



Examiners' Report

June 2023

GCE English Literature 9ET0 02

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications come from Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk.

Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.



Giving you insight to inform next steps

ResultsPlus is Pearson's free online service giving instant and detailed analysis of your students' exam results.

- See students' scores for every exam question.
- Understand how your students' performance compares with class and national averages.
- Identify potential topics, skills and types of question where students may need to develop their learning further.

For more information on ResultsPlus, or to log in, visit www.edexcel.com/resultsplus. Your exams officer will be able to set up your ResultsPlus account in minutes via Edexcel Online.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk.

June 2023

Publications Code 9ET0_02_2306_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2023

Introduction

This group of students was the first post pandemic cohort to have experienced relatively little disruption to their A-level teaching in the form of national lockdowns and school closures (although of course their experiences at school were significantly affected by these). As such, examiners were very pleased to see that students were extremely well prepared to answer questions on their set texts and had an in-depth knowledge of not only the books but also the writers and their craft, and the contexts affecting their production and interpretation. The standard of answers was extremely high, and it was rare that students had not addressed all four of the assessment objectives being tested on this paper. Students had clearly practised their exam timing and essay technique, and there were far fewer incomplete or truncated answers seen than in the 2022 series.

A key factor for success in AO1 is whether or not the student has directly answered the question. This may sound obvious, but examiners noted that some students had tried to adapt pre-prepared answers (perhaps recalled from mock exams or completed as part of their exam preparation) to fit the terms of this year's questions. For example, questions 7 and 8 (which asked about the exploration of death and the presentation of the experience of learning) often became essays about otherness, identity, or the patriarchal control of women. This approach was rarely successful unless precisely directed at the specific question posed, and candidates are reminded that part of the skill being tested on this paper (and indeed on every part of the A level English Literature course) is their ability to formulate clear arguments which demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the texts, writers and literary concepts they have studied. For this reason, generic introductions are not particularly helpful. The best introductions showed that students had thought about the specific question and outlined their main ideas in response to this. Planning the response will help students to gather their points and avoid making generic opening statements (along the lines of 'The writers approach the theme in various ways').

In order to demonstrate this understanding, it is important that students closely reference the texts they have studied. For structural or whole text points, this can sometimes be appropriately achieved using paraphrase or description of an event or characters, but in most cases using direct quotations would give students more opportunities to develop their ideas and probe the methodological approaches of authors, and thus achieve marks for both AO1 and AO2.

The skill of AO2 (analysing how the writer's craft shapes meanings) lies in what is done with these quotations. The best responses delved into textual details, rather than using their quotations as 'evidence' that a character felt/behaved a certain way. The focus here should be on the writer, what they are doing and why. Simply using a quote is not enough; students must say something about it and consider the deeper meanings it creates.

AO3 asks students to consider the contextual factors which shape our understanding of the texts. Literary and critical contexts were often used successfully, for example many students applied feminist or Marxist readings when discussing different interpretations of their novels. Many also wrote successfully about genre contexts, considering how genre conventions were being used, changed and adapted by the writers. Many students focus rather too exclusively on generic statements about the social and cultural conventions of a particular time period. While this is often relevant in helping us to understand the world into which the text was written, it can lead to an assumption of homogeneity which does not truly reflect the views and ideas which informed the authors.

There were few responses which wrote about the novels separately, and thus AO4 was very well addressed in this series. Most students successfully drew links between their pair of texts, moving between them frequently to draw out connections and comparisons. However weaker answers often used linking adverbials ('similarly', 'in contrast') without actually making a connection between the texts, going on to make an entirely unconnected point on their second text.

Answers which were rewarded in level 2 or below tended to be descriptive in nature, often focusing on characters as if they were real people rather than **characterisation** by the writers, an important distinction to make in AO2.

At the other end of the mark scheme, level 5 responses were characterised by their evaluative approach. Centres may wish to consider making clear to students what Edexcel means by this. Some were clearly aware of the need to evaluate, but had interpreted this as making a value judgement, often commenting on which of their two texts was 'more successful'. In this specification, evaluation refers to a consideration of different possible meanings, and an appreciation of the alternative ways in which texts can be studied and approached. This need not include explicit reference to critical views or theories (which are not assessed on this paper); evaluation can also be shown in the candidates' own ideas about what an author **might** have meant, how varied contexts **may** have influenced the production or reception of the novels, or how a detail from the text **could** be interpreted. At the top end of level 5, candidates will start to assert their own ideas, developing a critical voice, while remaining open minded about the possibilities of a text.

Question 1

Question 1: presentation of characters who make important choices

Many students successfully wrote about the important choices made in their novels. Many focused on how important choices such as marriage were outside of women's control, considering how some had choices made on their behalf. Some of the strongest responses considered the consequences and 'ripples' of these choices, and what messages writers were delivering by presenting these; there was thoughtful discussion of Briony's choices to impose her narrative on other characters and thus remove their ability to make their own decisions, ultimately leading to the downfall of the family. Mr Gradgrind's choice to remove imagination from his school curriculum was also frequently discussed, along with the dehumanising effects of this, particularly in relation to Louisa, and her pursuit of agency. Some weaker answers focused on the choice itself, rather than the presentation of the character **making** the choice, which tended to lead to a more narrative and less analytical approach.

This is the beginning of a level 5 essay on *Hard Times* and *Atonement*, which scored full marks, 20+20.

Text 1:

Hard Times

Text 2:

Atonement

Both McEwan and Dickens utilise various literary techniques to explore the morality of important choices as well as the characters who make them. Atonement is centered entirely around one misguided choice and the butterfly effect it creates throughout, ~~through the~~ whereas Hard Times is nearly entirely about the cause and effect of many terrible choices, and lays blame at the doorstep of those who make them.

The choices in both novels are expressed through their very structure in order to craft a clear dichotomy between

consequence and causation, particularly within Dickens' *Hard Times*. The three 'books' the originally serialised novel is divided into are titled 'Sowing', 'Reaping' and 'Garnering'. As well as being subtle religious allusion intended for a more religious Britain, there are natural cause and effect connotations between the steps, like harvesting crops. Given that the novel opens in a 'plain, bare, monotonous vault of a school room' with 'nothing but facts', it becomes clear that the original choice is 'Sowing', the root, if you will, of the deprived and unnatural growth and ~~pre~~ perturbed life of the Gredgrind children lies with their father and his obsession with utilitarianism. While it is clear he is not the cut-and-dry protagonist of Dickens' allegorical novel, he is a puppet master of sorts, both through this choice and the choice made at the end of the 'sowing' process: to marry off his only daughter. Dickens exhibits no subtlety about where the blame lies in his ~~allegorical~~ critique of

utilitarian ideology, clearly illustrated on 'Down' where he utilizes Louisa to say "Your philosophy and your teaching will not save me" and "you have brought me to this". As we are encouraged to root for Louisa, we have immediate distaste for Gradgrind that does not dissipate despite his retribution and lessening "squareness". Dickens use of structure allows us to accurately place the blame on Gradgrind (and symbolically, all practitioners of his "philosophy") for the spoiled harvest of his children. Similarly, Atonement's entire purpose is to explore the morality of choice and those who are complicit in it. Briony's choice in Part One, to falsely accuse Robbie, dictates the subsequent lives of every person throughout the novel. In the novel-within-a-novel structure, Briony's perception and exploration of Robbie's experiences in Dunkirk is muddled and messy, a desperate method of returning him (as Atonement) to his "Cee". Cecilia and Robbie choose not

to forgive her, they choose to be together, they choose to wait for each other, but thanks to the original choice of Briary, as explained by the epilogue, this is simply the illusion of choice. as Briary removes their real lives (and deaths) and chooses for ^("I was not so self-serving to let them fight me") them, again manipulating so many lives through her choice. McEwan's choice of title 'Atonement', or literally 'at-one-ment', is Briary desperately trying to be 'at-one' with her awful choice, and fails. Both writers expertly use structure to explore important character choice and consequence, ultimately providing the audience with someone to blame for all the terrible occurrences, should they feel morally inclined to do so.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The essay focuses immediately on the issue of morality within choices, giving a clear indication of the approach being taken to the question. Connections are drawn in the introduction which are developed in more detail as the essay progresses.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

The short quotations used in this essay allow the student to analyse their deeper meanings with precision.

Question 2

Question 2: the ways writers explore the roles of children

The word 'roles' was often a differentiating one in this question, as it guided students to consider the narrative function of children in the novels, rather than their presentation. A wide range of approaches were seen, considering the innocence of child characters, their symbolic meanings within the texts, their growth and development. Some high-level responses went on to consider the ways that the expectations of children were subverted, for example Lola and Celie being forced into adult roles at a young age, or Briony remaining in a childish world of fantasy even as an adult. Contextual links to the experiences of children at the times the novels were set were usefully made, with many considering how writers used children to condemn aspects of society, or to make comments on parental behaviour and its effects. Children were often interpreted as a symbol of hope, and for doing things differently in the future.

This extract from a level 4 response on *The Color Purple* and *Hard Times* makes detailed links between texts and context. It was awarded 14+14.

