep insecurity in a world that denies the students any real identity or future, and her final act of repentance suggests that she is more tragic than villainous.

From the Hailsham chapters, Ruth emerges as a controlling leader. She runs the imaginary game of horses and organises the "secret guard" to protect Miss Geraldine, deciding who is allowed to join and who is excluded. These games show her desire for power, but also her need to create a world of significance in a school where the students have so little control. Kathy's narration is revealing: she notes how Ruth would invent stories and expect everyone to go along with them. Ishiguro suggests that Ruth's selfishness is partly a way of feeling special.

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The episode of the pencil case is a good example of this complexity. Ruth hints that it was a gift from Miss Geraldine, which would break Hailsham's rules and mark her as a favourite. Kathy, knowing it came from the Sales, almost exposes her. Ruth's lie is selfish, a bid for status, yet Kathy's reflection on her own behaviour is surprisingly guilty, and she later regrets humiliating her friend. Ishiguro thus prevents us from seeing Ruth simply as unkind, because Kathy, our narrator, is not entirely innocent either.

At the Cottages, Ruth's insecurity becomes more obvious. She copies the veterans' mannerisms, such as the gesture of tapping a partner on the arm when saying goodbye, which Kathy recognises as borrowed from television. When Kathy points this out, Ruth is hurt and lashes out, revealing how desperate she is to seem sophisticated. Her most unkind act during this period is when she mocks Tommy's drawings of imaginary animals in front of others and implies that Kathy also finds them ridiculous. This cruelty damages both of her friends, and it shows how Ruth uses intimate knowledge as a weapon.

The trip to Norfolk shows Ruth at her most vulnerable. The search for her "possible", the woman she might have been modelled on, reveals her longing for a better origin and an ordinary life working in an office. When the woman turns out not to resemble her, Ruth bitterly claims that the students are "modelled from trash". Her anger is ugly, but Ishiguro makes the reader understand it: her dream of a meaningful identity has been crushed. Here, unkindness seems less a fixed trait than a reaction to despair, which reflects the novel's wider interest in what it means to be human when society treats you as disposable.

Most damning, however, is Ruth's relationship with Tommy. She takes him as her

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boyfriend and quietly discourages Kathy from imagining any future with him, even suggesting that Tommy would not be interested in her because of the boys she had been with. This is a calculated, selfish act, and its consequences are serious, because Kathy and Tommy lose years they could have spent together.

Nevertheless, the ending strongly complicates the statement. After her donations have begun, Ruth asks Kathy and Tommy to go with her to see a stranded boat, a symbol of the students' stranded lives. There she admits that she kept them apart, and calls it the worst thing she did. She gives them Madame's address so that they can apply for a deferral, and tells them they should have been together. This act of confession is brave and generous, and it suggests that Ruth recognises her own selfishness. Her death after her second donation, with Kathy as her carer, makes this reconciliation especially poignant.

Overall, I agree that Ruth is often selfish and unkind, particularly in her treatment of Kathy and Tommy. Yet Ishiguro uses Kathy's gentle, forgiving narration to show that Ruth's flaws grow from fear, jealousy and a desperate need to belong. By the end, her attempt to give her friends a future she could not have herself turns her into one of the novel's most human characters. Ruth is not simply selfish, but a damaged person who, too late, tries to put things right.

09 Zusak presents Rosa Hubermann as a woman whose love is hidden inside a hard, abrasive shell. Death's narration invites us at first to laugh at her, even to dislike her, but the novel is structured so that both Liesel and the reader slowly learn to read past her harsh words. Rosa becomes one of the clearest examples of Zusak's belief that goodness in Nazi Germany often looked ordinary, rough and unheroic.

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The extract introduces Rosa through a bold heading, "SOME FACTS ABOUT ROSA HUBERMANN", one of Death's interruptions to the narrative. The format is almost like a file or a list of evidence, and this detached presentation is revealing. Death simply sets out facts without judging them, so the positive and negative qualities sit side by side: "Her cooking was atrocious" is placed as flatly as the fact that she works for "five / of the wealthier households in Molching". The blunt adjective "atrocious" is comic, yet the detail about washing and ironing quietly shows a woman who works hard to keep a poor household afloat. Even the physical details matter. She is only "five foot one inch tall", which makes her fierce personality seem all the larger, and the "browny-grey strands of elastic hair" suggest someone worn, practical and unglamorous rather than maternal in a conventional sense.

The turning point of the list comes with the conjunction "But": "But she did love Liesel Meminger." The short, emphatic sentence, with the stressed auxiliary "did", insists on this love as though Death expects the reader to doubt it. Zusak then undercuts it immediately: "Her way of showing it just happened to be strange." The understatement of "just happened" is wry and affectionate. The final line, "bashing her with wooden spoons / and words", uses zeugma, linking a physical object and language with one verb. This creates humour, and it hints that Rosa's violence is more noise than real threat. It also connects Rosa to the novel's central concern with the power of words, because her insults are a kind of language Liesel must learn to translate.

Across the novel, Rosa's harshness is seen most obviously in her swearing. She calls Liesel "Saumensch" and her husband "Saukerl", and when Liesel first arrives Rosa is loud and impatient, forcing her into the bath. Placed beside Hans, who is gentle, patient and plays the accordion, Rosa seems at first the less loving parent. Zusak uses this contrast deliberately: Hans's warmth is immediately visible,

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whereas Rosa's must be discovered, so the reader experiences her through Liesel's own gradual change of view.

That change comes through moments of crisis. When Max Vandenburg arrives at the house, a Jew needing to be hidden, Rosa does not hesitate. She feeds him, keeps the secret and nurses him when he falls ill. In a society where hiding a Jew could mean death for the whole family, her courage is far more significant than her cooking or her temper. Death even comments that she is a good woman for a crisis, a phrase which captures how Zusak sees her: unremarkable in daily life, but steady and brave when it matters. The scene where she storms into Liesel's school is especially telling. In front of the class she seems to be shouting at Liesel, yet in the corridor she quietly brings the news that Max has woken. Her public fury becomes a disguise for tenderness, and the comedy of the scene allows Zusak to show how love has to hide in Nazi Germany.

Rosa's vulnerability also emerges as the novel progresses. When Hans is sent away with the army, Liesel finds Rosa sitting up at night holding his accordion. The image is quietly moving, because the instrument is so closely associated with Hans's kindness that Rosa holding it shows how deeply she loves him, even though she never says so in gentle words. Zusak also shows the economic pressure she is under when her laundry customers drop her one by one as the war tightens, which helps explain her bad temper as the product of poverty and fear rather than cruelty.

Finally, Rosa is killed in the bombing of Himmel Street, and Liesel's grief makes the reader re-evaluate everything that came before. Liesel recognises too late how much Rosa did for her, and the "wooden spoons" of the extract are reframed as part of a love that was real all along. Through Rosa, Zusak suggests that we judge

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people too quickly by their surfaces, and that in dark times the people who quietly protect others may be the least likely to look like heroes.

