

New Exam Task: *Macbeth*

Read the following extract from Act 1 Scene 1 and then answer the question that follows.

This is the opening of the play. None of the other characters have appeared on stage yet.

A desert place.

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 this speech, explore how far Shakespeare presents the witches as strange but powerful characters.

Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents ambition in this speech
- how Shakespeare presents ambition in the play as a whole.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Sample Answer 1

Shakespeare presents the witches to be strange and powerful throughout the play and the extract. This is evident from the first act. In the extract the quote “when the hurly-burleys done, when the battles lost and won” shows a supernatural side to the witches as they know when they’re going to meet Macbeth and how the battle will end. They then go on to talk to animals, by saying “I come, Graymalkin?” and “Paddock calls” which supports the idea that they have some supernatural qualities and talking to animals is usually synonymous with slightly strange people.

In the rest of the play it is made apparent that the witches don’t dress in the typical attire for the time the play was written, they are described as “that look not like th’ inhabitants o’ th’ earth” meaning they don’t look human and Macbeth says “By each at once her choppy finger laying, upon her skinny lips; you should be women and yet your beards forbid me to interpret that you are so” which shows how they have more masculine features than feminine. Also for no real reason other than a sailor’s wife didn’t give one of the witches some of her chestnuts, they decide to torment a sailor. But perhaps in the worst way, they decide to sexually harass him. One of the witches says “I’ll drain him dry as hay, sleep shall neither night nor day” which implies that they are going to exhaust him. They then go on to say “shall he dwindle, peak and pine” which means that he’s going to waste away. And finally, the witches live on the fringes of society, like feral animals with no social status yet they manage to make Macbeth murder Duncan without actually saying anything about it.

Which leads on to how they are portrayed to be powerful. In the extract they say they “hover through fog and filthy air” which shows how they travel and “fair is foul and foul is fair” shows how they can predict what will happen as this is a reference to the battle and how Macbeth won but many people were killed. In the rest of the play they are shown to have power over the weather/elements as the second witch says “I’ll give thee a wind” to help the other witch search to find the sailor she was looking for. And finally the witches have the power to concoct potions to cause hallucinations and other various unpleasant side effects. This is shown by when the witches give Macbeth a potion which enables him to see into the future.

In conclusion, the witches are portrayed to be strange but powerful in the extract and throughout the rest of the play as they are supernatural, manipulative, weird looking people who Macbeth grows to be dependent on to find out his fate which backfires as he ends up committing murder which would never have happened if the witches hadn’t of put the idea of being king in his head.

Sample Answer 2

Shakespeare offers conventional representation of witches, with references to the familiars, which suggests their strangeness. By placing these characters in 'a desolate place' the audience understand that these creatures are other-worldly, with the setting embodying the nature of these characters. The play's central motif of inversion of normality ('fair is foul') returns later in the play, suggesting their power lies in their ability to meddle with the morality of the protagonist. Yet whether their power is 'real' or merely the power of suggestion is an interesting debate.

In the extract given there are several ways in which Shakespeare makes the three witches to appear as strange and mysterious characters. Before the dialogue even begins the setting at which the witches are found represents their lack of human interaction as they are found in a "desert place." This is an oddity, they lack the knowledge to socialise with others and suggests a power as they are able to predict their encounter with Macbeth, a person they had never met before. It also shows these witches as to fit into the stereotype as they appear to talk to animals. This would show them to be strange as talking to animals shows some delusion, however it could be believed that these animals house the devil proving their power over others.

Throughout the rest of the text the witches are portrayed as having strange qualities, one of these being how their appearance is described as "hags". Their strange appearance leads us to question the feminine features of what a woman should have, whether they have beards or not could question our way of thinking about the appearance matters it is clear that they are unusual in appearance to the women society knows, withered features and rags for clothes showed a complete opposition to the idealistic woman. They also show strange and psychopathic personality tastes, they used any excuse to inflict pain and suffering on those that stood in their way. An example of this is when the witches decide to punish a sailor's wife for not sharing her food with them. They show enjoyment as they discuss how the plan to lure in her husband to in the song can cause them both pain. They also show enjoyment after tormenting Macbeth, showing him his future of corruption, they are then seen to be dancing and singing as they leave Macbeth distraught about what he has done.