Hard Times also explores the role of children in religion, specifically immersed in a Christo-centric society. The Book is split into three, the titles being 'sowing', 'reaping' and 'gathering'. These biblical allusions create direct parallels to the bible, specifically Paul 6:7 where he states to the Galatians 'a man must reap what he sows'. Consequently, these allusions may establish the fate for the children in Hard Times. The 'sowing' may link to Gradgrind's utilitarianism - stating, 'these children must learn facts and nothing but facts', suggesting

that ~~his~~ replacing Christianity with utilitarianism will only result ~~and~~ in sin and eventually, 'the reaping'. This is then shown in Louisa, who's 'soul' has no 'graces' as she is deprived of her emotion due to her father's teachings. Again, Dickens may be implying that Gradgrind's need for industrialisation is affecting his children. More biblical allusions are demonstrated; her 'soul' inferring that her entire entity is corrupt with 'facts' and therefore sin. Her descent to sin as a result of her childhood is further confirmed, Dickens carefully titling the last chapters as 'lower and lower' and 'down'. Physically, this ~~could~~ could mean Gradgrind's eventual death. However it could alternatively ~~mean~~ demonstrate Louisa's descent to sin as she becomes corrupt by utilitarianism. Contrastingly, Walker displays children in religion as a 'journey back to spirituality' which Celie eventually finds. Her letters begin with 'Dear God', explicitly showing her faith in Christianity. However, Walker later details

Celie's lack of knowledge of the real God, believing he is a 'bearded' 'white man' as white societal stereotypes taught her to. Walker's morally ambiguous cues on religion are shown through Celie's character progression from childhood as she gradually converts to spirituality. Critic Richard Wesley claims 'Walker exposes the darkest secrets of a country' which is prevalent within 'The Colour Purple' as she demonstrates Celie's gradual decline in God as the traditional stereotype. Instead, she begins her letters with 'Dear God', 'Dear stars', 'Dear sky', in which the repetition demonstrates Walker's ambiguity. Perhaps, she is unsure of what 'God' is herself, and reflects this through Celie as she confides in him throughout her childhood. This is finally confirmed through Nettie at the end of the play, metaphorically stating that God is 'inside us' and 'more spiritual'. Thus, Walker successfully shows how childhood and the role of child development may progress our change in faith and religion.



The essay successfully centres around a contextual comparison, in this case the way religious contexts affect the roles of children in the novels. There is a good balance between specific contextual detail and examples from the texts which link to these.



Try to link contexts to specific examples from your novels.

Question 3

Question 3: presentation of journeys

Some excellent responses were seen considering the literal and metaphorical journeys undertaken in the texts studied. Many considered how the literal journeys were used as symbolic of other kinds of journey, for example a journey to reach a point of understanding or self-development. Context was interwoven well, with consideration of how the contextual factors had influenced the writers and their texts. Some students considered how the journeys began and ended, for example discussing Conrad's use of the frame narrative, and the circularity of *The Lonely Londoners*. This was a successful approach because students were able to consider character developments and the wider messages and themes of the texts. Several high-level answers made interesting contextual links to philosophical and psychological readings of the texts, with references to Freud and Nietzsche providing a springboard to some interesting ideas. There was also interesting discussion of the physical journeys in the texts, and how descriptions of places were often symbolic reflections of the political landscape, for example the use of physical distance between the English and Indian settlements in *A Passage to India*, with the hilltop location chosen by the colonisers being understood as a symbol of social hierarchy.

This essay on *Heart of Darkness* and *The Lonely Londoners* gained full marks. The start of it is reproduced here.

Conrad and Selvon both construct ~~journey~~ journeys within their novellas. Conrad not only takes us on a physical journey through The Congo, but it is also a ~~p~~ journey through the psyche as ~~the reader sees~~ Marlow and the reader unexpectedly discover the dark truths of European colonisation. While ~~Conrad's journey~~ Marlow's journey primarily takes place in three settings: London, Belgium, and, The Congo. The characters in 'The Lonely Londoners' all remain in London for the entirety of ~~the novella~~ ^{their journey}, reflecting the stasis of ~~their~~ what one critic described as their 'arrested adolescence'. Due to their nickname of 'the boys' as they are not allowed by white British society to complete their journey of ~~to~~ fully integrating themselves into British society and are trapped within the stasis of not quite being a fully British man, due to their outsider identity due to their race.

⊕ Through the character of Marlow, Conrad demonstrates the prospect of a journey into the unknown. Marlow reflects on how upon looking at a map of Africa he was 'charmed by it', the use of 'charmed' can have a duplicitous meaning consisting ~~both~~ images of light ~~and gaiety~~ of but also a darker meaning, linking back to the Bible when Eve was also 'charmed' into eating an apple which eventually led to destruction and downfall. This can be linked to the concept of a 'chiaroscuro' which is the intermingling of both light and dark. The ~~fog~~ in 'brooding' fog in the

opening can also be evidence of Conrad's use of the chiaroscuro as it is a nebulous obfuscation of the dark truths of London and indeed most of Europe, as the fog is concealing the truths of the true intentions colonialism. Marlow's journey takes him into Belgium, which like London ~~is~~ was a central, prosperous city at the time, and ~~appears to be a place of~~ outwardly seems as a place of opportunity for him and a stepping stone to him embarking on his intended journey of discovery, but there is the ^{portentous} ^{foreboding} image of the 'white sepulchre', something beautiful ~~beautiful~~ outwardly, but contains a darkness within. Like possibly reflecting Marlow's naivety of the truths and horrors that he will eventually witness on his journey. Like Marlow, in the ~~Lonely Lonely Londoners~~, Galahad ~~has a son~~ arrives to London with a strong sense of hope, described to be 'looking about the desolate station as if he in an exhibition hall on a pleasant summer evening', ~~the~~ Galahad's childish hope during a 'grim winter evening' reflects the mindset of many ~~immigrants~~ immigrants who came to London in hope of a better life, as they were promised British citizenship, leading them to believe that they could easily integrate themselves into ~~the~~ White British Society.*

^{Eventually} ~~but~~ like the rest of 'the boys' Galahad begins to lose hope. A ~~subtle~~ symbol of Galahad's loss of hope can be when he begins to 'shiver', after his first few ~~of~~ months in London, he has lost the ~~of~~ sunny optimism of his ~~to~~ the prospect of his journey, and ~~instead~~ ~~or~~ ~~begin~~ that previously

~~kept~~ kept him warm, and instead is met with the bitter chill of the failure of his journey.

⑩ Galahad's name is remnant of King Arthur's greatest knight, who went in search of a prize, but ultimately does not succeed, and creates a sense of ~~irony within that~~ the satirical/satirical Calypso nature of much of the novella, of something outwardly bright and exuberant, eventually internally having a darkness to it.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The answer considers the **significance** of the journeys, and the deeper meanings and messages of the writers. It touches on a wide range of issues such as race, identity, nationhood and colonisation.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

When analysing, consider why the part of the text you are commenting on is significant in the novel as a whole? What is its deeper meaning?

This essay on *The Lonely Londoners* and *Heart of Darkness* was given marks at the top of level 2, 8+8.

Both texts begin their stories through journeys. We can see this in *TLH* where Moses 'hops on a number 46 bus at the corner of Chepstow road - boat-train. The specific name-dropping of the journey itself would be significant for a contemporary as well as modern ~~the~~ readers who live in London as it gives the story as well as Moses' journey realism. The reason for Moses' journey is significant also as he is on the way to pick up another Caribbean immigrant from the train station named Henry James (Galahad) despite 'seeing rough' himself and and 'get up from a nice warm bed and dress and come out in this nasty weather to go and meet a fella that he didn't even know'. The emphasis on the 'nasty weather' ('grim winter evening') is used to highlight Moses not wanting to pick up Galahad from the train station as he didn't actually want to help him. This is a direct link to Moses in the Bible who split the red sea to guide other people through which is very similar to Moses in *TLH* guiding immigrants through London. The journey that these immigrants faced is also very significant as they came from the Windrush Generation, meaning that they were the same group of people that moved from the Caribbean to England/predominantly London in hope of the promised 'motherland' and great work. This

The Windrush generation is a key part to the story as characters in the novel itself experience many of the backlash ~~due to~~ from it. This is best showcased through Harris, a black man who tried his best to fit into society, 'he like English customs and thing', 'Only thing, Harris face black'. This means that due to the colour of his skin he was unable to fully live the life that he wanted to. Harris is meant to present the journey of those immigrants who tried to abandon their culture for the fantasy of London.

Although Heart of Darkness also begins with a journey, ~~the~~ the focus on the physical journey is much more important as on the 'Nellie' Marlow begins his story/journey of Congo. Congo throughout Marlow's journey is presented as uncivilised and under-developed with the natives/slaves being described as 'black shapes' and 'black shadows of disease and starvation'. This is drastically different to TLE where the journeys that the characters face (Moses e.g. Moses reflecting on the past two years at the end of the novel) are seen as positive/enlightening experiences whereas 'HoD' chooses to describe these journeys ~~at~~ at the expense of other people's torture. Many critics like Achille Mbembe have said that

Mabo is used as a mouthpiece for Conrad as he doesn't develop in the story like other characters usually do. Instead he carries the same beliefs he always did and becomes obsessed with another coloniser named Kurtz.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

Although this candidate clearly knows their texts well, their comments are rather general in nature, and has a tendency to tell the story rather than comment on what the writer is doing and why. Because each text is written about in turn, there is little detail in the comparisons until quite late in the essay.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Start making connections between the texts early on in your essay, and keep adding detail as you continue writing.

Question 4

Question 4: the ways writers resolve their narratives

Fewer responses were seen to this question in the colonisation pairing. Candidates were able to discuss the idea of resolution in a variety of ways, for example thoughtful discussion was seen of the final chapters of the novels, moments of climax and resolution, and the very final passages of the texts. Selvon and Conrad were the most commonly seen pairing, and students were able to discuss the unusual narrative forms of the novels, considering how this shaped readers' sense of resolution or its absence.