10 The settings of place and time in The Book Thief are central to its meaning. By placing the story in a small German town between 1939 and 1943, Zusak tells the familiar history of the Second World War from an unfamiliar angle: that of ordinary Germans, some of them complicit, some quietly resisting, all of them caught up in events they cannot control. The time and place are not just a backdrop but the force that shapes every character's choices, and Zusak uses them to explore how humanity survives inside a cruel regime.

The town of Molching, near Munich, is presented as ordinary and poor, and this ordinariness is the point. Most of the action takes place on Himmel Street, and Death tells us that "Himmel" means heaven, an irony he notes himself, since the street is shabby and will eventually be destroyed. The name hints at a deeper idea, though. For all its poverty, the street does contain a kind of heaven in the small kindnesses of its people: Hans painting and playing the accordion, Rudy's loyalty, Rosa's hidden love. Zusak makes a small community stand for Germany as a whole, showing that not every German was a fanatic, and that most were simply trying to live, eat and protect their families.

The time setting gives the novel its constant threat. Liesel arrives in Molching at the start of 1939 after her brother has died on the train and her mother, almost certainly persecuted as a communist, has given her up. As the years pass the war closes in. Hitler Youth meetings, rationing, the drafting of men such as Hans and Alex Steiner, and finally air raids all show how the historical moment intrudes into private life. One of the most powerful scenes is the book burning on Hitler's

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birthday, when Liesel steals a book from the smouldering pile. The public setting, with flags, speeches and a crowd, reflects how Nazism used spectacle and the destruction of words to control people. Liesel's theft, in that place and at that time, becomes an act of defiance, and it is significant that her love of books grows precisely when the regime is trying to burn them.

The basement of the Hubermanns' house is perhaps the most important single setting. It is where Hans teaches Liesel to read, painting words on the walls, and later it is where Max Vandenburg hides. The basement is both a place of safety and a place of danger: it shelters Max, but its discovery would mean death for the whole family. Zusak makes the cramped, cold, dark space become a place of creativity and friendship. Max paints over the pages of Mein Kampf to create The Standover Man and The Word Shaker for Liesel, and the image of a hated book transformed into a gift of love sums up the novel's belief that words can be used to heal as well as to destroy. Liesel even brings Max descriptions of the weather because he cannot see the sky, so the outside world itself is something she must translate for him through language.

Zusak also contrasts the basement with other places. The mayor's library, full of books, represents a world of comfort and privilege that Liesel enters through Ilsa Hermann, and it is in this house that the grieving Ilsa and the poor girl form an unexpected bond. The Amper river and the open fields are places of childhood freedom for Liesel and Rudy, where they race and steal apples, which reminds the reader that the characters are still children even in wartime. Meanwhile, the road through Molching becomes a place of horror when Jews are marched through the town towards Dachau. When Hans gives bread to an old man and is whipped for it, the setting forces the people of Molching, and the reader, to witness the cruelty of the time rather than look away.

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Finally, time is structured by Death himself. He often reveals what will happen in advance, telling us early on that Rudy will die, so we read with dread. When the bombs fall on Himmel Street in 1943, the street that was named after heaven is destroyed, and Liesel survives only because she is in the basement writing her own story. The setting that once hid Max now saves her, and the act of writing in that place becomes the book itself.

In this way, Zusak uses place and time to show that history is lived by ordinary people in ordinary streets. The settings make the novel more than a war story: they show how kindness, courage and language can survive, briefly and fragilely, in one of the darkest periods of human history.

11

In both Mrs Vadnie Marlene Sevlon and Graham Greene's The Destructors, isolation and loneliness are presented as conditions that people try to disguise, whether through fantasy, pride or cruelty. Kay treats Vadnie's loneliness with gentle humour and sympathy, showing how she builds a whole imaginary life to protect herself, while Greene presents loneliness in a harsher, post-war world where isolated individuals are vulnerable and almost no one reaches out to them. Together the stories suggest that loneliness is not only a private sadness but something shaped by how society treats people who do not fit.

In the extract, Vadnie's loneliness is never stated directly; instead it is revealed through what she has invented to fill the gap. The anecdote begins with something trivial, an electrician's question, "Is you Miss or Mrs?", and her instinctive answer, "Mrs". Kay's matter-of-fact narration makes the moment seem small, yet it turns out to shape the next twenty years. The bitter little sentence

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"He never did but Vadnie kept the Mrs anyway" exposes the disappointment underneath: the "right man" never arrived, and the title becomes a substitute for the relationship she hoped for.

The most striking method is repetition. Kay lists the places the title appears: "Mrs on her bank cards", "Mrs on her direct debits", "Mrs on her water bill and Mrs on her gas and electric". The accumulation is comic, because these are such dull, bureaucratic documents, but it is also poignant. Vadnie's identity as a wife exists only on paper, and the official world of bills and licences is the only place that addresses her in the way she longs to be addressed. Her reason, that "she felt she got more respect that way", hints at a society that judges single women, especially older single women, as somehow lesser, so her fantasy is also a form of self-protection. Kay even raises the idea that the title might keep her "safe from men of disrepute", suggesting that loneliness and vulnerability are linked.

Kay then shows how fantasy becomes reality: "Strange thing was, after a number of years, she believed it herself." The thrill of "the early days" fades and she takes the title "quite for granted", which is both funny and sad, because the lie has become so complete that it has replaced the life she might have had. The construction of the "composite husband" is the most inventive part of the extract. Vadnie takes the hair from one man and gives it to another so that he is "just receding", and adds "two inches of height". The precise, almost practical tone of these choices makes her seem resourceful and imaginative, yet the fact that the men are an electrician and a stranger on a bus to the Lake District reveals how few real connections she has. She has built a husband out of fragments of brief encounters. The rhetorical questions about "fate or luck or God" show her searching for meaning in her solitude, and Kay invites the reader to sympathise rather than mock.

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Greene presents isolation very differently in The Destructors. Mr Thomas, known to the gang as Old Misery, lives alone in a house that stands by itself among the bomb damage of post-war London, propped up by wooden struts. The physical isolation of the house mirrors his own isolation: he is an old man living alone, and the nickname the boys give him shows how the community sees him as a figure of ridicule. When he offers the boys sweets, they assume it is a trick, which suggests that in this damaged society even kindness from a lonely person is met with suspicion. Like Vadnie, he seems to cling to something that gives him identity: his beautiful house, which T. says was built by Wren.

Greene also presents isolation in T., the newest member of the gang. His father has come down in the world, and T. is silent and set apart, which makes him an unsettling leader. His claim that love and hate are "hooey" and "There's only things" suggests an emotional isolation far more disturbing than Vadnie's loneliness. While Vadnie invents a husband to bring feeling into her life, T. seems to have rejected feeling altogether. The gang's destruction of the house can be read as a symptom of the war, which has left both the old and the young cut off from security and meaning.

