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Cambridge IGCSE / IGCSE (9-1) / O Level Literature in English

The aim of this video is to give you and your learners a breakdown of how Assessment Objective 3 is assessed. However, remember that for each candidate's answer, all four assessment objectives are considered by the examiner. The best candidate responses will consider all four when answering the question.

Drama Assessment Objective 3

AO3: Recognise and appreciate ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings and effects.

Notes
In order not to just recognise, but appreciate the ways in which Shakespeare used language, form and structure we are going to look at two of Shakespeare's tragedies: *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*.
Assessment Objective 3 requires you to recognise, and then appreciate, not one, but the *many* ways Shakespeare used language, form and structure to create and shape the *multiple* meanings and effects in his work. In order for you to achieve this, we need first to consider what is meant by *recognise* and *appreciate*.
Candidates will have to demonstrate an understanding of the writer's intentions and methods, and how to respond to the writer's use of language. To recognise and appreciate, we must be able to understand Shakespeare's **methods,** such as: • What techniques has he used? • What effects are they creating? • Does this fit with our expectation? We must also be able to understand Shakespeare's **intentions**: • Why did he do what he did? • How was he trying to shape the audience's thoughts and feelings? • What impact was he trying to have on the audience? To create a response to Shakespeare's use of language we must look at his use of language in close detail and examine the nuances of words to decide why that word was chosen.
Let's start by looking at the Prologue from Act 1 of *Romeo and Juliet*. We shall look at Shakespeare's methods, starting with form and structure.
ACT I **PROLOGUE**

Notes
Two households, both alike in dignity, In fair Verona, where we lay our scene, From ancient grudge break to new mutiny, Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean. From forth the fatal loins of these two foes A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life; Whose misadventured piteous overthrows Do with their death bury their parents' strife. The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love, And the continuance of their parents' rage, Which, but their children's end, nought could remove, Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage; The which if you with patient ears attend, What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend. The opening of the play takes the form of a **sonnet** – a love poem. It is **14 lines** long. It has the ABABCDCDEFEFGG rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet. It is written in iambic pentameter. We know that sonnets are associated with **love** and **death** which are two of the major themes of the play, so Shakespeare is giving the audience a clue to the story. Now we move on to **language,** which also reflects these themes. Through the sonnet, Shakespeare promises the audience 'lovers' that are 'cross'd' and 'mark'd' by forces as powerful as 'death' and the 'star(s)'. He hints at a deadlocked battle between equals suddenly becoming unlocked by juxtaposing an 'ancient grudge' with 'new mutiny'. He uses very obvious caesura in the first four lines to reinforce this sense of division. He promises political intrigue and murder through the play on words 'civil blood makes civil hands unclean'. He even gives away the ending and still claims there is more to say. Shakespeare's intention was to tantalise the audience by offering them a truly juicy story: love and death are considered the two most common themes in literature. So by writing this prologue as a sonnet, making clever use of language, Shakespeare was putting his audience into the correct frame of mind for his play.
But why else does he feel the need to open his play in this way? To answer we need to add in some of our knowledge from Assessment Objective 1 and Assessment Objective 2.
Our Assessment Objective 1 knowledge of the play, and Assessment Objective 2 knowledge of context of production, suggests that one reason could be because the opening scene (Act 1 Scene 1) of *Romeo and Juliet* is a comic scene.
Shakespeare is setting a serious and formal tone in the prologue by using a sonnet which has a strict and rigid form and structure. Act 1 Scene 1 is a comic scene. By starting his tragedy with a comic scene, Shakespeare would have given the wrong message to his audience.

Notes

SCENE 1. Verona. A public place.

Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY, of the house of Capulet, armed with swords and bucklers

SAMPSON

Gregory, o' my word, we'll not carry coals.

GREGORY

No, for then we should be colliers.

SAMPSON

I mean, an we be in choler, we'll draw.

GREGORY

Ay, while you live, draw your neck out o' the collar.

SAMPSON

I strike quickly, being moved.

GREGORY

But thou art not quickly moved to strike.