This essay on Heart of Darkness and The Lonely Londoners was rewarded at the lower end of level 4, 13+13.

Both 'Heart of Darkness'⁽¹⁸⁹⁹⁾ by Joseph Conrad and 'The Lonely Londoners'⁽¹⁹⁵⁶⁾ by Sam Selvon resolve their narratives with feelings of uncertainty. At the ends of both texts the focalisers (The First Narrator in 'Heart of Darkness' and Moses in 'The Lonely Londoners') are unsure of what the future holds for them. This could link to how both the authors were themselves unsure of what the future would bring, having experienced either the act of colonisation and its immediate effects on the colonised, or the ^{times} ~~experiences~~ impact of colonisation only 57 years later on migrants moving to London.

In 'Heart of Darkness', Marlow at first appears eager and his narrative by ^{to} ~~confirming~~ the facade of ~~the negative~~ colonisation as ^{the} ~~a~~ positive force to much of Europe, at the time believed it was. (Inspired by Galton's comparative

worth of the different races, which stated that your worth as a human was determined by your skin colour, many Europeans would have thought of native Africans as uncivilized and barbaric, and therefore deserving of the western influence. He upholds this by lying to Kurtz's intended about Kurtz's final words, claiming they were ^{'[her] name'} ~~of her~~ rather than an exclamation of the horrors of colonisation. ^{'The horror! The horror!'} (Once he has done this, he feels an 'inconceivable triumph', perhaps suggesting that he feels he has done the right thing.) By lying to the intended, Marlow is effectively lying to the whole of Belgium, (which she represents, as her 'pale' complexion and 'fair' hair are reminiscent of the 'whited sepulchre' of Brussels) and concealing the truth. However, he clearly ^{eventually} feels the need to reveal the true horrors and effects of colonisation, hence his unloading of the tale to the crew aboard the *Nellie*. Only then is his narrative able to be resolved, ^{and his ironical complaint.} ~~and then~~ The First Narrator, however, is left feeling as though there is // However, the novella ~~that~~ is resolved with the Thames, at the start an 'interminable waterway' now leading 'into the heart of an immense darkness'. The contrast between the depiction of light and opportunity at the beginning (London is a 'luminous space' and the water 'shines] peacefully'), and the ominous 'black bank of clouds' at the end clearly show the change that has occurred in the

possibly the
First Narrator, and other passengers of the Nellie, - instead of being fueled with the conviction that they are the 'emissaries of light' as they complete missions for the company, the First Narrator is instead filled with foreboding. ~~Perhaps~~ He is unsure where their path will take him, and wary of what the effects of his actions will ~~have~~ be.

Similarly, in 'The Lonely Londoners' ends with a feeling of worry, as Moses stands by the Thames and reflects on his place in London (Both texts ending on the Thames ~~or~~ heightens the ^{idea} ~~emotions~~ that both the authors may have been feeling^{similar emotions} - Conrad, perhaps 'guilt' and ^{worry at the effects of his actions} ~~selfish~~ apprehension at the future of migrants in London, and suggests that already in Conrad's time were people beginning to explore the impact of colonisation, ~~and~~ ^{as} only two generations later were those effects causing great upheaval to the ~~man~~ ^{norm} as migrants began arriving in London after the British Nationality Act of 1948.) Moses consistently feels a sense of stasis throughout the novel, as his lack of upward mobility causes him to become cynical and almost depressed, 'unable to move his body'. ~~However, at the very end, despite him feeling~~ ~~the~~ Despite the joys that summer brings him, he (the 'kilt-kilt laughter') Moses experiences a great sense of unaccomplishment, 'a great aimlessness', suggesting he

perhaps thinks his time in London has ~~ended to~~ produced nothing. ~~As the~~ The novel, however, ends on a more hopeful note than one might expect, considering Moses' ~~own~~ hopeless ^{attitude} ~~thoughts~~, as he muses on writing a book - perhaps here, Selvon is putting himself into his novel, and projecting the hopes he had about 'The Lonely Londoners' onto the page, trying to make the readers understand the doubts and struggles the migrants faced. He therefore ~~concludes~~ resolves the narrative on a lighter ~~at the best~~ note than Conrad, as Moses is suddenly more at peace than the First Narrator is at the conclusion of 'Heart of Darkness'. The fact that the later novel has a more hopeful resolution ~~could~~ suggests ~~that~~ that Selvon himself had more hope for the victims of colonisation than Conrad did; Conrad presents no point of escape from the negative aspects of ~~the~~ life the colonised would experience, ~~whereas~~ ~~or~~ instead letting his novella end in darkness. Selvon, despite having experienced the racism and prejudice of London, is more hopeful for the future, providing a route some migrants, such as himself, could take to make ~~the~~ life ~~more~~ easier. Though both end in uncertainty, they are clear in their predictions of what may come.



This essay has lots of great ideas and begins well, with a clear argument about the uncertainty of the resolutions of the novels. There are many excellent ideas made, however, in places the essay goes off topic a little, so the focus on the question is lost.



Planning your answer carefully can help you organise your ideas clearly and stay focused on the question.

Question 5

Question 5: the ways writers make use of violence

Stronger answers to this question often looked at the role of violence in the texts and the reasons for it, often linking to contextual factors such as colonisation in *The Moonstone*, or Capote's comments on American society in the 1950s for *In Cold Blood*. Violent crime was, perhaps naturally, the most common focus in essays, with attention given to the graphic or shocking depictions of violent crimes and their perpetrators. There was also interesting discussion of sanctioned violence as a means of punishment or justice, particularly when considering Capote's focus on the lives of the killers, and the narrative connections drawn between the crimes and the executions of the criminals ('four shotgun blasts that ended six human lives'). In a similar way Collins was seen to use violence to set up the destructive connotations of the moonstone, and the ethical dilemmas posed by answering violence with more violence.

This is part of a longer essay gained full marks. It focuses on Lady Audley's Secret and In Cold Blood.

In both 'Lady Audley's Secret' (LAS) and 'In Cold Blood' (ICB), violence is exhibited by the perpetrators of crime towards the victims. Violence is also present in the way in which ~~both~~ the novels' respective societies treat the perpetrators of crime, which arguably makes them sympathetic. Finally, both novels explore the prevalence of violence in the punishments of the perpetrators.

Both Bradshaw and Capote present violence as exhibited by the perpetrators of crimes towards their victims. In LAS, Lady Audley subverts ^{Victorian} expectations for women in her attempted murder of George Talboys and manipulation of Sir Michael, while in ICB, Perry's ~~and Dick's~~ description of the Clutter murders reveals the violence of their deaths. In LAS, Lady Audley's description of ~~the~~ her throwing George into the well conveys violence; he 'sank with one horrible cry into

the dark mouth of the well'. The act of sinking here is a fundamentally passive one, ^{with} ~~to~~ which George's vulnerability and helplessness is perhaps magnified. Moreover, the 'enormous depth' of the well plays into Gothic tropes of crimes occurring around such objects of mystery and the unknown, which amplifies the sinister undertone ~~to~~ of the crime. Furthermore, Lady Audley's subversion here of the Gothic figure of a young and ^{vulnerable} ~~beautiful~~ ingenue, perhaps would have shocked Bradshaw's middle class readership, making the violence of her actions even more striking. ^{*} Lady Audley's violence which she exhibits towards the ~~as~~ Audleys is also reflected in Robert's dream, in which he imagines 'my lady transformed into a mermaid, beckoning ~~to~~ his uncle to destruction'. The comparison here of Lady Audley to a 'mermaid', reinforced in other parts of the novel by her description as an 'amber-haired siren', perhaps equates her with the dangerous and violent mythological creatures which lured sailors to their death. Alternatively, it arguably also ^{*} plays into her portrayal as a 'fairy'; a creature seen by Victorians as dangerous and untrustworthy (as demonstrated by Keats' 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'), which perhaps reinforces her powers of 'witchery', and the violence which accompanies them. Lady Audley's ~~to~~ 'lur[ing]' of Sir Michael continues his interpretation, and could be seen to ~~to~~ reflect contemporary fears of the ~~so~~ increasing ~~and~~ ~~so~~ social mobility of the lower classes. Overall, therefore, the violence with which Lady

Audley pursues ~~the~~ her victims betrays an inner violence which undermines both her angelic appearance, and Victorian expectations of the 'proper feminine'.

Similarly to Braddon, Capote presents the perpetrators of the crime as exerting violence towards their victims. The emotive description of 'Nancy listening to boots on hardwood stairs. Nancy's eyes' before Dick and Perry kill the Clutters reinforces the violence and needlessness of their actions, while the graphic image of Herb trying to breathe through 'a severed windpipe' conveys to the reader the visceral horror of the murders. The vulnerability of the Clutters is emphasised; like George, Herb is described as 'drowning', which perhaps alludes to his helplessness. Moreover, the desperation of Bonnie in 'ma[king] [Perry] promise I wouldn't let ~~the~~ Dick hurt anybody'; while simultaneously remaining polite, magnifies the nobility and 'plain virtue' of the Clutters, making the violence towards them ^{seem} all the more extreme. However, there are elements of the violence of the murders which Capote could be seen to mitigate by making Perry seem sympathetic. While Dick is unequivocally the 'lunatic roam[ing] below', Perry chats to Nancy, who he deems a 'nice' girl 'and not spoiled or anything', and appears to abdicate responsibility in 'I didn't realise what I'd done till I heard the sound'. This 'twisted tenderness' which Perry

exhibits was perhaps amplified by Capote in order to make him more endearing to the reader; indeed, Capote himself in a 1966 New York Times Interview appears to sympathise with Perry, saying that he was trapped in 'a psychological cul-de-sac'. In this way, the violence of the murders is arguably mitigated by Capote's reinforcement of Perry's nobility. Overall, both Braddon and Capote present the violence present in both crimes, and the vulnerability this lends to the victims.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This is an extremely sophisticated response, which draws on many different literary and conceptual contexts, and approaches the question from several different angles. The texts are always treated as constructions which have been carefully crafted by the writers, particularly important given the true-crime basis of *In Cold Blood*.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

An evaluative approach considers different ways of interpreting details from the texts.