The endings are crucial. Mr Thomas is locked in his outside lavatory overnight, physically shut away and helpless, while his home is destroyed. When the house collapses, the lorry driver laughs and insists there is nothing personal in it, and this laughter leaves Mr Thomas utterly alone, with no one taking his loss seriously. Kay's treatment of Vadnie is far warmer: her loneliness is softened by humour and imagination. Yet both writers suggest that isolated people are often unseen by those around them, and that loneliness can only be survived by holding on to something, a title, a house, an invented husband, that tells them who they are.

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In Doris Lessing's Through the Tunnel and Jhumpa Lahiri's A Real Durwan, relationships change because of a test: in Lessing's story a boy tests himself in order to grow up, while in Lahiri's story a community is tested and fails. Lessing presents changing relationships as part of a necessary and hopeful journey towards independence, whereas Lahiri shows how fragile and conditional human ties can be, especially for someone who is poor and alone.

At the start of Through the Tunnel, Jerry's relationship with his mother is close but uneasy. They are on holiday, and she is a widow, so the bond between them is intense. Lessing uses a shifting third-person narration that moves between their perspectives, showing how carefully each considers the other. The mother is anxious not to be over-protective; she is determined, as Lessing puts it, to be neither possessive nor lacking in devotion. Jerry, meanwhile, notices her small figure on the beach and feels a pang of guilt about leaving her. This mutual watchfulness shows love, but also suggests that both know the relationship must change as Jerry gets older. The setting establishes this from the beginning: the "safe beach" belongs to the mother and to childhood, while the "wild and rocky bay" represents the adult, unknown world that Jerry longs to explore.

Jerry's relationship with the local boys is presented through contrast and longing. They are older, bronzed and confident, and they dive into the sea and swim through an underwater tunnel. Jerry, an English boy who cannot speak their language, desperately wants to belong, and when they ignore him he clowns about, shouting nonsense in French. Lessing makes the scene painful to read: his attempt to impress them only exposes how separate he is. When they disappear through the tunnel and he cannot follow, he is left close to tears, which shows how much

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his self-worth depends on their acceptance at this stage.

The tunnel then becomes the centre of the story and a powerful symbol. Jerry decides to swim through it alone, and Lessing describes his training in obsessive detail: he practises holding his breath, counting the seconds, suffering nosebleeds. The structure slows down here, with time measured in numbers, so the reader feels his determination. When he finally swims through the dark, narrow tunnel and emerges into the light, the moment reads almost like a rebirth. He has passed from childhood to a new, more independent self.

What is striking is how this changes both relationships. Jerry no longer needs the local boys at all: Lessing ends with the idea that it was no longer of the least importance to go to the bay. His need for their approval has been replaced by self-respect. With his mother, the relationship changes more subtly. He does not tell her what he has done, and she does not press him. The secret marks a new distance between them, but it is a healthy one, because he is becoming his own person. Lessing presents this change as natural and even loving.

Lahiri presents a very different kind of change in A Real Durwan. Boori Ma is an elderly refugee who sweeps the stairwell of a Calcutta building and sleeps by the letter boxes. At first her relationship with the residents is affectionate, if a little patronising. They listen, amused, to her exaggerated stories of her lost wealth before Partition, and her refrain "Believe me, don't believe me" shows that even she knows her stories may not be trusted. The residents tolerate her because she is useful and harmless, and Lahiri's narrative voice, which often seems to speak for the building as a whole, captures this collective attitude.

The relationship shifts when Mr Dalal becomes wealthier and buys two new basins.

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This sudden change in fortune brings envy and competition among the residents, and the warmth they once showed Boori Ma starts to vanish. Mrs Dalal promises to replace Boori Ma's bedding, which suggests kindness, yet the promise is never fulfilled. While Boori Ma is out walking the market, one of the basins is stolen. Instantly the residents turn on her, accusing her of helping the thieves and deciding that what the building needs is a real durwan. The title becomes bitterly ironic: Boori Ma had protected the building in her own way, but her loyalty counts for nothing once something valuable is lost.

Lahiri's ending is bleak. Boori Ma is thrown out, and her relationship with the community, which seemed secure, is revealed to have depended entirely on circumstance. Whereas Jerry chooses to move away from others and grows stronger, Boori Ma is pushed away against her will and loses everything. Together the stories suggest that relationships change as people change, but Lessing finds hope in that change, while Lahiri exposes how easily a community can abandon its most vulnerable member when money and fear intrude.

13

In Julius Caesar Shakespeare presents power as something that changes those who hold it and corrupts those who seek it. In this soliloquy Brutus kills Caesar in his mind before he kills him in reality, justifying the murder not by what Caesar has done but by what power might make him do. Across the play, Shakespeare suggests that the fear of tyranny can be as destructive as tyranny itself, and that once power is seized by force it passes to those most skilled at using words and violence.

The soliloquy opens with a conclusion rather than an argument: "It must be by his death." Brutus has already decided, and the rest of the speech searches for

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reasons. He admits he knows "no personal cause to spurn at him / But for the general", which presents him as a principled man acting for the good of Rome, but also exposes the weakness of his case. The key line, "He would be crowned: / How that might change his nature, there's the question", shows that Brutus fears power as a force that transforms character. The modal "might" is significant, because the whole speech rests on possibility rather than fact.

Shakespeare uses animal imagery to make this possibility seem threatening. "It is the bright day that brings forth the adder" suggests that the warmth of public success brings out hidden danger, and the crown becomes "a sting" that would give Caesar the power to "do danger" at will. At the end Brutus imagines Caesar "as a serpent's egg" that must be killed "in the shell". This image is chilling, because it argues for destroying something innocent before it has become harmful. The serpent also carries biblical associations with the Fall, so Caesar is linked to temptation and evil, yet the logic is circular: Brutus is condemning Caesar for a crime he has not committed.

The extended metaphor of the ladder is Brutus's most careful image of power. "Lowliness is young ambition's ladder" suggests that ambitious men appear humble while they climb, but once at the "upmost round" they turn their back and scorn "the base degrees / By which he did ascend". This is a perceptive analysis of how power alienates leaders from the people who raised them. Yet Brutus himself admits that "the quarrel / Will bear no colour for the thing he is", meaning that Caesar's actual behaviour does not justify killing him. The verb "Fashion it thus" is revealing: Brutus is consciously shaping the argument, and Shakespeare lets the audience see a good man talking himself into murder. The fragmented syntax and short, decisive phrases such as "So Caesar may. / Then lest he may, prevent" show how rapidly he moves from fear to action.

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Elsewhere, Shakespeare presents Caesar's power more ambiguously. Cassius describes him with resentful exaggeration: "he doth bestride the narrow world / Like a Colossus", while the others "peep about" beneath him. The image makes Caesar seem monstrous in scale, but Cassius also reminds Brutus of Caesar's physical weakness, suggesting that power is a role rather than a natural quality. Caesar himself, refusing the crown three times at the games according to Casca, plays the humble leader while clearly enjoying the crowd's devotion. Later he declares he is "constant as the northern star", an arrogant claim moments before he is stabbed. Shakespeare seems to suggest that power has made Caesar believe in his own godlike status, which partly supports Brutus's fears.