Within the extract Shakespeare also gives indication to the witches having unnatural powers which will help them to then lead the downfall of Macbeth. As the three witches enter the scene, thunder and lightning can be heard to create suspense and anticipation to the scene. This creates a feel of fear but can also be linked to the power they may have, as the thunder is heard it is known a point is about to occur which involves the witches. Due to this occurring every time in which the witches appear could link to power they may have over the weather, this would be inhumane and an unnatural power. The witches who we know are in a desolate place, isolated from the rest of society. Somehow we are aware of

Macbeth's existence and where they are going to encounter him. At the extract point where we are discussing Macbeth, we don't know who this character's part in the play is, it therefore shows the witches to have mystic powers as they are able to look into the future. They can also be almost seen to be possessed by some greater power as shown as they all talk in unison and read out a paradox of "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." This is a powerful statement which is read out several times throughout the play, this shows power over the people who read out this statement, but since it is also read by the witches does this indicate a greater power controlling them?

Shakespeare also gives indications to the witches' power through the rest of the play, an example of this is that they are able to take control of Macbeth and manipulate him into killing King Duncan. By simply telling Macbeth that he could become King he takes into his own hands to commit the crime, this brings up the question of can the witches' power be stopped if they are successful in causing the death of the King? They also show power to create spells and other forms of black magic which would be done by witches, they are able to concoct spells which could cause harm to people. The ingredients used within this usually include things which are deemed to be morally wrong, an example of this is the "finger of a strangled babe." As well as being able to control others they can make apparitions that tell the fortune of Macbeth, these ghost like images are something of the supernatural and show power of the supernatural. This could also link to the three witches being able to vanish from in front of people, although some may say that this is an illusion, it could show powers of those who take on the form of a ghost-like being.

Shakespeare's choice to open the play by focusing on the witches suggests their importance in the play, an idea which is confirmed in 1.3. Their power is clear as the play progresses, when we see how they influence Macbeth through their strange prophecies, bringing about his downfall. In the extract, Shakespeare has the witches speak briefly, and the exchange of their lines suggests a closeness, but also a strangeness, as if their power is concentrated in their unity. The inversion of 'fair is foul, and foul is fair' suggests their oddity where normal values are muddled.

Sample Answer 1 Commentary

This is a competent answer. In the first paragraph, the student picks out two useful lines from the extract to show how the witches are *strange*, which is one of the key words in the question. The second paragraph then offers further examples of strangeness, this time from the rest of the play. They are sensible examples, but the student doesn't say much about them – there is little discussion or further thought.

In the third paragraph, the student moves on to look at the other key word in the question – *powerful* – and offers some straightforward points. The conclusion is sensible, but like the rest of the essay, it doesn't say anything of any depth or detail.

Taken as a whole, the essay is focused on the question, but the points are straightforward. The student needed to comment more, rather than just explain the examples.

This would get a mark in Level 3.

Sample Answer 2 Commentary

This is a highly effective answer. In the first paragraph, the student makes an interesting point about how the role of the witches links to the wider themes of the play. This is often the hallmark of a good answer. The second paragraph begins to use examples and offer good comments about the strangeness of the witches.

The third paragraph offers insightful points about the inversion of gender stereotypes. It is written fluently. The fourth paragraph is well developed and indicates that the student is thinking quite deeply at this point in the answer. The penultimate paragraph is also detailed and writes effectively about power. There is some speculation about meaning here.

The essay ends well and once again, makes reference to wider themes of the play.

Taken together, this would get a mark in Level 6.

New Exam Task: *A Christmas Carol*

Read the following extract from the final chapter of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge is a better man.

"A merry Christmas, Bob," said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. "A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year. I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob. Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present Scrooge's transformation into a more admirable man?

