**Unit 4: Shakespeare**

**Section A: Shakespeare extract**

Select carefully from the extract ***evidence*** of how Shakespeare presents a character(s)/relationship/attitudes/thoughts and feelings (depending on the question).

* ***Do not*** track through the extract line by line, commenting as you go along on any device you may spot, as this will result in a less structured and less coherent response.
* Think about the broader aspects of Shakespeare’s presentation, for example if another character in the same extract adds to/filters the presentation of the central character in any way, or use of an aspect of staging/stagecraft.
* As well as discussing aspects of ‘language and imagery’ as required by the question, such as metaphorical language, discussing ***implicit meaning*** is also important, as this also shows understanding of ***how language shapes meaning***.
* Remember this is a play, and Shakespeare’s ***dramatic techniques*** must be considered.

Look at the following examples of the opening paragraphs of candidate responses to the extract question, and identify where AO1 and AO2 can be rewarded.

***Candidate response to King Lear extract – opening paragraph***

***Q 1.*** With close reference to the language and imagery in this extract, analyse Shakespeare’s presentation of Lear’s thoughts and feelings at this point in the play.

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| *In this extract Shakespeare presents Lear as a man on the brink of insanity. The unravelling of his mind is clear in his confusion, nonsense threats and his unpredictable emotions throughout.*  *Towards the end of the extract there is a section where Lear attempts to threaten Regan and her sister with “revenges”; however, he says in the same breath “what they are yet I know not”. By writing these empty threats, Shakespeare is presenting Lear as powerless because suddenly it seems less likely that Lear’s revenges will be “the terrors of the earth” and so his threats mean nothing to Goneril or Regan*. |

***Candidate response to Hamlet extract – opening paragraph***

***Q 3.*** With close reference to the language and imagery in this extract, analyse how Shakespeare presents Hamlet’s character at this point in the play*.*

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| *In this extract we see Hamlet caught between action and hesitation, with him initially seeming propelled forwards to take his revenge against Claudius claiming “Now I might do it pat.” However, Hamlet expresses great uncertainty in the true justice that will be achieved in Claudius’ death, whilst he is praying. He questions himself, exploring that “A villain kills my father; and …do this same villain send to Heaven.” Shakespeare uses the contrasting ideas of murder and heaven to emphasise that Claudius is unworthy of an afterlife in heaven. This recurrs at the end of the extract with Hamlet defiantly stating that Claudius’ “ heels may kick at heaven” while his soul is “damn’d and black as hell”. This drives Hamlet’s certainty that Claudius does not belong to heaven, therefore he cannot, and shall not, enter. Through mirroring these images, Shakespeare emphasises that Hamlet’s mind is unchanged when it comes to the justice his father deserves.* |

***Candidate response to The Tempest extract – opening paragraph***

***Q 5.*** With close reference to the language and imagery in this extract, analyse how Shakespeare presents Prospero at this point in the play.

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| *During the extract, Prospero decides on exacting forgiveness, instead of retribution, against his adversaries that made him endure intolerable strife. His monologue, spoken in blank verse, illustrates that he is a commanding and formidable presence when possessing his sorcery ability, the “so potent art” that Shakespeare hyperbolises to accentuate Prospero’s authority.*  *Initially, incorporating an imperative tone, Shakespeare presents Prospero as being decisive, instructing his spirit Ariel to “go release them”, that is the king’s company who he has charmed as redemption for their indiscretions. The emotive verb “break” has connotations to violence, which, highlighted by the inverted syntax in the phrase “my charms I’ll break”, is paradoxical as Prospero is professing that he will not resort to hostilities, but forgive those who did him wrong, “their senses I’ll restore.”* |

**Preparing a response to a Shakespeare extract question**

Read the extract from *King Lear*, taken from the 2017 WJEC **Eduqas** paper.

* What essential aspects do we learn about Cordelia’s presentation here?
* What do we understand about the situation in this extract?
* What are the key words and phrases from the extract to help the candidate develop a relevant response to the question?