After the assassination, power shifts to whoever can control the plebeians. Brutus speaks to them in prose with balanced reasoning, but Antony's "Friends, Romans, countrymen" speech, with its repeated, increasingly sarcastic "Brutus is an honourable man", turns the crowd into a mob. The plebeians, who had cried that Brutus should be made Caesar, now riot. Shakespeare shows that in a republic, the people hold power but are easily manipulated by language, and this would have resonated with an Elizabethan audience anxious about who would succeed the ageing, childless Elizabeth I.

Power then becomes openly ruthless. In Act 4 Antony, Octavius and Lepidus coldly mark the names of those who will die, and Antony dismisses Lepidus as a slight, unworthy man to be used and discarded. The conspirators, who killed Caesar in the name of liberty, have created a new and harsher tyranny. Even Brutus and Cassius quarrel bitterly over money and authority. At Philippi, Brutus recognises "O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!", conceding that Caesar's power lives on after his death.

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Shakespeare therefore presents power as a force no one in the play can truly master. Brutus's fear of what power might do leads him to an act that unleashes far worse, and the serpent he tried to kill "in the shell" returns as civil war.

14 Shakespeare presents conflict in Julius Caesar on every level: within the mind of an individual, within marriages and friendships, within the city of Rome and finally on the battlefield. These conflicts are carefully connected, so that the private struggle of one man spreads outward until it engulfs a whole society. Shakespeare seems to suggest that political violence, however noble its intentions, releases forces that cannot be controlled.

The first and perhaps most important conflict is internal. Brutus loves Caesar but fears what Caesar might become, and Shakespeare dramatises this through soliloquy. He admits that since Cassius first worked on him against Caesar he has not slept, and he describes himself as "with himself at war". This image of civil war inside one man foreshadows the civil war that will follow in Rome. In his orchard soliloquy he imagines Caesar "as a serpent's egg" to be killed "in the shell", and the audience watches him resolve his inner conflict by persuading himself of something he cannot prove. Cassius plays on this struggle with forged letters thrown through Brutus's window, so the conflict is deliberately inflamed by others.

Shakespeare also presents conflict within marriages, which shows how politics invades private life. Portia begs Brutus to share his secret, even wounding herself in the thigh to prove her strength, and his evasions create tension between them. Calpurnia, terrified by her dream of Caesar's statue running with blood and by reports of strange omens, persuades Caesar to stay at home. Caesar's response,

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"Cowards die many times before their deaths", reveals his pride, but he first agrees to stay for her sake. The conflict is resolved when Decius reinterprets the dream as a sign of Rome drawing life from Caesar, and Caesar's pride wins. Here Shakespeare shows how personal loyalty is overpowered by public image, and dramatic irony makes the audience dread his decision.

The natural world reflects these conflicts. In Act I Scene 3 a violent storm breaks over Rome, and Casca describes it as if there were civil strife in heaven. For an Elizabethan audience, disorder in the heavens signalled disorder in the state, so the storm becomes a warning that the conspiracy goes against the natural order. The assassination itself, in which each conspirator stabs Caesar and Brutus strikes last, prompting "Et tu, Brute?", turns political conflict into intimate betrayal. Brutus's call for the conspirators to bathe their arms in Caesar's blood is meant to make the act seem ritual and noble, but the imagery is disturbing rather than heroic.

The conflict then passes to the people of Rome, and Shakespeare uses crowd scenes to dramatic effect. Brutus's prose speech appeals to reason and briefly wins the plebeians over, but Antony's speech reverses their mood. His repeated line "Brutus is an honourable man" becomes steadily more ironic, and by showing the wounds in Caesar's mantle and reading the will he turns grief into fury. The crowd's sudden shift shows how easily conflict is stirred by language. Antony's own words over Caesar's body, "Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war", reveal his intention to unleash violence, and the animal image suggests a force that, once released, will run wild.

The consequences are shown most horrifyingly in the murder of Cinna the poet. The mob attacks him simply because he shares a name with one of the

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conspirators, and when he protests they cry "Tear him for his bad verses". The dark humour is chilling. Shakespeare uses this short scene to show how political conflict destroys innocent people and how a mob abandons reason altogether.

Conflict also divides the conspirators. In Act 4 Scene 3 Brutus and Cassius quarrel bitterly; Brutus accuses Cassius of having an "itching palm", greedy for bribes, and Cassius feels betrayed by Brutus's coldness. The scene shows that the alliance which killed Caesar was never as united as it seemed. Their reconciliation is moving, especially when Brutus reveals that Portia is dead, yet the quarrel suggests that the conspiracy is already falling apart. On the other side, Antony and Octavius are also tense with one another, and Antony's contempt for Lepidus shows that new conflicts are already emerging among the victors.

Finally, conflict becomes open war at Philippi. The battle scenes are confused and full of misunderstanding: Cassius kills himself after wrongly believing Titinius has been captured, and Brutus runs onto his own sword. Caesar's ghost, who calls himself Brutus's evil spirit, suggests that the original act of violence has come back to destroy those who committed it. Antony's tribute to Brutus as "the noblest Roman of them all" ends the play with a kind of peace, but only after enormous loss.

Through these interwoven conflicts, Shakespeare suggests that the struggle within one man's conscience can lead to the destruction of a whole state, and that violence, once begun, is almost impossible to contain.

15 Shakespeare presents the relationship between Macbeth and Banquo as one that moves from comradeship to suspicion, rivalry and finally murder. The witches'

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prophecy is the turning point, because it gives Macbeth a crown and Banquo a dynasty, and the two men cannot both have what they are promised. In this extract, on the night of Duncan's murder, their friendship is still outwardly intact, but the dialogue is full of evasions and hidden meanings, showing that trust between them has already broken down.

At the start of the play, Macbeth and Banquo are presented as equals and brothers in arms. The Captain describes them fighting together against overwhelming odds, and they enter together on the heath after the battle. Their response to the witches, however, reveals a difference. Banquo is curious but cautious, asking Macbeth "why do you start, and seem to fear / Things that do sound so fair?", and he warns that "The instruments of darkness tell us truths" in order to lead us to harm. Macbeth, meanwhile, falls into asides, revealing to the audience thoughts he does not share with his friend. Shakespeare uses this device to open a gap between them from the very first scene in which they appear together.

In the extract, this gap has become a wall of polite dishonesty. The scene opens in darkness with Banquo's anxious question "Who's there?" and Macbeth's reply "A friend." The single word is deeply ironic, because Macbeth is about to murder the king Banquo serves, and the audience knows he is no longer the friend he claims to be. Banquo's description of Duncan "shut up / In measureless content" adds further dramatic irony: Duncan is happy and trusting at the very moment his death is being prepared. The diamond Duncan sends to Lady Macbeth as "most kind hostess" is a symbol of generosity that Macbeth must accept while planning betrayal, and Shakespeare uses this prop to make the audience feel the weight of his treachery.