SAMPSON

A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

GREGORY

To move is to stir; and to be valiant is to stand:
therefore, if thou art moved, thou runn'st away.

Act 1 Scene 1 contains a series of puns, based on homonyms of ‘collier’, immature bravado from Sampson in the lines ‘we’ll draw’ and ‘I strike quickly’, and joking insults from Gregory, ‘if thou art moved, thou runn’st away.’

This scene is unlike most of the rest of *Romeo and Juliet* which is written in blank verse, as it is written in prose. This is because the lack of rhythmic structure allows for the freedom needed to make Sampson and Gregory’s exchange sharp and witty. This is also because the characters are from a lower class and Shakespeare often wrote the dialogue for his lower-class characters in prose. This was partly to show a lack of education and partly as another layer of character presentation, a literary type of costume to work with clothing, accent, walk, laugh, etc.

Let’s now look at the opening of *Macbeth*. Again we will look at Shakespeare’s method to try and work out his intentions.

ACT I

SCENE I. A desert place.

Notes

Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches

First Witch

When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Second Witch

When the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

Third Witch

That will be ere the set of sun.

First Witch

Where the place?

Second Witch

Upon the heath.

Third Witch

There to meet with Macbeth.

First Witch

I come, Graymalkin!

Second Witch

Paddock calls.

Third Witch

Anon!

ALL

Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

Starting with the methods.

The majority of *Macbeth* is written in blank verse. As Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* near the end of his career, the blank verse is less rigid than in *Romeo and Juliet* but experts agree that it is still blank verse.

However, Shakespeare begins not with blank verse, but with something else entirely.

The witches speak in a rhyming style – AABBBCDDEFGHH – which opens and closes with a rhyming couplet.

Notes
The rhythm is also very different as it is a combination of trochaic (DUM de) and iambic (de DUM) rhythm. As normal speech is usually mainly iambic and does not rhyme, this separates the witches from normal people. Why does Shakespeare begin the play with such a different rhyme and rhythm? Because the language of the witches separates them from normal people. This is reinforced when the first thing that we notice when we read the text is the pathetic fallacy in the stage direction 'Thunder and lightning'. Although this is not a spoken element of the text it is still a part of the text and therefore important in creating and shaping meaning and effect. The witches are abnormal – or 'unnatural' – and this difference is reflected in both the language and the setting. Shakespeare continues to use pathetic fallacy to foreshadow the stormy future of Scotland's monarchy and the evil nature of the witches. The witches are currently meeting in thunder and lightning, travel through 'fog and filthy air' and plan to meet in 'thunder, lightning, or in rain' showing they are associated with dangerous, powerful forces and deeds now and in the future. Shakespeare also gives the witches the power to know the future and that the battle will be over 'ere the set of sun'. This foresight is also shown in the witches' line 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair' which foreshadows and pre-echoes Macbeth's very first line in Act 1 Scene 3, 'So foul and fair a day I have not seen'.
Shakespeare's intentions here are clear. He is setting up the character of the witches by showing the audience the extent of their power and leading the audience to believe them and fear them. Awareness of how he uses language, form and structure helps us to see more deeply into his intentions.
Why else does he feel the need to open his play in this way? To answer we need to add in some of our knowledge from AO1 and AO2.
Our knowledge of the context of production of the play tells us that *Macbeth* was written as a tribute to King James I/VI. He is even mentioned in the play. *Macbeth* is loosely based on the historical events of James's family; Banquo is credited with being the founder of the Stuart line. As *Macbeth* the play is quite different from Macbeth the reality, opening the play with the witches helps create a sense of separation from reality and a connection to it through their accurate prophecies. Also, King James was a great believer in witchcraft and very much against the practice of it on religious grounds. This led to the banning of *Macbeth* for five years as he feared the spells were real. Our knowledge of the text also helps us to recognise that many of the main themes and elements of the play are referred to in the opening scene – witchcraft and the supernatural, Macbeth, prophecy, war and violence, deception and the idea that 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair'.
We have looked at how understanding language, structure and form (AO3) helps us to open up and understand the text (AO1) more deeply (AO2), helping us to inform a sensitive and personal response (AO4).

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