Question 6

Question 6: presentation of love

Very few candidates attempted this question, perhaps suggesting that love was not an aspect of crime novels that they had considered in depth.

Question 7

Question 7: the ways writers explore death

There were a number of successful approaches seen to this question, considering both literal and metaphorical deaths. Some wrote about death as a consequence of not following the rules, others considered death as an escape from suffering, or as an inevitable fact. Some candidates chose to consider entirely metaphorical deaths and sometimes only tenuously addressed the question in its own terms. While the death of hope, death of women's roles, or the death of identity were valid ideas to discuss, they needed to be directed clearly at the question in order to remain consistently relevant to the question of how writers explored death itself. Those who focused at least partially on the literal deaths of characters in their chosen novels tended to have a more focused argument. Some higher-level answers considered writers use of structural techniques such as foreshadowing to lend the deaths in the texts gravitas, and their pivotal function in conveying wider messages.

There was thoughtful discussion of the euphemisms for death used in *Never Let Me Go*, with some considering the easy acceptance of death by Kathy the clones' reason for existence was inseparable from their deaths. In *Frankenstein*, many chose to discuss the deaths of Justine, William and Elizabeth, often leading to discussion of victimhood and the dark side of scientific discovery. Many students answering on *The Handmaid's Tale* included discussion of 'The Wall' in their answers; while this often led to productive ideas about the use of death as a punishment or means of social control, the best of these considered the details of the description of death, for example the ways the bodies were arranged or covered, or Atwood's use of imagery. This led to thoughtful AO2 analysis. There was also consideration of attitudes to suicide, and its role as an escape, rebellion or act of desperation. There were interesting contextual links made to the death of the environment, often anchored to specific contextual influences such as the Three Mile Island nuclear accident in 1979, or environmental concerns in the 1980s when Atwood was writing about issues such as the depletion of the ozone layer. For *The War of the Worlds*, candidates considered the enormous scale of the deaths in the text as an extinction level event, or at the deaths of the Martians as depending entirely upon bacteria rather than human actions and therefore exposing the helplessness of mankind. The Curate's death was often discussed as a symbol of the death of organised religion, with some candidates able to link this to Wells' own political and religious views.

Some strong responses considered the ways in which narrative voices were used to describe deaths. There was also much contextual discussion of the roles of women in the texts, and consideration of the ways in which parenting and motherhood had been destroyed in the texts, leading to wider damage and death as the natural order had been disrupted.

This essay on *Frankenstein* and *The Handmaid's Tale* was awarded marks in level 5, 18+17.

Throughout Mary Shelley's Gothic horror 'Frankenstein' and Margaret Atwood's speculative fiction 'The Handmaid's Tale', the presence of death is ~~near~~ near-constant. Both authors ~~demonstrate~~ present death in three distinct ways: death as the contrast to desire, the equivocation of death, and finally death as an escape.

Firstly, Shelley presents Frankenstein's overwhelming desire for revenge as a bulwark against death. Over the course of the novel, Victor's ~~is~~ loved ones all perish, and Shelley characterises his suffering from this: 'Despair had almost secured her prey, and I ^{should} have sunk beneath this misery'. The personification of despair as a female figure for whom Victor is 'prey' suggests his extreme emotions of grief, as the ~~adverb~~ quantitative adverb 'almost' suggests his being on the brink of succumbing to this predatory emotion. The concept that he 'should have sunk' evokes maritime imagery, which corresponds with his journey across the lifeless ice sheets: Victor's surroundings in the final chapters reflect his suffering. Moreover, the concept of 'sinking' into death connotes the Rime of the Ancient Mariner, in which an ignorant sailor is punished by watching the deaths of all his crewmates at the hand of a curse; thoroughly similar to the ~~death~~ emotional 'death' Shelley presents in Victor. Nonetheless, Shelley presents his desire for revenge as overpowering his closeness to death: on his deathbed in Walton's ship, Victor declares 'my task is unfulfilled'. ~~Victor~~ ~~Victor~~ The creature is frequently presented as possessing superhuman endurance, and for Victor to

endure the same ^{Arctic} conditions and still be overwhelmingly focused on his 'task' to ~~to~~ get revenge demonstrates an extreme conflict between death and desire within his character. Whilst seemingly aware of the impossibility of his survival (the modal 'should' implies this), Shelley presents Victor defying this inevitability, ~~to~~ a typical trait of Gothic protagonists being the ~~conflict~~ inner tension of extreme emotions with extreme circumstances.

Whilst Shelley presents desire for revenge as sustaining Victor's life, Atwood ~~to~~ demonstrates the 'death-sex' drive devised by Freudian psychology in *Offred*. ~~Structure~~ The novel's structure has several 'love triangles' between Offred and other characters - ~~initially~~ both in her adulterous relationship with ~~Nick~~ ^{Luke} and her affairs with the commander and Nick. Atwood suggests that 'maybe it's lack of love that we die of', ~~which is~~ a parallel to the pre-Gileadean society in which people were 'turning off on love'. Hence, the cyclical structure of Offred's affairs is presented as a strategy for survival and self-preservation. The conflict between death and sexual desire is most clearly presented immediately following the 'Salvaging', after which Offred says 'I want to make love, right now'. Atwood suggests that to 'make love' would balance out the death Offred has just witnessed, as within literature death and sex are often parallel to each other. Shelley and Atwood both draw on the linguistic styles of writers like Keats and Shakespeare, who frequently deployed extreme contrasts ~~to~~ to elevate the tension and emotional impact of their writing. Therefore, Atwood's use of the 'death-sex' drive is used to

demonstrate the poignant effect of witnessing death.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This candidate brings in psychological perspectives as a context, and is able to add interesting interpretations to the texts through this lens. Their approach is constantly comparative, making detailed links between the texts both on a broad level and in the granular detail of their analysis.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

A close focus on the deeper meanings of quotations will gain high marks in AO2.

This response on Frankenstein and Never Let Me Go also gained marks in level 5, but took a slightly different approach to the question. It was given 17+17.

In 'Frankenstein' and 'Never Let Me Go', both novels show the different ways in which humans approach the inevitability of ~~death~~ one's own death and the deaths of those around them. However, Shelley uses the theme of death to reflect a sense of uncertainty in a post-enlightenment society, whereas Ishiguro stresses ~~an~~ passive approach to mortality, presenting characters as largely untroubled by death at the end of the novel.

Firstly, both novels present death as an inevitability which all humans face, however, Ishiguro uses death to reflect societal issues of inequality and premature death, while Shelley's connection to death in the novel is more personal. In 'Never Let Me Go', the structure of the novel from the beginning presents death as something inevitable or impending. From the first chapter, the use of ambiguous, euphemistic language such as "donors", "drugs", "~~final~~" and "pain" "~~finish~~", all creating ~~vague~~ vague imagery of ~~an~~ a medical procedure, ~~with~~ significantly resulting in death through Kathy's ambiguity, mentioning "By the time I finish", a possible allusion to her inevitable fate. Similarly, from the beginning of 'Frankenstein', the theme of death is introduced in the opening chapters with Victor's mother's death explicitly described to the reader from her "sick bed" to her "death-bed", again like Ishiguro ~~or~~ presenting death as this inevitability. This

death clearly hangs over the novel both literally and metaphorically where his mother symbolically hangs over him "stood on the mantel-piece", physically representing the painful effects of death despite ~~its inevitability~~ which weigh upon loved ones but also it's inevitability, ~~suggesting~~ suggested as something you cannot escape or move away from. In 'Never Let Me Go', this sense of inevitability in their death and fate is shown to imprison them, symbolically portrayed by the "woods", which "cast a shadow over Hailsham", their beacon of hope. ~~This suggests a sense of again prevents death like with the woods~~ ~~representing~~ With the shadow of the woods symbolically representing their fate, this ~~suggests~~ ^{reflects} that death is something you ~~cannot escape from as a human~~ can "never really get away from" as a human. Furthermore the fate for the clones death is gradually revealed as something which will come prematurely when Miss Emily reveals that their "futures have been set out for them" ~~as~~ in "donating their "vital organs" before they are "even middle aged". In context of the wider societal picture when the novel was written in ~~the~~ 2005, Ishiguro may be commenting on the issue of pre-mature death and forced organ harvesting, particularly with the regime in China. ~~The~~ The horrific findings of the treatment of Uyghur Muslims in the early 2000's ~~is~~ is likely what Ishiguro wishes to shed light upon, with the treatment of the clones "reared" to be killed like animals ~~the~~ mirroring the treatment of the ~~the~~ Muslims reared for their organs to

support a booming transplant trade in the early 2000's. Shigeno therefore may be ~~again~~ encouraging the reader to ^{understand} see the injustices in society where people are forced to face death due to cruel and barbaric regimes. By contrast, Shelley's presentation of death is ~~more~~ more focused on her personal connection to it, with the use of gothic imagery in " and horror ~~image~~ when Victor sees "the corpse of his dead mother", likely ~~to~~ reflecting Shelley's traumatic personal connection with death, ~~to~~ losing family such as her mother from a young age and later ~~to~~ her children. Therefore, Shelley's presentation of death likely comes from a place of personal grief, highlighting the emotional responses to death ~~of~~ of family members as opposed to Shigeno's presentation of ^{injury} death, which touches issues in a wider society.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

There is a really thoughtful opening argument about the inevitability of death, which is then discussed in detail in the subsequent paragraphs. There is close attention to AO2, with thoughtful analysis of the writers' language choices, before zooming out to consider the wider significance this may have on the writers' overall messages.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Consider what the writer is trying to say or comment on in wider society, and **how** they do this.