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Banquo's mention of the witches, "I dreamed last night of the three weird sisters", is a test, perhaps deliberately so. Macbeth's reply, "I think not of them", is an outright lie, since he has thought of almost nothing else. Shakespeare then shows Macbeth trying to draw Banquo into his plans with deliberately vague language: "If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis, / It shall make honour for you." The verb "cleave" suggests binding loyalty, and the unfinished "when 'tis" avoids naming the deed. Banquo's answer is careful and principled. He will listen only if he can keep "My bosom franchised and allegiance clear", meaning his conscience free and his loyalty to Duncan intact. The careful, guarded verse, with lines shared between the two men, shows them circling one another. Banquo has already prayed to be protected from "cursed thoughts" in his sleep, so Shakespeare presents him as a man who also feels temptation but chooses to resist it. He becomes a moral foil to Macbeth.

After Duncan's murder, the relationship turns to open suspicion and fear. In his Act 3 soliloquy Banquo says "Thou hast it now" and fears that Macbeth "play'dst most foully for't". Macbeth, for his part, admits that "Our fears in Banquo / Stick deep", and resents that the witches placed a "fruitless crown" on his head while Banquo's sons will inherit. His friendly questions to Banquo, "Ride you this afternoon?" and "Goes Fleance with you?", sound casual but are chillingly purposeful, because he is gathering information for the murderers. Shakespeare shows that Macbeth can now use the language of friendship as a weapon.

The murder of Banquo marks the final collapse of their bond, yet Banquo continues to haunt Macbeth. At the banquet his ghost sits in Macbeth's place, and Macbeth cries "Never shake / Thy gory locks at me." The image of blood-soaked hair shows that guilt has invaded Macbeth's mind, and his public breakdown destroys his authority before the lords. Later, the witches' show of kings ends with

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"the blood-boltered Banquo" smiling and pointing at the line of his descendants, a vision that tortures Macbeth because it confirms that his crimes have gained him nothing lasting.

The contrast between the two men would have mattered to the original audience, since King James I believed himself descended from Banquo. Shakespeare presents Banquo as honourable and loyal, unlike Holinshed's source, where he shares in the guilt. Through their changing relationship Shakespeare shows that ambition destroys friendship, and that Macbeth's betrayal of his closest companion is a key step in his moral ruin.

16 The witches play a crucial part in Macbeth's downfall, but I do not agree that they are completely to blame. Shakespeare presents them as catalysts who awaken and later manipulate Macbeth's ambition, yet he is careful to show that they never order him to kill anyone. Macbeth's tragedy comes from his own choices, encouraged by Lady Macbeth, and Shakespeare makes the audience watch him choose evil with full knowledge of what he is doing.

There is a strong case for the witches' guilt. They open the play in thunder and lightning, chanting "Fair is foul, and foul is fair", a paradox that establishes a world where moral values are inverted. Their chant, in rhyming trochaic rhythm unlike the iambic verse of the human characters, marks them as unnatural. For a Jacobean audience, with a king who had written about witchcraft and supported witch trials, the witches would have seemed genuinely dangerous agents of the devil. Their prophecy that Macbeth "shalt be king hereafter" plants an idea that leads directly to Duncan's murder, and without it it is hard to imagine the tragedy happening at all.

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Later in the play the witches seem even more responsible. In Act 4 the apparitions deliberately mislead Macbeth through equivocation. He is told that "none of woman born" shall harm him and that he will not be defeated until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane. These riddles give him a false sense of security that drives him to further violence, including the slaughter of Macduff's family. When he learns that Macduff was "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb, he curses those who deceive with double meanings. In this sense the witches clearly contribute to his final ruin.

However, Shakespeare suggests that the seed of ambition was already in Macbeth before the witches spoke. His first line, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen", echoes their chant, linking him with them before they have even met. When the prophecy is given, Banquo notices that Macbeth starts and seems to fear words that "sound so fair", which implies that the idea of killing the king has already crossed his mind. Indeed, within moments, his aside reveals "horrible imaginings" of murder that make his hair stand on end. Crucially, Banquo hears the same prophecies and resists their temptation, which proves that the witches do not control men's actions. By contrast Macbeth soon asks the stars to "hide your fires" so that light may not see his "black and deep desires", showing that the ambition is his own and that he knows it is wicked.

Lady Macbeth must also share the blame. When she reads Macbeth's letter, she immediately resolves that he will be king, fearing only that his nature is "too full o'th'milk of human kindness". She calls on spirits to "unsex me here" and fill her with cruelty, and her violent imagery, especially her claim that she would dash out the brains of her own baby rather than break such a promise, shows a will more ferocious than her husband's. In Act 1 Scene 7, when Macbeth decides "We will

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proceed no further in this business", it is Lady Macbeth who changes his mind by questioning his manhood. At this decisive moment, it is a human voice, not a supernatural one, that pushes him to murder.

Above all, Shakespeare shows that Macbeth chooses with full self-knowledge. In his soliloquy before the murder he lists every reason not to kill Duncan: he is his kinsman, his subject and his host, and Duncan has been a virtuous king. He admits that he has no spur except "Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself / And falls on th'other." This metaphor of a rider leaping too high and falling identifies ambition as his tragic flaw and predicts his downfall. A man who understands his motives this clearly cannot be seen simply as a victim.

After Duncan's death, Macbeth acts increasingly alone. He arranges Banquo's murder without consulting either the witches or his wife, telling her to be "innocent of the knowledge". The murder of Macduff's wife and children is his decision, made out of rage and fear, and it is this senseless cruelty that turns Scotland against him. By the end, Malcolm calls him a "dead butcher", a label which places the responsibility on him as a man who has chosen bloodshed.

In conclusion, the witches are important in starting Macbeth's downfall and in hastening it with their deceptive prophecies, but they are not completely to blame. Shakespeare presents them as tempters who work on desires already present, while Lady Macbeth's persuasion and, above all, Macbeth's own ambition and choices bring about his ruin. The play's tragic power depends on this: Macbeth is a brave and intelligent man who knowingly destroys himself.

17 Priestley presents Gerald's attitudes to women as charming on the surface but

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possessive and self-serving underneath. He genuinely believes he is kind to women, yet he treats them as objects to be rescued, enjoyed, protected or managed, and never quite as equals. Through Gerald, Priestley exposes the comfortable sexism of the Edwardian upper class and suggests to his 1945 audience that good manners can hide the same exploitation of the powerless that the Birlings practise more openly.

In the extract, Gerald's hesitation is revealing. His stage direction "hesitatingly" and his evasive "It's hard to say" suggest a man who has never really asked himself whether he loved Eva, which is itself telling: her feelings mattered less than his pleasure. His admission, "I didn't feel about her as she felt about me", is honest but uncomfortable, because it shows he allowed a vulnerable young woman to depend on him while knowing the affair was unequal. Sheila's "sharp sarcasm" in calling him "the wonderful Fairy Prince" cuts through his self-image. The fairy-tale metaphor captures exactly how Gerald saw himself, as the gallant rescuer of a poor girl, but Sheila's tone turns it into mockery, implying that the prince was really enjoying being worshipped. His reply, "Nearly all men would have done", is perhaps the most revealing line of all. Gerald generalises his behaviour to excuse it, treating male enjoyment of female devotion as natural and normal, and so reveals an attitude shared by his whole class.