Write about:

- * How Dickens presents Scrooge in this extract.
- * How Dickens presents Scrooge's transformation in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

Sample Answer 1

At the start of the novel, Dickens describes Scrooge to be as “Solitary as an oyster.” This tells us that Scrooge was found out to be a hard, lonely person, but if you break into him there is something nice inside. The word “solitary” was used because it describes Scrooge as rather isolated and lonely. Another word used to describe Scrooge was “oyster”, this tells us that there is good in anyone, no matter how hard they are on the outside, they may be something nice on the inside, so if you break him up he will be kind and helpful.

Towards the end of the novel, Dickens describes how Scrooge has changed into an admirable character. He describes Scrooge as the “pearl” since he becomes “merry”, welcoming Bob Cratchit onto “a raise in his salary.” This tells us that Scrooge has changed throughout the novel, since he wouldn’t even give a penny to charity.

Dickens structures the novel so that the reader sees how miserable and miserly the main protagonist is at the start of the story, and in doing so, we see how extreme and necessary the transformation is.

The extract, which is taken from the end of the novel, shows that Scrooge’s transformation is purely outstanding. Another way that you can tell Scrooge has changed to an admirable man is because “he bought a turkey for Bob Cratchit.” This tells you that Scrooge has become a more kind, friendly person who wants to help others who are in need. You can tell that Scrooge has changed from the start of the novel, mainly because Scrooge was a stuck up man that wouldn’t give a single penny to help people in need. However towards the end, he has changed because he kindly bought Bob Cratchit a lovely, big, golden turkey. This shows that Scrooge is trying to become a helpful friend.

Scrooge has become a “merrier”, friendly person towards the end of the novel. Dickens shows this by presenting Scrooge as “a second father for Tiny Tim.” This tells us that obviously Scrooge has changed, to become a more caring guy who wants to help Bob Cratchit’s son.

At the start of the novel, Dickens describes Scrooge as a “miserable, stuck up, selfish man.” Scrooge is described as this because he says “Who needs to help the poor, they will decrease the surplus population.” However Scrooge changes over time, because at the end of the novel, he cares about Tiny Tim, trying to protect him from death. This part also links with how Scrooge has become a “good friend” to Bob Cratchit. Dickens makes Scrooge’s transformation incredible. It makes him become friends with his colleague Bob Cratchit, as well as his children and wife. This transformation brought them closer because Scrooge saw what would happen, not only to himself but Tiny Tim, so he decided to help by giving Bob a pay rise.

Sample Answer 2

Dickens uses Scrooge to show the division between the rich and the poor in his time, and also as a clarion call to his readership: he wants them to see the value and power of change, and how it is essential for society to progress. Scrooge is presented initially as a greedy, self-centred, un-sharing individual with no care for others and their situations. But by the end Scrooge has become enlightened with understanding of the difficulties of the less fortunate people and their own suffering family. This knowledge makes a very generous and empathetic being. "I'll raise your salary." Scrooge wouldn't even give a shilling to charity, like when the "Portly fellow" gives Scrooge the opportunity to donate to which he replies "If they (the poor) are going to die they should just do it and decrease the surplus population," but now he is offering his very own charity and time by choice and will "endeavour to assist Bob's struggling family."

The Scrooge of chapter 1 is shown as a very emotionally cold, stunted person giving the reader the impression/knowledge that he is a very unpleasant and sour protagonist. But in the extract from the end of the story Scrooge becomes a very admirable man. Dickens uses a metaphor in Scrooge's dialogue "We'll discuss your affairs over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop." This is used to show how Scrooge has metaphorically 'thawed out' and his icy, cold mental persona is now one of warmth and welcoming, shown by a hot bowl of something pleasurable.

As well as this, there is a transformation in Scrooge's dialogue. In the beginning of the novel Scrooge's reply to "Merry Christmas" or anything he dislikes would be "Bah Humbug", whereas in the extract taken from the end it is Scrooge saying "Merry Christmas!" to Bob and everyone else. The exclamation marks in Scrooge's speech represent his excitement rather than anger in the beginning of the story. He laughs, sings and cheers, and no longer grunts and groans.