Question 8

Question 8: presentation of the experience of learning

This was the most popular question on the paper this year. The key word in the question was how the writers presented the **experience** of learning, and the best responses considered specific characters and their experiences. Weaker answers tended to write more about knowledge or education rather than the experience of learning itself. Candidates explored many facets of what learning can entail, including different types of learning; structured through an institution, gaining emotional understanding of the self, societal understanding of the world around one, or experiential learning about specific facts or knowledge. Some saw learning as dangerous, while others considered the benefits of learning as well as the risks. Some successfully discussed the idea of the cautionary tale, and the novels' roles in providing an 'experience of learning' for the reader, often referring to speculative fiction as a didactic or self-reflective force for change. At all levels, candidates tried to explore what authors may have intended to say about learning and the consequences of restricting or controlling this experience.

There was thoughtful consideration of the creature's experiences of learning both in the wilderness and at the De Lacey's cottage, learning through observation and imitation. Some excellent responses were able to link this to Victor's childhood experiences of learning (guided by a silken cord) and Romantic ideals of education free from the corrupting influences of society outlined in Rousseau's ideas about the 'noble savage'. Some students made excellent use of intertextual links with Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (which is an archetypal cautionary tale) and some even made connections with the Mariner's compulsion to tell his story ("And he stoppeth one of three") – how the cautionary tale must be told in order to prevent the same mistakes being made.

The War of the Worlds was considered against the backdrop of Darwinism, and there was interesting discussion of the narrator's process of learning about the Martians, particularly through his direct observations while trapped in the ruined house. Candidates drew contextual parallels to colonisation, and British fears of being 'invaded' by something foreign or 'other'. There was good analysis of images such as the trampling of the people in the rush reflecting how the British Empire 'trampled' over the lives, customs, and cultures of the countries they were invading.

Some strong answers on *The Handmaid's Tale* considered the location of Harvard as the site for Gilead, and the Historical Notes section as an example of the continuation of the patriarchal world of the university, and the lack of learning from history it reveals. Many candidates discussed the game of scrabble in terms of the power of literacy and the ways in which a lack of access to learning can be a tool of disempowerment, often connected well to similar ideas in *Frankenstein*. The term 'palimpsest' was used quite widely, but not always fully understood, and rarely coupled with the direct use of this word in chapter 1 of the text itself. Stronger essays were able to understand the nuance of the word and the idea of erasing and overwriting the original text, and the metaphorical implications of this (often in relation to the 'faith' and 'charity' pillows in Offred's room, or the partial Bible quotations such as 'blessed are the meek'). One response made astute reference to the unburnable edition of Atwood's text and the wider context of censorship.

This response on *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Frankenstein* scored marks in level 5, 19+18.

The experience of learning is emphasised by both Margaret Atwood and Mary Shelley. Learning suggests the gain of new knowledge and both consider that to be overall empowering. In Frankenstein, the learning experience is focused on the Creature who begins with no knowledge and then becomes a well-read being. Likewise, ~~Atwood~~ Atwood focuses on Offred as having no knowledge but the desire to learn things about Coriel and her situation. Ultimately, both Atwood and Shelley present the experience of learning as an innate desire in humanity, exploring how this experience can be undermined or suppressed by those in power.

Both authors explore the desire to learn and the learning experience through the narrative voice of the protagonists. Atwood, in The Handmaid's Tale chose to give the narrative voice to a female protagonist who seems to hold some of the most amount of power in society. As a result we as the reader only learn things when she does. This at times can be frustrating and we can see the ~~defeated~~ ^{defeated} ~~and~~ frustrated tone when she says 'Any news, may, is better than none.' The emphasis on 'any' does bring into question the idea of truth and suggests that despite Offred 'learning' she really does not as she has no way of knowing whether something is true. Offred's desire for knowledge is perhaps concentrated in the scrabble games with the Commander. She emphasises how 'voluptuous' the pieces feel saying 'What a luxury.' These hypnotic descriptions ~~suggest~~ illustrate

Oppred's delight in using his mind which is reinforced when she asks what 'Moulted *Pharodon carbonatorum*' means.

She is then allowed to write down and 'The pen between my fingers is sensuous, alive almost' This mind imagery, marked with sexual connotations seems to lighten the immensity of the situation.^{and also creates suspension.}

We are witnessing the distillation of the morning experience, with the narrative voice emphasising and choosing to focus on this event. However, this is quickly undermined by

the Commander 'That's not real Latin' and 'That's just a joke.' The life of Oppred, we as the reader are disappointed. After

waiting to learn what it means the final answer is ultimately

unsatisfying. ~~This seems to be~~ ~~total~~ This seems to be a

pattern within the Handmaid's Tale which suggests that Atwood

perhaps because of the context of writing this novel did not want to

give satisfying answers. She was writing during the time of

Reagan and saw the rise of traditional family values in disguise

of the far Christian right. Perhaps here we could link this to the

growing of anti-intellectualism found in critical and ultimately the

Atwood wanting to produce a thought provoking novel to warn the

reader.

Similarly, ~~the Creature~~ Shelley gives a disenfranchised

character a narrative voice and we share in his journey

of learning. Interestingly, the Creature reads many books and

the one that strikes him is Paradise Lost 'But Paradise Lost

excited different and far deeper emotions' suggesting almost a

spiritual connection, clearly demonstrating the importance of Milton
to Shelley. The Creature, for the first time, for the first time, for the first time
to understand his place in the world, 'like Adam' and he
identifies with Satan 'Many times I considered Satan as the
fittest emblem of my condition.' But 'Satan had his
companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him, but I
am solitary and abhorred.' Perhaps this does not suggest a
positive learning experience, as he intimates the oppressive and
dehumanizing language 'abhorred' does however, there is an
argument that as a learning experience this is empowering
he gains knowledge about the world and he has found
some, finally understanding why he is treated the way that he
is. However, like in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the Creature's
education is not presented as a revolution and in fact it is
used against him. At the end of the novel, his narrative
voice is undermined by Victor who says 'he is eloquent and
persuasive; and once his words had even power over my heart:
but trust him not' here Victor is proving the Creature right, he is
'abhorred' despite all the learning he has done. It is interesting
that Mary Shelley's mother advocated for the education of the
disfranchised and here Shelley is doing the same symbolically
through the Creature and Victor. However, she is presenting a
nuanced argument suggesting that the desire and actual
experience of learning is not enough when those with power seek to
suppress it. In this way, the ideas of Atwood and Shelley are
similar, both presenting a member of the disfranchised who

denial to learn but is ultimately denied that right. Perhaps the actual learning experience is more prevalent in *The Frankenstein*, however it cannot be understated how little Oppen knows and this is emphasized by ~~the~~ ~~novel~~ demonstrating his ~~the~~ belief in the importance of learning. ^{X1}

X1, Furthermore, David Lodge argues that the most important decision for a novelist is the point of view of the narrative as it shapes how we respond to that narrative. In both *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* and *Frankenstein*, the voice is given in part to the disenfranchised, and through this we can better understand the circumstances and ultimately what they do and do not know. ~~Then~~



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This essay focuses closely on narrative voices, and draws interesting links between the two novels. Points are extended by using critical views or contextual details, and an evaluative approach is taken.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Words like 'perhaps' and 'could' are useful to signal an awareness that there is more than one way of interpreting a textual detail.

This is the final section of an essay on Frankenstein and Never Let Me Go which was given marks in level 4, 15+14.

Both novels present the experience of learning to sometimes be misleading. In 'Frankenstein's' ~~Shelley's~~ creature 'Never Let Me Go' Kathy naively in thinking after the fourth donation of your skin alone they won't keep going, suggests ~~for learning to be~~ she has learnt to be misled. Ishiguro plays on Kathy's naivety to ~~not~~ suggest 21st century England's acceptance of science and questions morality the morality of science as cloning develops - needs like 'survivor siblings' and 1999 post

Human embryo' shows humanity's ability to turn the other way even when learning about immoral effects of science, as in *Never Let Me Go* the clones. Furthermore, Shelley further this idea through the Creature. The Creature is misled into thinking humanity is nice and welcoming, until ~~Victor~~ Victor ~~his~~ ~~as~~ he learns Victor's reaction "grim wrinkled" and "wretch"; just as Victor shudders and recoils at the monster, Madame "shudders" at the clones and ~~as is~~ ~~for~~ Ishiguro compares her fear to one of being scared of a spider; suggesting both the Creature and the clones experiencing of learning about human kind is misleading. ~~suggesting the contrast~~ Furthermore, ~~Shelley~~ ~~both~~ Therefore through both novels using animal imagery "spiders" ~~from~~ for the clones "Spiders" and the Creature being called a "monster" and "beast" ~~shows both~~ suggests both ~~have been~~ ~~or~~ ~~been~~ created by science have been misled in their learning of humankind and humanity therefore highlighting their experience of learning to be

unmistaking and misleading.