Structurally, the extract also shows Gerald's control over the story. He refuses Sheila any "details", and when the Inspector asks about the end, he answers crisply: "I can tell you exactly." He decided when the affair began, where Eva lived and when it finished, and even before leaving "Daisy knew it was coming to an end." The verb "broke it off" is decisive and practical, as though ending the relationship were a business arrangement. Eva has no voice here; she simply accepts what Gerald decides. Interestingly, Gerald does defend her when he insists

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"it wasn't disgusting" to Mrs Birling, which suggests some genuine affection, and Priestley allows us to see that he is more sympathetic than Birling. Yet even this defence centres on his own reputation and memory.

Elsewhere in Act 2, Gerald's description of meeting Eva in the Palace Bar reveals his attitudes clearly. He contrasts the "hard-eyed dough-faced women" who hang about there with Eva, who looked "young and fresh and charming". The harsh compound adjectives dismiss the other women as unattractive and almost less than human, while Eva is valued for her youth and beauty. Gerald sees women in terms of their appearance and their worthiness of rescue. He presents himself as saving her from Joe Meggarty, and then insists he did not install her in the flat "so that I could make love to her". Yet the verb "install" makes her sound like a piece of furniture placed for his convenience, and his account of her as "intensely grateful" suggests that her gratitude was part of the attraction. The flat belonged to a friend, the money was his: Eva's survival depended entirely on Gerald, which gives him all the power.

His attitude to Sheila is similarly possessive. In Act 1 he is the confident fiancé, and the engagement ring becomes a symbol of ownership as much as love. Sheila's joking complaint that he never came near her "all last summer" becomes dramatic irony once we learn where he really was, and it shows how easily he deceived her. When the Inspector arrives, Gerald repeatedly tries to protect Sheila from the "unpleasant" details, assuming that a respectable young woman is too delicate for the truth. Priestley shows this protectiveness as patronising: Sheila proves far stronger than he expects. The engagement also has a business dimension, since Birling openly hopes the marriage will bring Crofts and Birling closer together, which suggests women in this class are partly currency in male alliances.

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By the end, Gerald has learned little. After discovering the Inspector may not be real, he offers the ring back with "Everything's all right now, Sheila", assuming she will simply return to him once the scandal disappears. Her refusal shows that she now rejects the role he expected her to play. Priestley therefore uses Gerald to show that charm and chivalry are not the same as respect. His attitudes belong to an older generation's view of women, and in 1945, when women had worked and fought through two wars, Priestley's audience is invited to see them as outdated and quietly cruel.

18 Priestley presents Sheila as the character who changes most completely in An Inspector Calls, moving from a giddy, sheltered daughter to a morally awake young woman who takes on the Inspector's values. Her transformation is the play's clearest sign of hope: Priestley suggests that the younger generation can learn social responsibility, even if their parents cannot. Writing in 1945, he uses Sheila to urge his audience to build a fairer society rather than return to the selfishness of 1912.

At the start, Sheila is presented as childish and self-absorbed. The opening stage directions describe her as "very pleased with life and rather excited", and her language is playful and immature. She calls her mother "Mummy" and teases Eric for being "squiffy", which places her firmly in the protected world of the nursery. When Gerald gives her the ring, her exclamation that it is "wonderful" and her promise never to let it out of her sight suggest that she values material things and the security of marriage. Yet Priestley hints at a sharper side even here. Her pointed remark about Gerald staying away "all last summer" shows a suspicion she quickly laughs off, suggesting she is more perceptive than she lets herself be.

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The first sign of change comes when the Inspector describes Eva's sacking from Birling's works. Sheila responds with instinctive sympathy, insisting that the strikers "aren't cheap labour" but "people". This short statement is significant because it echoes the Inspector's own humane outlook and directly contradicts her father's view of workers as costs. Her own confession, that she had Eva sacked from Milwards out of jealousy, is a turning point. She is described as running out of the room in distress, and when she returns she admits she felt "rotten" at the time and now feels "a lot worse". The comparative structure shows guilt growing rather than fading. Crucially, she accepts the blame, unlike her parents, and the Inspector recognises this, remarking that the young are "more impressionable".

In Act 2, Sheila becomes increasingly assertive. She warns her mother not to "build up a kind of wall" between the family and Eva, and the metaphor of the wall captures the barrier of class and self-deception that Sybil hides behind. Sheila also sees how the Inspector works before anyone else does, warning that he is "giving us the rope" so they will hang themselves. This image shows her new insight: she understands that denial is useless. Her treatment of Gerald also changes. Where she was once dependent on his approval, she now questions him sharply, and in the extract where he confesses, her "sharp sarcasm" about the "Fairy Prince" shows she is no longer dazzled. Yet she is also fair to him, thanking him for his honesty and returning the ring because they are no longer the same people, which shows maturity rather than mere anger.

Sheila's most dramatic change is in her attitude to her parents. She openly interrupts her mother and challenges her father, overturning the Edwardian expectation that a daughter should be quiet and obedient. In Act 3, when Birling and Gerald try to dismiss the evening as a hoax, Sheila refuses to go back. She says she is frightened by "the way you talk", and complains that they are

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"pretending everything's just as it was before". The word "pretending" is central: Sheila now sees her family's respectability as performance. Even if the Inspector was not real, the moral truth of what they did remains. Her bitter "I suppose we're all nice people now" uses irony to mock their relief, showing a mind that has grown independent and critical.

Structurally, Priestley pairs Sheila with Eric as the younger generation who change, and contrasts them with Mr and Mrs Birling, who stay the same, and Gerald, who sits uneasily between. This division between old and young carries Priestley's socialist message. Birling sneers at "the famous younger generation", but the play proves the younger generation right. In 1945, as Britain voted for a Labour government and the welfare state, Sheila embodies the possibility of a new, more responsible society. She is also significant as a woman who finds her own voice, reflecting women's growing independence after two world wars.

Ultimately, Priestley presents Sheila's change as genuine but painful. She loses her innocence, her engagement and her trust in her parents, but she gains moral clarity. When the final phone call announces a real inspector, the audience realises that Sheila was right to keep the lesson, because the consequences were always coming.

19

Miller presents witchcraft less as a supernatural reality than as a test of character: each person's attitude to it reveals what they value, whether that is truth, reputation, power or self-preservation. In the extract, the Proctors' different answers show how dangerous honesty has become in Salem, while across the play Miller contrasts the zealous belief of Hale, the self-interest of Parris and the cynical manipulation of Abigail. Writing during the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s,

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Miller suggests that whenever a society makes belief compulsory, attitudes to an invisible enemy become a weapon.