Dickens uses repetition of words such as 'laughter, grin and good' all of these suggest Scrooge's feelings and how it now positively impacts those around him, rather than pushing them away. Dickens, in the extract, describes Scrooge as "a good friend as good a master and a good man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town or borough in the good old world." This description is the complete opposite to how Scrooge was described in the opening of the novel, "cold, frosty, chilled, unpleasant." Everyone knows of his transformation.

The fact that Scrooge allowed people to laugh "on seeing the alteration in him" tells the reader he has become much less self-centred and conscious of what others think of him. Instead he puts his efforts into Tiny Tim becoming "a second father." He becomes very friendly and welcoming, "Scrooge was even better than his word," rather than reclusive and secretive at the beginning of the novel (especially with his money and feelings). Even words couldn't describe Scrooge's kindness.

Dickens shows Scrooge's 'thawing'/transformation stating "His own heart laughed." This use of personification shows Scrooge was happy from the inside out, no more emotionally

stunted and frozen like he was. "This was quite enough for Scrooge," even without the presence of money and luxury, Scrooge believed there was more to happiness than wealth. There would be no more denying Bob of any warmth and coal for a fire. "Make up the fires, and buy another coal scuttle!"

During the course of the novel, his greed transforms into sharing which brings Scrooge more joy than ever before, keeping things for himself like his money and luxuries, e.g. coal and warmth, time and thoughts. Throughout the novel Scrooge has become increasingly empathetic and thoughtful. In the beginning he didn't care about charity and poor people in need, wishing that "if poor people are going to die, they should do it and decrease the surplus population." But by the end he has changed his ways so Tiny Tim doesn't die (as told by the Ghost of Christmas Present "If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, none other of my race will find him here, the child will die") and he ensures his actions impact people positively.

There are several factors influencing Scrooge's transformation: initially, it is a kind of nostalgia for the past. His admiration for Fezziwig's open celebration of Christmas and his employees makes Scrooge want to 'say a word to my clerk'. There is also some pity present to – his misery at seeing Belle's happiness and the love of her family saddens him, and crucially, the pity he feels for the Cratchits and Tiny Tim is a motivating factor. There is self-pity for his isolated childhood. The final strand in his transformation is fear of his own lonely and unrecognised death. Taken together, the visions he is shown have a transformative effect on the miser and underline the moral of the novel: that fairness and community are far more important to human happiness than money.

Overall, Scrooge's transformation is very dramatic. The contrast of coldness and warmth from the beginning to the end of the extract is very effective in representing the gradual transformation of Scrooge. The alteration in his dialogue and actions from grunting to cheering and "whoop-halloo!" shows his change in mood and actions very clearly, as does his transformation of greed into sharing and generosity in the end of the novel, making him a much more admirable man.

Sample Answer 1 Commentary

The student begins with a relevant point about Scrooge in the early part of the novel: the point about him being the pearl in the oyster is apt. The second paragraph is a little thin, however, and although the points are okay, nothing much is said about them. This is also true of the third paragraph, where a sensible point about structure is made, but there is no real development of the idea.

There is good question focus here – the fourth paragraph explains the change in Scrooge and identifies admirable qualities, but it feels like the student doesn't know how to extend the points being made. A similar pattern is evident in the rest of the answer – relevant points are made and good choices of quotation are used, but there is scant discussion.

As a whole, the answer is straightforward and would get a mark in Level 3.

Sample Answer 2 Commentary

This answer starts well, giving a thoughtful overview of Dickens' overall message which ties nicely with the focus of the question. The rest of the first paragraph uses effective examples to demonstrate the nature of Scrooge's transformation. The second paragraph sees how Dickens uses the heat/cold metaphor to exemplify Scrooge's journey, and links this to an effective reference.

The middle section is highly competent and offers some more useful examples to make the overall point – there is a good use of both the extract and the novel as a whole. The student does well to see aspects of Dickens' method. Perhaps the most effective section is the penultimate paragraph, which gives a perceptive overview of the forces affecting Scrooge's change, and makes some very thoughtful comments about Dickens' intent.

This essay blossoms towards the end – enough to warrant a mark in Level 6.