***King Lear***

FRANCE. This is most strange,

That she, whom even but now was your best object,

The argument of your praise, balm of your age,

The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time

Commit a thing so monstrous to dismantle

So many folds of favour. Sure her offence

Must be of such unnatural degree

That monsters it, or your fore-vouch’d affection

Fall into taint — which to believe of her

Must be a faith that reason without miracle

Should never plant in me.

CORDELIA. I yet beseech your Majesty —

If for I want that glib and oily art

To speak and purpose not, since what I well intend

I’ll do’t before I speak — that you make known

It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,

No unchaste action or dishonoured step,

That hath depriv’d me of your grace and favour;

But even for want of that for which I am richer —

A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue

That I am glad I have not, though not to have it

Hath lost me in your liking.

(Act 1 Scene i)

1. With close reference to the language and imagery in this extract, examine Shakespeare’s presentation of Cordelia at this point in the play.

**Section B: Shakespeare essay**

**Unpacking the essay question**

* Each question is designed to enable access to ***AO3*** and ***AO5***.
* Read the question carefully and note the key words/phrases which are intended to encourage **discussion of contexts and different interpretations**.
* **Plan** your approach to the response first, deciding on which areas of the text you will explore in relation to the question.

***Hamlet***

***Q 10****.* How far would you agree that *Hamlet* is “not so much a revenge tragedy as a domestic drama”?

The contextual focus (AO3) of this question is the play’s genre, and so a clear engagement with the significance and influence of the revenge tragedy genre is required, as is an engagement with the concept of ‘domestic drama’.

As the question asks ‘how far would you agree?’ candidates can begin to address AO5 (different interpretations). Responses which appear to ignore part of the question, for example only discussing ‘revenge tragedy’, are self-penalising.

***Extract from candidate response to Hamlet essay***

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| *Shakespeare’s ‘Hamlet’ in many ways conforms more to the title of ‘domestic drama’ than the title of ‘revenge tragedy’. An emphasis on the destruction of family bonds initiates a focus on domestic life, as seen through the relationships of Claudius and Gertrude and Polonius with his children. The domestic matters of love, heartbreak and madness are also thoroughly explored through the characters of Hamlet and Ophelia. However, it must be remembered that these domestic matters are features of the play within themselves; they largely stem from the desire for revenge that causes Hamlet’s “noble mind” to be “o’erthrown”.*  *Immediately established by Act On*e *of the play is the domestic matter of Claudius and Gertrude’s “o’erhasty marriage”.* |

***Extracts from candidate response to The Tempest essay***

***Q.14*** “The island setting, the use of magic and the supernatural all provide us with nothing more than an entertaining spectacle.” How far would you agree with this view of *The Tempest?*

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| *The “tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning” that threatens to “split” the ship carrying the company of Alonso King of Naples acts as a central metaphor for the intrinsic disturbance in the ‘great chain of being’, an Elizabethan concept that designated individuals a rooted station in the social hierarchy determined by their lineage. Through pathetic fallacy Shakespeare foreshadows how the ‘great chain of being’ has been distorted within the context of the play; though a contemporary audience would inextricably associate this tumultuous natural disaster with such a notion, it becomes apparent for any audience via a combination of role reversal and Prospero’s substitute exposition…………*  *In conclusion, the island setting, the use of magic and the supernatural do not solely provide the audience with nothing more than an entertaining spectacle……. Becoming an allegory for artistic creation, the use of magic, supernatural and the island setting makes ‘The Tempest’, in the words of 18th century modernist critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a “romanticised pastoral poem”. The last of Shakespeare’s ‘final plays’, the “ending is despair” as Prospero asserts “this rough magic I here abjure”, halting the spectacle of magic, settin*g and the supernatural as metaphorically emblematic of Shakespeare retiring his quill. |

*Highlighting key: AO1; AO2; AO3; AO5*