In the extract, Proctor's attitude is cautious and divided. The long stage direction tells us that he "knows this is critical" and is "striving against his disgust" with Hale and with himself. Miller makes the audience feel the pressure of the moment: Proctor despises being questioned, yet he understands that one wrong word could condemn his family. His answer, "I know not what I have said, I may have said it", is carefully vague, and his admission that he has "wondered if there be witches" while doubting "they come among us now" is an attempt to be truthful without being heretical. His appeal to scripture, "the Bible speaks of witches, and I will not deny them", shows how belief in witchcraft is bound up with religious authority in Puritan Salem. To deny witches would be to deny the Bible, so Proctor's scepticism must hide inside a careful show of orthodoxy.

Elizabeth, by contrast, cannot disguise her disbelief. Her stammered "I, I cannot believe it" suggests both fear and conviction, and Hale's "shocked" response, "You cannot!", shows how extraordinary such honesty seems to him. Proctor's warning, "Elizabeth, you bewilder him!", hints at his anxiety that her integrity will be fatal. Elizabeth's reasoning is moral rather than theological: she cannot believe the Devil could own a woman who "keeps an upright way". The repeated "I am a good woman, I know it" shows her sense of self rooted in conduct, not accusation. Her final line, "If you think that I am one, then I say there are none", is a logical trap that exposes the absurdity of the whole process. Miller allows her plain, almost bare speech to become the voice of common sense, yet the audience knows that in this society common sense is itself suspicious.

Hale's attitude is the most developed across the play. In Act I, Miller's stage

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directions present him as an eager scholar who arrives with heavy books which are "weighted with authority". This image suggests he believes witchcraft can be studied and detected scientifically, and that he is proud to be the expert. His total belief makes him dangerous: it is his questioning of Tituba that leads to the first confessions and accusations. Yet in the extract we already see him troubled, and by Act 3 he denounces the court and quits it. In Act 4 he returns to beg prisoners to confess falsely, admitting that he has come "to do the Devil's work". This structural reversal, from absolute faith to bitter scepticism, shows Miller's view that blind certainty can turn even a well-meaning man into an instrument of injustice.

Parris's attitude is shaped by fear for his position. In Act 1, he is desperate to deny any "unnatural" cause for Betty's illness because a witch in his own household would ruin his standing with a congregation he already believes is plotting against him. When the hysteria grows and he can benefit from it, he becomes a supporter of the trials. Witchcraft, for Parris, is a matter of reputation, not truth.

Abigail sees witchcraft as an opportunity. At first, the dancing in the woods is a thrill and an escape from the strict, joyless life of Salem, and she is quick to deny anything more serious. But once Tituba confesses and is praised, Abigail realises that accusations bring attention and power. Her sudden outburst in Act 1, that she "danced for the Devil" and "wrote in his book", is followed by a frenzy of names. The broken, repetitive syntax creates an almost religious ecstasy, yet the audience recognises it as performance. She later uses the same weapon to target Elizabeth, showing witchcraft turned into personal revenge.

Through these contrasting attitudes, Miller reveals that the real evil of Salem is

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not the Devil but the way people exploit fear. Elizabeth and Proctor, who doubt, are punished, while those who claim belief gain power. For a 1950s audience watching friends named as communists, the message was clear: when a community demands that everyone share its terror, honesty itself becomes a crime.

20 Miller presents the relationship between John Proctor and Abigail Williams as the hidden engine of the whole tragedy. It is a past affair that Proctor wants to bury but Abigail wants to revive, and the gap between his guilt and her desire turns private sin into public catastrophe. Miller uses the relationship to show how lust, shame and the need for a good name can become destructive in a society that cannot tolerate private failings.

When they first meet alone in Act I, Miller makes the history of their relationship clear through tension and physicality. Abigail approaches Proctor flirtatiously, and her language is sensual and animalistic. She reminds him of how he "clutched my back behind your house and sweated like a stallion". The simile reduces their relationship to raw physical passion, and the verb "clutched" suggests desperation and need. For Abigail, this was not shameful but intensely alive, a release from the cold restraint of Puritan Salem. Her claim that he "put knowledge in my heart" has a biblical echo of the Fall: like Eve, she has tasted forbidden knowledge and cannot return to innocence. Miller also suggests that she sees through the hypocrisy of the village, mocking the "lying lessons" taught by its Christian women, which makes her desire feel partly like rebellion.

Proctor's response is firm, but Miller hints at uncertainty. He tells her she must "wipe it out of mind" and insists "We never touched, Abby." The obvious untruth of

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this statement shows how desperately he wants to undo the past. Yet his admission that he may "think of you softly from time to time" reveals that his feelings are not entirely dead, which gives Abigail hope. His vow that he will "cut off my hand" before he reaches for her again is emphatic, almost violent, showing his self-disgust. Abigail's reply, "you loved me, John Proctor, and whatever sin it is, you love me yet!", turns the dialogue into a struggle for the truth of his feelings. The audience may wonder whether she is deluded or whether she sees something Proctor cannot admit.

The power balance in the relationship is significant. Proctor is an adult man, a husband and a respected farmer, while Abigail is seventeen and was a servant in his house. Miller's stage directions in Act 1 credit her with "an endless capacity for dissembling", which encourages us to see her as manipulative, yet her position as an orphan with no standing also makes her vulnerable. Some readers may feel Proctor exploited her and then discarded her, which helps to explain the bitterness that drives her later actions.

In Act 2, Miller shows the relationship's damage to the Proctors' marriage. The stilted conversation over dinner, with Proctor praising the seasoning and Elizabeth answering stiffly, reveals how the affair has frozen their home. Proctor's frustrated outburst that Elizabeth's "justice would freeze beer" shows his resentment of being constantly judged, while Elizabeth's insight that "the magistrate sits in your heart" suggests his own guilt is his harshest judge. Abigail's presence is felt even when she is offstage: Elizabeth recognises that Abigail wants her dead, and the poppet with a needle in it becomes the tool by which the affair is turned into an accusation.

The relationship also shapes the plot structurally. Proctor knows from Act 1 that

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Abigail told him the dancing had nothing to do with witchcraft, yet he hesitates to reveal this because doing so would expose their affair. This delay allows the hysteria to grow. When he finally confesses in Act 3, crying that he has "known her", his language is broken and repetitive, showing how painful it is to sacrifice his name. He calls her desire "a whore's vengeance" and claims she wants to "dance with me on my wife's grave", turning their relationship into a public accusation. Tragically, Elizabeth, brought in to confirm it, lies to protect his reputation, and the truth that might have saved them is lost. The relationship becomes the dramatic irony on which the climax turns.

By the end, Abigail has fled Salem after robbing Parris, and Proctor faces execution. His refusal to sign a false confession, crying that it is his "name", suggests he has finally separated his identity from the shame of the affair. Miller therefore presents the relationship as the private sin that begins Proctor's fall and the source of his redemption: by facing the truth about Abigail, and then refusing a lie, he recovers his goodness. Abigail, meanwhile, remains a figure of unrestrained desire who reveals how dangerous the suppressed passions of a rigid society can become.