Overall, both Shelley ~~and Frankenstein~~ and Ishiguro present the experience of learning to ~~have~~ be both positive and progressive yet also destructive and ~~or~~ false. Shelley in Frankenstein uses Walton and Victor embodying the ~~Enlight~~ values of the Enlightenment 18th and the Promethean idea to save humanity to present the experience of learning as progressive and exciting. Yet in Never Let Me Go, Ishiguro presents the experience of learning as limited through Kathy's narrative. Yet, both ~~novels~~ novels highlight the destruction and consequences of the experience of learning through the treatment of both the Creature and clones. Therefore both novels present the experience of learning as destructive but in some aspects scientifically ~~even~~ exciting and progressive.



This is an essay which shows 'discrimination'. There is a lot of textual detail and links to relevant contextual factors. The candidate compares the two texts through the writers' use of imagery.



Level 4 requires **detail**. Make sure that points are exemplified, and that you have commented on the deeper meanings of your quotations.

Question 9

Question 9: the ways writers explore loss

Candidates considered a wide range of different types of loss: literal loss of life, the loss of masculinity, of identity, of control, of social status, and of morality among others. Comparison of Stoker and Wilde remained popular this year, with some strong essays on the loss of certainty surrounding the fin-de-siecle period, with Lucy's loss of a "pure" identity compared with Dorian's loss of his soul. A pleasing range of contexts were also considered including the gothic genre, Victorian morality, postmodernism, and gendered readings. Many students embedded discussions of genre into their essays, with the best able to discuss this in specific terms, such as the use of gothic settings to explore the loss of power, or gothic ideas around transgression to consider the loss of morality. Less successful were broad generalisations about 'the gothic' without specific textual examples to explore how it related to loss. Many responses considered the loss of loved ones, for example the toll Lucy's death has on Arthur and Van Helsing, the impact of Beloved's death upon Sethe and Denver, or the effects on Caroline Ayres of the loss of her mother and brother. There were some excellent comparisons of the manifestation of the anger behind the slave trade in the character Beloved and that of Victorian fears of reverse colonialism in Dracula. Some candidates comparing Morrison with Stoker also wrote successful comparisons of the writers' choices to address fears of female sexuality.

This essay on Dracula and The Little Stranger gained marks in level 4, 15+15.

Similarly, both authors depict a loss of self within their novels. In Dracula, Bram Stoker conveys a loss of identity through the characterisation of Jonathan, one of the novel's embedded narrators. Stoker could be seen to use Jonathan as a voice for the middle class during the fin de siècle, as Britain was facing a decline in the empire and threats of invasion. Furthermore, the reader is invited to perhaps view the character as a man spiralling into a pit of loss, introducing a sense of fear. Jonathan's loss of self is

showcased in chapter nineteen "I seemed to see the high lights of the Count's evil face", Stoker evokes an uncanny interaction through Jonathan's narrative voice. Crucially, Jonathan follows his intuition, "seemed", by regarding his suspicions as untrue "I took it that fear had helped imagination". Arguably, the deterioration of Jonathan's sense of self and the his inability to differentiate between real events and his ~~unconscious~~ imagination, suggests a loss of self has led to mental instability. Stoker's constructing a power dynamic where perhaps fear has dominated the mind, as "fear helped imagination", suggests fear takes a leading role in not only Jonathan's mind but in the novel. Furthermore, the credence awarded to fear could be seen as a reminder to the reader of the gothic categorisation of the novel. Similarly, Sarah Waters also explores loss through a loss of self in her novel. Waters offers the reader to witness a deterioration of self through the embedded storyteller, Dr. Faraday. However, unlike ^{one of} our credible middle-class narrators in *Dracula*, Dr. Faraday is depicted in an untrustworthy composition. Immediately, Waters crafts Faraday to be a man of who lacks credibility as he stole from Hundreds Hall on his first ever visit "I tried to praise it". Faraday is depicted as a character whom is not trustworthy as he disrespects the house, but also his mother as some may argue he put her job in jeopardy. Notably, Faraday's immediate fascination could be seen to foreshadow his later ~~the~~ insanity and absolute loss of self, as the house and possessive mindset engulfs his character. Faraday is representative of the societal reforms in nineteenth-century Britain, a new labour government introduced fear from the

aristocrats such as the Ayles, bestowed upon the working class characters like Faraday. Although, Faraday's absolute admiration of "Hundred's Hall" leads the reader to view him in a negative light. Even though he is meant to be representative of the working class, he was in "shock" and "disbelief" when he saw developers at Hundred's, suggesting the introduction of new social housing posed a threat on his beloved hall and ultimately his family. ~~Roderick~~ Waters uses Roderick as a voice of the aristocrats, under threat of the rising working class "you don't belong here", mocking Faraday's ~~worth~~ sense of belonging and driving him feeling his madness. Both narrators successfully connote a loss of self, although pity is created for Jonathan yet disgust and embarrassment ~~is~~ could be seen to be developed for Faraday.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The strength of this essay lies in its focus on the writers' methods; the comparison of narrative voices is thoughtful and there is detailed analysis of specific techniques used.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

It can be helpful to compare the writers' methods, as well as overall thematic links.

Question 10

Question 10: presentation of supernatural beings or events

This was the more popular of the two questions on the supernatural and elicited an interesting range of responses. Many students were able to successfully discuss gothic tropes and their subversion, and most were able to explore the symbolic meanings of supernatural beings or events in relation to societal and contextual issues (including the New Woman, class anxieties, degeneration, and the repressed trauma of slavery). There was a tendency to focus more on supernatural beings than on events, which was perfectly acceptable within the terms of the question. Weaker responses tended to list the supernatural characters themselves (Dracula, *Beloved*, Dorian Gray, and the poltergeist in *The Little Stranger*), but not explicitly consider **how** they were presented or their wider significances in the texts.

For *The Little Stranger* there was interesting discussion of setting, with the decline of Hundreds Hall being seen as representative of the declining aristocracy post World War Two. There was interesting discussion of the personification of the house, making it a 'supernatural being' itself, as well as discussion of Waters' use of narrative voice to suggest that Faraday himself is the cause of the supernatural events, left ambiguous until the final paragraph of the novel. Dorian Gray's picture was discussed as a supernatural entity, bearing the moral burden of his debauchery. Candidates tended to understand this as a critique of the superficiality and hypocrisy of late-Victorian society, often making nuanced links to Wilde's homosexuality. There was interesting comparison of approaches to social class in these texts, with discussion of the ways in which character are shown to mock, look down upon, or take advantage of the working-class, while the upper-class characters are immoral, corrupt, in decline, or responsible for unleashing a supernatural evil upon others. *Beloved* was considered to explore the horrific treatment of the slaves that set in motion the sequence of events that saw Sethe killing her own child to spare her, to the appearance and menacing behaviour of *Beloved*. *Beloved* was described as sapping the life force of Sethe, both of whom began to change shape in a similar way to Dorian's painting, *Beloved* becoming stronger, bigger and plumper, while Sethe became warped and twisted, appearing at once alive and dead.

This essay on Dracula and The Picture of Dorian Gray was awarded full marks.

Both Stoker and Wilde utilise Gothic genre conventions coupled with religious imagery in order to present supernatural events as having devastating consequences on those affected by them. During the fin de siècle, contemporary ideas and fears around societal degeneration were becoming increasingly widespread, popularised by texts such as Max Nordau's 'Degeneration'. However, whilst Stoker plays into these typical late Victorian fears by presenting supernatural beings as a tangible external threat for the good to fight against, Wilde subverts these traditional discourses around moral dichotomy to present an arguably far darker and more disturbing notion - that all people, regardless of status or appearance, are at risk of being corrupted by the occult, and that society itself already may be rotten to the core by its evil effects.

Although both novels explore the ~~destructive~~ physical impacts of supernatural events, this theme is arguably more palpable in 'Dracula', with Stoker making use of language typically associated with physiognomy to highlight the ~~dehumanising~~ dehumanised nature of supernatural beings.

Not only do the references to the 'sharp white teeth' and 'extraordinary pallor' highlight Dracula's physical difference from the protagonists as symbols of outward evil, they could also be interpreted as conveying Dracula's potential to cause harm as an almost predator-like being. In addition, some have argued that this description of Dracula's abnormal features portrays him to be an almost Satanic figure, adding a religious element to the fear Stoker associates him with. Likewise, Stoker uses a mention of a 'strong face' and 'aquiline nose', terms which for a contemporary reader would have been associated with the popular pseudoscience of physiognomy, which taught that a person's moral character can be shown through physical features, but especially the face. Through this lens, Stoker can be seen to use these *fin de siècle* notions to further highlight Dracula's status as a being of supernatural evil, as such features would have traditionally been interpreted as being marks of corruption. Such a reading is reinforced by Stoker's portrayal of his antagonist as being of 'criminal type', a reference to Lombroso's ideas that those considered to be sinful or outcast were physically inferior to respectable members of society. Additionally, Stoker uses grotesque imagery when describing the undead Lucy in order to depict supernatural beings as hideous and unnatural. Lucy is dehumanised as a 'foul Thing', highlighting her horrendous metamorphosis from sweet English maiden to vampire, and this has been interpreted by feminist critics as a comment on Victorian male fears around female sexuality. Indeed, the undead Lucy is depicted as 'wanton' and 'voluptuous', which could be argued to present her as a demonised figure of 'unnatural' female desire. In this way, Stoker uses Lucy's destruction to convey a powerful message - those who do not conform to societal values around sexual immorality are worthy of brutal punishment for their transgression. Here, supernatural beings are used as a metaphor

for real-world fears of the contemporary imagination. In contrast, Wilde focuses more on the psychological aspects of those tainted by supernatural occurrences in order to present the occult as an insidious, intangible threat. However, it could be argued that Wilde's depiction of the opium dens is reminiscent of the late Gothic concept of 'urban hell', with its sinful victims physically distorted as a result of their moral decay, transformed into 'monstrous marionettes' with little or no power to escape their torment. It could be seen as significant that Wilde uses such grotesque imagery to describe the lower classes, perhaps reinforcing typical ideas that societal degeneration was to be found amongst the poorest members of society. However, Wilde's use of the supernatural image of the portrait could arguably be read as a metaphor for how the wealthy are able to escape from the consequences of their actions - Dorian commits many of the same sins as the lower-class opium addicts, yet remains beautiful. This in turn could be interpreted as a critique of the late Victorian notion of aestheticism, which prized art and beauty over moralism. Whilst Stoker makes use of Gothic conventions to portray the supernatural as having terrible physical consequences, Wilde subverts this notion to link supernatural evil with the disturbing idea of facades.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The candidate is able to place gothic conventions at the centre of their argument, and manages to include an impressive number of contextual details, all of which are used to help understand and interpret the novels.