New Exam Task: *An Inspector Calls*

| How far does Priestley present Eric as an admirable character?

Write about:

- what Eric says and does in the play
- how Eric presents him by the ways he writes.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Sample Answer 1

I think Priestley presents Eric as a non-admirable character towards the start of the play but as the play proceeds we get to know Eric's personality, Eric was then seen as an admirable character.

The play started off with a family celebration, where Eric was drinking quite heavily at which point his family turned a blind-eye. We later in the play find out that Eric is excessively drinking. This shows that Eric is not an admirable figure because his family is of a higher class and he should know where the line of drinking an appropriate amount is.

Once the inspector has turned up Eric turns quiet and doesn't want to share any information with the inspector. Then shortly after accepts that he can't keep secrets from the inspector. Eric then says "You know, don't you" which suspects Eric has also taken part in driving Eva Smith to commit suicide. Like Sheila, Eric starts to understand the situation and starts to accept and regret his involvement with Eva Smith/Daisy Renton.

The inspector starts telling the Birling family about Eric's involvement with Eva Smith, the inspector says that Eric had been to a local pub and that is where he met Eva, this suggests he was at the pub as a result of his drinking problem. Once him and Eva had met, Eric in his squiffy state forced himself upon Eva. As a result, Eva gets pregnant.

There are parts in the play when Eric is seen to be an admirable character and an unadmirable character, such as when Eric stole money from his father's textiles company to help care for his unborn child. Eric had good intentions to do with the money he stole, Eric then went on to explain why he didn't go to his father for help "my father is not the type of father you could go to when you're in trouble." Some people may think that even if he did have good intentions to do with the money, he still stole from his father so therefore is not

an admirable character. However I think that Eric is an admirable character for doing this because he was helping and looking after Eva and his unborn child. Also Eric told his father that his intention was to help Eva, but also pay the money back, even though he had no way to do so.

As the play nears to an end Eric is a very admirable character, he accepts that he is guilty and takes the blame by saying "It's alright what happened to the girl and what we all did to her that matters. You lot may be letting yourselves out nicely but I can't. Nor can mother, we did her in alright." At this point Eric and Sheila seem to be the only ones taking the responsibility and blame for what happened to Eva.

Overall I think Eric is an admirable character because he helped Eva by stealing from his father with good intentions.

Sample Answer 2

In “An Inspector Calls”, Eric is presented as a conflicting character that could be perceived as admirable but also presents some detestable qualities. Priestley uses him to show that although society has made errors, it’s possible to change, especially if you are open enough and caring enough to look after your fellow man. In order to show this message, Priestley initially creates a sense of Eric being weak, but in some ways, he becomes a role model – an emblem of the way forward.

Eric is presented as an uncommendable, slightly drunk and uncomfortable character and this is shown when at the start of the play he suddenly laughs for no apparent reason – “I just had to laugh” – which shows that he was a bit “squiffy” as told by his mother, Mrs Birling. It is also shown further on in the play that Eric is alcohol dependent as when he is about to explain everything to the inspector he says “Can I have a drink first?” This explains that to help him get through bad times, he relies on alcohol to push him through and not something else such as his family and friends. This is not a very commendable trait as drinking is not good for your health so this suggests that Priestley wanted to portray Eric as not very admirable and a suspicious character at the start of the play.

In Act Three, Eric is presented as a praiseworthy person in my opinion – this is because he confesses to every bad deed to his family (which would not have been easy) as well as the Inspector. “You haven’t made it any easier for me have you mother?” explains that point as it was already hard for Eric to gather the courage to tell everyone, but when his own family says that the person that had done the terrible things to Eva should go to jail, it would take a lot more bravery to confess all of his wrongdoings. This is a conflicting part of the play as the perception of this scene differs; on the other hand, it could be portrayed that Eric is not ashamed of his wrongdoings and feels no guilt in telling his family yet on the other hand, it could also be presented as Eric feeling very guilty and has been stressing about it ever since (this could explain the reason that he is drinking a lot – to drown his fears) and that he wants to come out to his family but is unable to as a result of his fear of his father and his bitterness to him which is shown later on in the play when Mr Birling seems to care about his money over his son. Eric’s involvement with Eva is told to the audience soon after him talking to his mother and this shocks his family.