21 I find this a moving and carefully balanced ending. Hansberry gives the Youngers a genuine victory, yet she refuses to tie everything up neatly. The family leaves the cramped apartment with its pride restored, but the arguments, the uncertain future in Clybourne Park and the fragile plant all remind us that the struggle is not over. For me, the ending works because it celebrates dignity rather than pretending that racism and poverty have been defeated.

The most powerful feeling in the extract is pride in Walter's change. Just before

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this point he has refused Lindner's money, declaring that the family will move into the house his father earned "brick by brick". The ending lets us feel the aftershock of that decision. Mama's quiet remark to Ruth, "He finally come into his manhood today, didn't he?", is the emotional climax. Throughout the play Walter has equated manhood with money, with owning a liquor store and with being "somebody", and his foolish investment with Willy Harris seemed to destroy him. Here Hansberry redefines manhood as moral courage and loyalty to family. Mama's simile, "Kind of like a rainbow after the rain", is simple and biblical, suggesting a promise after a flood of suffering. I find it touching that this judgement is spoken softly, to Ruth, rather than to Walter himself: it feels like a private blessing.

At the same time, Hansberry keeps the family recognisably themselves. Beneatha's excited news that Asagai has asked her to marry him and go to Africa as a doctor shows that her dream is still alive, even though the money for medical school has gone. Her choice of Asagai over the wealthy, assimilated George Murchison confirms her commitment to her African heritage, an idea she has explored all play through her robes, her music and her questions about identity. Yet Walter immediately mocks her and suggests she should marry a rich man instead, and their squabbling echoes the bickering of the very first scene. I think this is a deliberate structural choice. It makes the ending feel truthful: families do not become perfect overnight, and the arguments are almost comforting, a sign that they are still a living, loving family rather than characters in a fairy tale.

The dramatic action of moving out carries much of the meaning. The movers, the boxes and the bustle create a sense of energy and forward movement which contrasts with the weary, trapped atmosphere of the opening, when Ruth wakes the household in a room where the furniture is worn and the space too small. The family is finally leaving the place where dreams have dried up. However, the

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audience knows what awaits them. Lindner's visit has made it clear that the white residents of Clybourne Park do not want them, and in 1950s Chicago, when Black families moving into white neighbourhoods faced threats and violence, this would have seemed a real danger. The ending is therefore brave rather than safe. For me, this makes it more inspiring: the Youngers choose dignity knowing that it may cost them.

Mama's final moments are the most memorable part of the ending. Left alone, she looks around the apartment where she has lived for most of her married life, and Hansberry's stage directions suggest an overwhelming wave of emotion as she prepares to leave. This silent moment lets the audience share her grief for the past, for Big Walter and for the hopes they once had there, as well as her joy at the future. Then, having gone out, she comes back for her plant. The plant has been a symbol throughout the play of Mama's care for her family and her dream of a garden, struggling to grow with very little light. By carrying it into the new house, she shows that the family's dreams, and her nurturing values, will continue. I find it significant that she nearly forgets it: perhaps Hansberry suggests that in the rush of change, it is easy to lose what matters most, and it takes a deliberate act of love to carry it forward.

The ending also completes the play's response to the question in Langston Hughes's poem, from which the title is taken, about what happens to a dream deferred. Rather than letting the dream "dry up", the family finally acts. Ruth's relief, Beneatha's renewed ambition and Walter's newfound maturity all suggest growth.

Overall, I respond to this ending with admiration because it is hopeful without being naive. Hansberry rewards the Youngers with self-respect and unity, but she

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leaves the audience aware that the real battle against prejudice lies ahead, outside the theatre.

22 Hansberry presents the relationship between Walter and Ruth as a marriage worn down by poverty and frustrated dreams, yet one in which love survives beneath the bitterness. At the start they barely understand each other: Walter is consumed by his ambition, while Ruth is too exhausted to share it. Through the play, Hansberry suggests that their problems come less from personal failings than from the pressures of life in a cramped Chicago apartment under segregation, and she offers hope that, once Walter finds a truer sense of himself, the marriage can be renewed.

The opening of the play establishes the strain immediately. The stage directions describe Ruth as a woman in whose face "disappointment has already begun to hang", and the verb "hang" makes her weariness feel physical, as though it is dragging her down. She wakes Walter with irritation, and their early dialogue is full of small, sharp exchanges. When Walter tries to talk about his plan for the liquor store, Ruth tells him to eat his eggs. His frustrated reply, that a man says he is "choking to death" and his woman tells him his eggs are getting cold, captures the gulf between them. The metaphor of choking expresses Walter's sense of suffocation in a life where he is a chauffeur with no prospects, while the eggs represent Ruth's world of practical, daily survival. Neither is wrong, but neither can reach the other. Ruth's weary remark that he "never say nothing new" shows she has heard his dreams too often to believe in them.

Walter's frustration sometimes turns into cruelty. He accuses Black women of failing to support their men, complaining that they do not understand about

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"building their men up". His bitterness is aimed at Ruth but really grows from his humiliation in a racist society that denies him power. Hansberry makes the audience sympathise with both: Walter's anger is understandable, but Ruth, who works long hours as a domestic worker and keeps the household going, is clearly not to blame. Their marriage reflects the way economic oppression can turn people against those closest to them.

Ruth's pregnancy becomes the clearest sign of their distance. She does not tell Walter at first, and when Mama learns that Ruth has paid a deposit to a woman who performs abortions, the family is shocked. That Ruth feels unable to bring another child into their crowded home shows how hopeless she has become, and that she cannot share this with her husband shows how far the marriage has broken down. Walter's failure to respond, walking out instead of comforting her, deepens the crisis. Hansberry aligns Ruth here with Mama, who shares her values of family and home, and who challenges Walter to be the man his father was.

Yet Hansberry also shows that love remains. In Act 2, there is a tender moment when Walter and Ruth talk quietly and she asks him why he cannot stop "fighting" her. The question, softly put, reveals how much she still wants to reach him, and for a moment they seem to remember the young couple they once were. Hansberry uses these gentle, private scenes as a contrast to the noise and arguments of the rest of the play, reminding us of what poverty has taken from them.

The structure of the play shows their relationship improving as the family's prospects change. When Mama buys the house in Clybourne Park, Ruth is overjoyed, insisting she would scrub "all the floors in America" to make the move possible. Her excitement gives her new energy, and in the moving day scene Walter

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and Ruth dance together, delighting in each other in a way that seemed impossible at the start. This physical closeness shows how hope can revive love.

However, Hansberry tests the relationship again when Walter loses the money to Willy Harris. Ruth's despair is intense, because the house is her dream as well, yet she does not abandon him. The final turning point comes when Walter refuses Lindner's offer and decides that the family will move after all. His act of dignity restores Ruth's respect, and Mama's comment to Ruth that he has finally come into his manhood suggests that the couple can move forward together.

Overall, Hansberry presents Walter and Ruth's marriage as a realistic portrait of love under pressure. Its tension reflects the injustices faced by Black families in 1950s America, but its survival reflects the play's central belief in family, endurance and hope.