Context can be interpreted widely, including genre conventions, historical events and details, autobiography, the cultural landscape, societal norms, and intellectual or philosophical ideas.

This answer on The Little Stranger and Dracula was also awarded full marks.

The role of women ~~is~~ is constantly in flux and Leake novel presents a woman's role and fears surrounding it through the use of ~~the~~ the supernatural. Within 'Dracula', the Vampire Brides ^{create} ~~presented~~ a horrifying ~~statement~~ ^{presentation} of or what appears to be the New Woman. Propelled by thinkers such as Wollstonecraft, the New Woman ~~was~~ abandoned traditional ideologies of domestication but instead fought for her rights and sought higher education. This contrasted to the preferred 'Angel in the house' of Victorian society, reflected in Mina's confinement to ~~the~~ the role of the traditional long wife. ~~The~~ The Vampire Brides are indicated to have fed on a 'half-smothered child'. ~~The~~ Stoker uses the reversed image of a mother feeding on her children, directly juxtaposing imagery of a child ~~to~~ feeding on its mother. As the New Woman abandons the title of 'Angel in the house', she also abandons all motherly duties. The lack of maternal nature in these women cause them to appear all the more frightening to the contemporary reader. Stoker describes the women as they 'closed round' and they previously 'whispered together'. There is a lack of individualism between the Brides as Stoker uses collective pronouns such as 'they' as they act 'together'. Perhaps Stoker intends to depict the unhypered communication of women as an evil, seeing as ~~the~~ communication between women had ~~to~~ led to the formation of women's

rights groups, such as the suffragettes. Joker evokes the New Woman to the supernatural evil as female solidarity is presented in such a horrific light, and its effects harm the innocent of society, breaking the family structure. While Waters does not include supernatural women, she depicts the punishment of the New Woman by the supposedly male supernatural. Caroline Ayres had previously joined the WSPU and aided during war effort but had to resume to ~~that~~ traditionally feminine duties during post-war. Despite ~~to~~ the right to vote being granted ~~decades~~ decades earlier, women like Caroline had a thirst for freedom from the patriarchal structures of Britain. She refuses to 'merry out of gratitude' and abandons feminine passive qualities as she breaks out of the 'trap' that is marriage. Consequently ~~her~~ her punishment is ~~not~~ fatal as she is later found dead. She is described to be 'beyond hysteria'. Hysteria was still regarded as a medical condition in women, and Waters includes this knowing that the modern female reader would read this diagnosis with great ~~distaste~~ distaste. The use of falling to her death is symbolic in that there is a physical downward movement of ~~Caroline~~ Caroline, reflective of her descending social power as a result of postwar Britain, reinforcement of ~~the~~ traditional gender expectations. In showing 'You' prior to her death ~~also~~ implies that this supernatural force is a familiar character, that being the hypermasculine Dr Faraday's dream self in which he forces the New Woman into her 'rightful' place of obedience and domestication. Caroline's soul remains forever in the home, similar to that of the ~~then~~ ~~era~~ traditional women.



This section writes very well about the roles of women. This is a topic that is often over-generalised, particularly when writing about contextual factors and 19th century texts. This candidate manages to strike a good balance between giving specific contextual details and close analysis of the texts, with the context illuminating the points about the text itself.



Try to avoid overgeneralising about 'the Victorian period' or making sweeping statements about what women could or could not do at a particular point of history. Social attitudes are rarely homogenous, so where possible link your ideas to factual contextual details.

Question 11

Question 11: presentation of characters who help others

A relatively large number of candidates attempted to subvert this question and discuss characters who did **not** receive help from others (often citing Tess and Mariam as examples), which did not directly answer the question as posed. Focusing on the main characters was not always helpful, and many stronger responses considered characters beyond the main protagonists, such as Marian, Izz and Retty in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Mr Earnshaw and Nelly in *Wuthering Heights*, and Mullah Faizullah in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Others chose to discuss the ambiguities around the concept of 'helping', for example considering the ways in which Alec D'Urberville's and Rasheed's offers of supposed help disguised more sinister or selfish motivations. There was much excellent writing about the emotional help and support offered by communities of women. Weaker responses tended to take a more narrative approach, listing examples in the texts where characters received help, rather than focusing on the characters **offering** the help. Stronger answers explored different perspectives on help, considering the wider implications of different types of help, for example maternal help, children helping parents, and practical and financial help in working class contexts.

There were some interesting explorations of Tess as a caretaker and how the way she helps is through labour. Candidates explored the way Tess was cast into a role of self-sacrifice in having to care for her family, take the blame for Prince's death, throw herself on the mercy of her relatives, make excuses for her father, take on laborious work and accept her ultimate punishment. Edgar's commitment to and protection of his daughter as he attempted to shield her from Heathcliff was mentioned, as well as his and Nelly's concern for Linton. The mutual way Cathy and Hareton took care of each other – he offered physical protection while she educated him as he ought to have been according to the status of which Heathcliff deprived him – was also considered. There were some very good responses that critiqued ideas of motherhood and the ways in which mothers are supposed to help their children, often at the expense of their own safety or comfort. Some discussed mothers who fail with some nuance, understanding the stereotypes of the time periods they were discussing. There were also interesting ideas about the assumption that female characters are usually seen as 'helpful' as a reflection of their supposed roles within society. There was thoughtful discussion of the mutual help offered by Mariam and Laila to each other, the one's final sacrifice providing safety for the other and her family, while the other offered acceptance and family to the emotionally impoverished older woman. A number of candidates writing about Mrs Dalloway made thoughtful contextual links to issues of mental health when discussing Woolf's presentation of Sir William Bradshaw's and Dr Holmes' misled attempts to help Septimus.

This extract from a response on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Wuthering Heights* was given marks at the bottom of level 5, 17+17.

Both texts offer depictions of maternal figures, which have contrasting success in helping others. In 'Wuthering Heights', Nelly adopts a maternal role over many of the younger characters at the beginning of the book. A sense of trust is exhibited between Nelly and Catherine, as Catherine confesses her true feelings for Heathcliff to her. Nelly, who had been her confidant, 'he's more myself than I am'. In one sense, Nelly attempts to help Catherine by listening to her personal emotional troubles, whereby the closeness of the relationship is emphasised by 'confidant', and Catherine expresses her deeper, spiritual connection with Heathcliff. Despite the atmosphere of trust and intimacy, Nelly ultimately does not seem to aid Catherine in this instance, as she is aware of Heathcliff's overshadowing, who is so deeply offended and attacked by. Critic Leavis argues that Nelly's 'feminine nature satisfies itself in nurturing each of the children of the book in turn', further emphasising her role as a character that helps others. Her maternal compassion is further illustrated through her treatment of Heathcliff, whereby she refuses to engage in the ridiculing of him for his mysterious origin and different appearance, instead choosing to take a positive approach and praise him for his potential cultural background, suggesting that his mother may have been 'an Indian

Queen!', thus contrasting the typical discrimination he faced from the majority of other characters: 'imp of Satan'. Nelly is also vital as a narrator, as she effectively conveys the story of 'Wuthering Heights', despite Lockwood being the first character introduced to us. The use of a female narrator hidden beneath the facade of a male character mirrors the conditions under which Brontë initially published the novel, whereby she employed the pseudonym 'Ellis Bell', due to a critical reception of female-written literature at the time. In juxtaposition to Nelly's ~~genuine~~ genuine aid of others, Tess's mother assumes the position of a failed maternal figure. Joan fails to adequately prepare Tess for her experiences with men, allowing her ultimately to fall victim to Alec's assault: 'Why didn't you warn me?'. The rhetorical question employed by Tess conveys a sense of pleading, as if any sense of rage or anger is absent, and she instead truly wants to understand why her mother failed to inform her of the risks associated with male interactions, as Tess herself falls pregnant and has a child of her own. 'the girl-mother nodded' Hardy deliberately constructs the compound word of 'girl-mother' to create an overarching sense of disgust in order to emphasise the unnatural nature of Tess's motherhood, particularly due to her age and the method of conception. Additionally, Tess is relieved frequently of any personal guilt through Hardy's authorial intervention, choosing instead to encourage the reader to seek other places to

lay the blame, such as society and Tess's mother: 'bastard gift of shameless nature that respects not the social law'. Hardy offers a hyperbolic and satirical comment about Tess's baby, which serves to highlight the absurdity of blaming Tess or the Pa baby itself for the baby's existence. Therefore, a contrast is drawn between the two maternal figures of Nelly and Joan, as Nelly is successfully able to help other characters, whereas Joan fails to do so, and is therefore potentially partially to blame for Tess's suffering.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This essay explores a thoughtful point about maternal roles, considering expectations of 'helpfulness' and how specific characters break or conform to these. There is a direct comparison of Nelly and Joan which allows for detailed linking between the texts. One of these characters, in the candidate's interpretation of the texts, is not helpful, but by drawing a contrast with one who is, the candidate is able to write about this while remaining relevant to the question.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Comparing pairs of characters can be a useful way of drawing connections between the texts, as long as your focus is on the writers' methods of presenting them.