Priestley presents Eric in many ways when he describes the despicable event of Eric forcing himself upon Eva using short simple sentences. Eric describes himself as in a “state where a chap easily turns nasty” which suggests that Eric did not do an ethical thing because he had the upper hand as if someone did something that did not please him, he would become violent which could become dangerous. Eva was forced to let Eric in her room and all that

Eric says is “that’s when it happened.” This can be perceived as him being an incredibly horrible person as he isn’t ashamed of telling his family about the events of that day. This means that Priestley wanted Eric to be the villain of the story of Eva Smith, yet the quote can be viewed as Eric feeling so guilty and bad that he did not want to say anymore that could be why he said “that’s when it happened” and not “I did ... to Eva.” Priestley creates a conflicting point in this scene as it is up to the reader whether they perceive it as a good or bad thing that he is confessing everything and might want to change and become a more admirable character.

As a part of Eric’s confession, he states that he stole money from his father’s accounts which is against the law therefore making him a shameful person. As well as this, Eric also denies the fact that he did steal the money by saying “No, not really, I intended to pay it back.” This could just be a lie trying to cover up his crimes which would make him a more deceitful person or he could be genuinely telling the truth and wanted to pay back his father as he feared the consequences. Either way, it seemed that Eric was being presented as a coward and a criminal but as he is presented as contradictory, he may well change and present more admirable qualities.

Eric is seen to be changed and presents a more admirable personality after that scene as when Mr Birling asks about the money, Eric does not care about it but rather cares for Eva and about what happened to her – “The money is not the important thing. It’s what happened to the girl and what we all did to her that matters.” This shows that he has realised his mistake and knows that repenting is more important than the money that he stole. This is admirable as a person that cares more about money than humanity is a terrible person so Eric has presented himself as a contradicting person of many emotions.

Priestley uses brackets in front of speech to show Eric’s emotions. This presents Eric as admirable as well as disrespectful. Whenever Eric is being spoken to after his confessions, the tone of his voice suggests that he was not talking in a respectful way but rather aggressive (this is shown when (angrily) or (bitterly) is put in front of his speech.) This could be taken as Eric being an impolite and rude person which is not very admirable qualities to have. On the contrary, this threatening tone may also be linked to how he feels about himself; he may feel very bad after all he has done to Eva and might feel enraged at himself for doing all of the terrible deeds that he did.

All in all, Eric has been a contradictory character on the topic of being admirable. This is shown by his transition from the start of the play to the end of the play. At the start of the play, Eric is seen as a spoilt and drunk child of a rich businessman, which does not represent admirable characteristics. However, by the end of the play, Eric is seen to regret all of his mistakes and realises that he needs to change his perspective of life and does that therefore making him admirable.

Sample Answer 1 Commentary

The answer begins with a sensible idea – that Eric becomes a better person. The phrasing is slightly clumsy and as an introduction, it feels quite sparse. The next paragraph offers a similar lack of detail, but the focus on the question is good. One of the problems with this essay is that it often avoids the debate – the third and fourth paragraphs are mainly re-telling the story rather than advancing an argument.

The large paragraph towards the end is much better – a good discussion is offered, and a sensible conclusion reached. It's a shame there wasn't more writing like this during the whole essay

On balance, there is enough competent ideas to get a mark in Level 3.

Sample Answer 2 Commentary

There is a level of detail in this answer which makes it stand out. The question focus is good throughout, and although some of the phrasing could be better in places, the student is obviously thinking in some depth. The opening paragraph sets the essay in the context of the wider message of the play. It would have been nice to read more about this in the essay.

You will notice that as the essay progresses, many references are used by the student to support the ideas being made. The student acknowledges that Eric has his flaws and that some of his words and actions could be interpreted in different ways. There is a good sense of how Priestley shapes the character and it feels like a thoughtful, detailed essay.

This essay would have benefited from more links to the wider ideas in the play, but it still does enough to merit a mark in Level 5.

