

WJEC English Language and Literature GCE: Unit 3

Practising the extract question (Section A): King Lear (*The Collins Alexander Complete Works of William Shakespeare*)

“By focusing on the linguistic and literary techniques used, explore...”

AO1: Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.

AO2: Analyse the ways in which meanings are shaped in text.

1.

Select a passage from the play about 30-35 lines long. It should make sense on its own. Look at past papers for examples of this if required.

2.

Look up any words that you are not familiar with, e.g. “derogate”, “disnatur’d”, “cadent” 1iv ll.280-285

3. Now ask yourself:

- How does this extract relate to what has happened previously? For example, Lear’s commands (“Blow...crack...rage/Strike flat”) at the start of 3ii are an ironic echo of his earlier tyranny. Only mention other parts of the play briefly, in passing, where necessary.
- Who is on stage? How does this extract reveal more of their character? If there is more than one character, what is their relationship at this point? What is going on between them? How is this conveyed in the language?
- Are there any striking visual effects (someone kneeling; on a balcony; brandishing a sword in threat?) How do they relate to the language?
- Is there any dramatic irony? What effect does it have?
- Speech types (e.g. prose or verse, soliloquy, stichomythia)? What effect do they have?
- What kind of tone is used? Any contrasts?
- Conversation analysis: Is there a dominant speaker? What does it tell us?
- Grice’s maxims – are any being flouted or broken? What effect do they have?
- How is imagery and lexis used? What effect do they have?
- IMPORTANTLY: If there is high emotion, does it use the grand style? Details of this? Effects?

The Grand Style

Intensified lexis

compounds, such as “thought-executing”, “oak-cleaving” “high-engender’d” - 3ii, but also *polysyllabic/latinate lexis*: “subscription”, “pernicious” - 3ii

Metaphors and similes

“crack your cheeks” “rumble thy bellyful” 3ii; “sing like birds i’t’h cage” - 5iii

Sound patterns

alliteration - “pattern/patience”, “concealing continents” “keep/caves” - 3ii, *assonance* - “convenient seeming” - 3ii, *consonance* - “crack your cheeks” “strike..thick” 3ii), *reverse rhyme* - “villain-like he lies” - 5iii, *pararhyme* - “spit/spout”, “drench’d/drown’d” - 3ii, *rhyme* - “make us break our vows” - 1i

Epithets

“all-shaking thunder” “servile ministers”, “high-engender’d battles” - 3ii

Metrical features, such as

disruption (where the iambic pentameter is changed) such as *spondees* “Blow winds” “Rage, blow” - 3ii, trochaic line starts “Singe my” - 3ii; but also *caesuras*, *enjambments*, *short or long lines...*

Periodic sentences

where a long sentence delays the main finite verb until the end, for climax “You sulphurous and thought-executing fires...Singe my white head” - 3ii

Rhetorical features

for example, *antithesis*, *apostrophe*, *articulus*, *personification*, *chiasmus*, *metonymy*, etc.

4.

Now write your response (24 minutes total). If you have a study partner, check each other’s work. If not, come back to it in 24 hours and reassess it.

Do

- Start directly and relevantly; look for patterns of language and imagery; make and support points succinctly; always say what effect the language has. Remember that it’s a play!

Don’t

- Write lengthy and redundant introductions e.g. “This is from Act 3 Scene 2 of King Lear, written in 1606...”; make extended references to context; try to take account of other readings or interpretations; use overlong quotations or copy out large portions of the text.