Exam Task: *Bayonet Charge*

Look at the June 2017 task:

Compare how poets present the effects of war in 'Bayonet Charge' and in **one** other poem from 'Power and conflict'.

[30 marks]

Bayonet Charge

Suddenly he awoke and was running – raw
In raw-seamed hot khaki, his sweat heavy,
Stumbling across a field of clods towards a green hedge
That dazzled with rifle fire, hearing
5 Bullets smacking the belly out of the air –
He lugged a rifle numb as a smashed arm;
The patriotic tear that had brimmed in his eye
Sweating like molten iron from the centre of his chest, –

10 In bewilderment then he almost stopped –
In what cold clockwork of the stars and the nations
Was he the hand pointing that second? He was running
Like a man who has jumped up in the dark and runs
Listening between his footfalls for the reason
15 Of his still running, and his foot hung like
Statuary in mid-stride. Then the shot-slashed furrows

Threw up a yellow hare that rolled like a flame
And crawled in a threshing circle, its mouth wide
Open silent, its eyes standing out.
20 He plunged past with his bayonet toward the green hedge,
King, honour, human dignity, etcetera
Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm
To get out of that blue crackling air
His terror's touchy dynamite.

Ted Hughes

Sample Answer 1

In both 'Bayonet Charge' and 'Remains' they both speak about war and how it's one soldier fighting for his life and there is no looking back, it's a constant fight where they don't have time for anything, not even sleep.

In the 'Bayonet Charge' he says "he awoke and was running," this shows how terrified the soldier is and he has no turning back, he just has to keep on running. Both poets present a lot of effects of war but in the 'Bayonet Charge' it shows a lot of fear and how strong the soldier is to keep running and fighting. The poet uses words such as "stumbling, rifle, fire, patriotic tear, dark, honour" and "dignity" to show us how hard it is to be in the war and to be fighting in the war shows a lot of bravery and love for their country.

Both poets make the readers feel like they are in there watching the soldier fight and seeing how hard it is for a soldier to be fighting for their country, they say things like patriotic tear which makes us feel like he is crying to the point where his tears are molten because of how cold it is and he is just trying to find a space to calm down and have a rest.

In both poems they make you feel that they've been fighting for so long and they just want the fight to be over so they can go home to their families. They both show a lot of fear and dramatic irony to the point they can't take the fight any more.

Sample Answer 2

In 'Bayonet Charge' and 'Charge of the Light Brigade', both poets present war as a terrible experience which cannot be justified by any cause. Whilst in 'Bayonet Charge' Ted Hughes focuses on the soldier's detailed perspective of war, Alfred Lord Tennyson explores the effects of war on soldiers as a whole. The effect is the same – the coruscating condemnation of war's horror and futility.

In 'Bayonet Charge', the poet illustrates the horrible experience of one unnamed soldier and presents the effects of war on him as being completely negative. By beginning it with "suddenly he awoke" Hughes immediately throws the reader straight into the chaos of war which intensifies the impact the poem has on readers. Hughes uses the adverb "suddenly" to demonstrate how the soldier feels vulnerable and confused because he has just woken up but is instantly in a dangerous war zone. Also, the use "he" keeps the soldier anonymous which tells the reader that each soldier goes through this terrible experience of war. In comparison, in 'Charge of the Light Brigade' the poet explores the impact of war on all the soldiers collectively. The poet wants us to "honour the Light Brigade, honour the charge they made". This creates the impression that all the soldiers go through this experience

together and are all affected. The word “they” shows the reader that, as a whole, the soldiers in war must go through seeing deaths and other horrors but he doesn’t focus on the experience of a single soldier. Also, “honour” shows that unlike Hughes in ‘Bayonet Charge’, the poet believes that the soldiers should be respected and appreciated and includes some positivity. Here, Tennyson shows how grateful he is for the soldiers who fought in the Crimean War and shows that they should be honoured.

Furthermore, in ‘Bayonet Charge’, the poet shows the reader how soldiers are mentally affected by war and how being in a war zone changes them. Now, “the patriotic tear that had brimmed in his eye” is “sweating like molten iron.” This suggests that actually being in the war changes the soldiers’ perspectives as they no longer care about honour and patriotism when their lives are in danger. Hughes may have intended to show the reader that in war, soldiers are permanently changed because they have to go through such a terrible event. Here, the poet might have wanted to show that war is always pointless as it can never justify the mental impact it has on soldiers, for example, after the war some suffer from PTSD and struggle to come to terms with what they have done or been through. On the other hand, in ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’, Tennyson seems to focus more on the physical sacrifices made in war. The first few stanzas all end with the same line, “Rode the six hundred”. This is a constant reminder to the reader of just how many soldiers are killed in war and the repetition could suggest that he is angry at this. He portrays the violence and ridiculous number of killings which war results in.

Also, in ‘Bayonet Charge’, the poet presents how the main enemy of the soldier is the opposition which causes the main impact on the soldier. The writer’s use of the metaphor “bullets smacking the belly out of the air” creates the impression that the weapons were extremely dangerous and harmful. The use of “smacking” and “belly” could suggest to the reader that because weapons are almost personified as humans, it also seems as though the soldiers are being dehumanised; they are a mere weapon to be used in war. Whereas, in ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’, the poet presents the impact of the war caused by the leaders who seem to be the soldiers’ enemy. Tennyson describes how “someone had blundered”. This demonstrates how because of a mistake of those in authority, the soldiers are going through such a horrible experience. The reader infers that the enemy of the soldiers is not the opposing army but the leaders who put them in this position in the first place. The poet included this because in the Crimean War, the people in charge of the soldiers gave them the wrong orders so the soldiers followed them which resulted in many deaths.

In addition, ‘in Bayonet Charge’, the poet presents the effects of war as solely negative because the soldier cannot escape his situation. Even his “king, honour, human dignity, etcetera” are “dropped like luxuries in yelling alarm”. This shows how the experience on the battlefield is so chaotic and harsh that nothing else but his life matters to him anymore. Hughes uses the word “etcetera” to suggest to the reader that patriotism is now unimportant as the soldier dismisses any reason that he is in the war, he just wants to escape and get “out that blue crackling air”. Here, we learn how, in war, soldiers find it extremely difficult to endure the situation but feel as though they cannot escape. Similarly, in ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’, Tennyson also presents the way soldiers are trapped by using the metaphors “valley of Death” and “mouth of Hell”. This shows the reader that for the soldiers, death is inevitable and they must face the reality of their situation. This helps

the reader to sympathise even more with soldiers because not only do they suffer physically, they are haunted by the fact that they will die in this way. Tennyson does this to show how the soldiers must have felt in the Crimean War as well as other wars where they are constantly surrounded by “cannons” and life threatening danger.

Overall, both poets present the impact of war in an extremely horrible way; although the experiences they focus on differ, both writers reveal the fundamental pointlessness and human cost of conflict.

Sample Answer 1 Commentary

This is a brief answer which doesn't really offer a lot of detail. There are some positive aspects, for example, the ideas about the soldier's lack of choice, his fears and the hardship of war.

Some apt references from the printed poem are given, and they are reasonably well-selected. The choice to link the poem to 'Remains' could have worked, but unfortunately, there are very few direct points made about this poem. While direct quotations aren't expected, the vague ideas on Armitage's poem needed more detail to make the points work.

The brevity of the response and the weakness of the points about 'Remains' means that this get a mark in Level 2.

Sample Answer 2 Commentary

The introduction to this essay sees the wider ideas straight away – that war is a futile business. It's clear that the student is fully in control of the response, and knows the texts very well. This student has decided to look closely at the word choices in 'Bayonet Charge' and this works because the ideas which emerge are always made relevant to the task.

An impressive knowledge of Tennyson's poem is shown and the poet's choices are explored well, giving the impression that the right areas are being selected and fashioned in a way that offers salient ideas about war. The essay brims with detail and offers the occasional perceptive idea.

This is a well-written, detailed essay which makes a sensible choice to compare the printed poem to Tennyson's. A mark in Level 6 is appropriate.