Question 12

Question 12: ways writers make use of settings

This was the more popular question in this thematic group and was generally very well answered. Many responses considered the geographical aspects of setting, with some comparing the division of rural and urban areas, with comments on how this represented wider contextual settings of the novels. Some considered the symbolism of the settings themselves, such as Kabul and the Bamiyan Buddhas; Talbothays and Stonehenge; Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange; London locations and Bourton. The consideration of setting linked to the characters' emotions was a central focus for many and how nature itself serves as a backdrop to key events. Some candidates drifted in focus, writing more about female disempowerment than about the setting itself, or simply listing settings without considering their significances and deeper meanings. At the top end of the mark grid, candidates often took a broad approach to settings, considering time settings and jumps, seasonal shifts, and pathetic fallacy in detail. Many linked settings to specific contexts, such as social class or cultural and political landscapes. A number of students attempted to discuss 'psychological settings' which was often a rather loosely defined concept and tended to lead to discussion of characters rather than places.

Settings were seen to reflect a variety of things within the novels. Some wrote of clear class divide represented by descriptions of places, like London in *Mrs Dalloway*. The Wessex countryside was seen to reflect Tess's natural innocent beauty while the Yorkshire moors represented the youthful freedom and wild natures of Catherine and Heathcliff, a place they could run to and shake off the trappings of civilisation. Alec's house was described as a place of danger, enclosed, cloaked, giving it a sinister appearance foreshadowing his treatment of Tess. Authors were seen to use contrasting settings to explore concepts of literal and figurative freedom and restriction due to the expectation of social conformity.

Some candidates struggled to give concrete examples of settings from their texts, for example commenting on the oppressive setting of Rasheed's house, but giving an example which was related to his abuse, rather than being linked to the place itself. Others were able to use examples more relevantly, such as one candidate's discussion of Mariam's 'setting' inside her burqa with her newly restricted view representing the broader restrictions she faced within her marriage and within Afghan society under the Taliban.

This level 3 response on Wuthering Heights and A Thousand Splendid Suns was awarded 11+10. The whole essay is reproduced here.

Both Bronte and Hosseini use setting as a way to mirror society's restrictions on women. The isolating settings in both novels restricts the women from gaining any form of control. Whilst it is known that ~~women~~ both women in Afghanistan and the Victorian era are ~~for~~ ^{are} ~~app~~ oppressed, the isolating and restricting settings used in both novels further perpetuates the oppression of women and their inability to obtain control.

In 'A Thousand Splendid Suns', the first form of restriction and isolation is through the kolba. The kolba is described ^{to be} ~~as~~ "up the dirt track, over rocks and pebbles, around holes and bushes". Hosseini uses ^{asyndetic} ~~as~~ listing of the barren and treacherous terrain to illustrate it's difficult journey. This can further suggest how society has ~~margins~~ marginalised both Nana and Mariam due to Mariam being 'harami', and therefore the isolation of the kolba from the rest of society is used as a form of punishment and expression of shame and disapproval. Likewise in Wuthering Heights, Bronte similarly uses the desolate setting of Wuthering Heights as a way of punishment, specifically the punishment of Isabella. In Chapter This is evident

when Isabella is described to be staring out the 'lattice'. The imagery of the lattice connotes to a prison like environment ^{which can suggest} ~~as she is isolated~~ how Isabella longs for freedom and feels captive in her own home, similar to both Mariam and Laila in Rasheed's home.

~~Despite the novels context~~

Throughout both novels setting is used to demonstrate the transformation of female characters - Mariam becoming more stronger as a women and Isabella and Catherine transforming their appearance and personality to reflect their ~~for~~ home. Bronte uses the contrasting description of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange to show the juxtaposition of characters. Wuthering Heights is described to be a "misanthropists heaven" with "thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving aims of the sun." The noun "thorns" has connotations to being harmful and painful, this could imply that the "thorns" are used as a form of protection to restrict anyone from entering the home. However Bronte juxtaposes this with the simile of them trying to crave the sun which ~~could~~ may be interpreted as the Wuthering Heights estate longing for warmth - which later in the novel ~~is~~ ~~at~~ the estate becomes warm and welcoming with the "house-door" opened". In contrast

the Thruscross Grange estate is described to have "crimson" and "gold" coloured walls and furniture. These colours are often associated with wealth which can suggest how the Linton household is of higher class and carries a more proper and elegant behaviour. In the novel Catherine is stated to be a "wild" young girl who plays in the moors, however after visiting the wealthy estate she is transformed into an elegant woman. The transformation can suggest how the upper class had both a physical and psychological impact on Catherine's character as she is no longer an outsider but instead fits into the expectations of an upper class Victorian woman. ^{Although} ~~Although~~ in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* the setting does ~~not~~ transform Mariam's physical appearance as she is forced to wear a "burka", Hosseini uses setting to illustrate her ^{own} journey of endurance as an Afghan woman. ^{Similar} ~~like~~ to Isabella being imprisoned in *Wuthering Heights*, in Chapter 47 Mariam is physically imprisoned in a cell where she "sat by the window." Both Mariam and Isabella look out of a window when imprisoned ~~to~~ which could suggest a longing for freedom; yet in the instance of Mariam it is more so acceptance.

Bronte and Hosseini ~~use~~^{uses} the imagery of liminality to illustrate the desire of freedom, however shows the reader ~~to~~^{the} reality of the entrapment of women as both women are imprisoned.

In Conclusion, despite the novels contextual differences - Wuthering Heights being a Victorian Gothic and A Thousand Splendid Suns being a modern novel set in war torn Afghanistan - both novels accurately portray the impact of setting on women, as Hosseini provides readers with a imagery of realism and Bronte illustrating the gothic yet realistic element of women during the Victorian era.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The points made in this essay are clear and relevant to the question of settings. The central argument, that settings are used to show restrictions on women's freedom, is sound, and is exemplified appropriately. The answer does not reach level 4 due to the level of detail discussed. To improve, it would be helpful to have more focus on the writers rather than their characters.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Remember that writers are not channeling a pre-existing story or character; they are constructing these things and making choices about the language they use in order to create meaning and nuance.

This essay on Wuthering Heights and Mrs Dalloway received full marks, 20+20.

Within both 'Wuthering Heights' by Emily Brontë, and 'Mrs Dalloway' by Virginia Woolf, the use of setting allows both authors to comment on the harshly restrictive, patriarchal nature of their respective societies. By displaying the impacts of isolation, the lack of forced conformity, and formative experiences on the lives of various female characters through each author's retrospective use of setting, Woolf and Brontë appear to critique the lack of opportunity and inequality faced by women in both the Victorian, and post-war periods. Whilst Brontë's novel fulfills the romantic tradition of externalising emotions in a largely rural, natural setting, Woolf utilises the modernist 'stream of consciousness' narrative technique to explore the impact of the patriarchy on women, by delving into the psyche of a number of characters, who are all present in the bustling, hectic London setting. Nevertheless, both authors explore both the causes and

negative consequences of female repression through the use of setting.

Both Woolf and Brontë demonstrate the harshly restrictive nature of male-dominated societies through their portrayal of female isolation. Both Clarissa and Cathy seek isolation as a form of refuge, as if they are longing to escape the pressures imposed on them by society to conform to traditional standards of femininity. For Clarissa, this can be seen in her retreat to the "attic room", a setting traditionally used in Victorian literature to connote an escape and release for women from the oppression they face in the outside world (for instance, ~~the~~ Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*). Clarissa notes how women must "dodge" and "put off their rich apparel" upon entry into the attic, which implies she is able to remove the mask of being a "perfect hostess" that allows her to fit seamlessly into everyday Victorian society. The value of this escape can be seen in the divergence in ~~the~~ Woolf's presentation of Clarissa in isolation versus her commentary as she navigates the streets of London whilst in public, Clarissa seemingly feels ~~attracted~~ anxious and fearful regarding her outwards presentation, as she ~~again~~ exclaims how it's "very, very dangerous" to live even one day, and how she lives with the constant fear that something "awful" is about to happen (evidenced by her interpretation of the car's engine as an explosion). This constant nervousness regarding the dangers and hostility of the outside world is directly contrasted by her euphoric dive into the utopia that is Barton whilst in the attic. Whilst the society in which she exists today expects her to fulfill the typical 'angel of the house' function, to which she conforms through her barren, passionless marriage to Richard, her internal monologue within the attic is happy to transgress social constraints, as she recollects how her lesbian passions for Sally resulted in the most "exquisite" moment

of her whole life. Given the fact that lesbianism was still highly censured within 1920's England (as shown by the legal dispute over 'The Well of Loneliness', described as sinful for showing 'unnatural practices' between women), Clarissa is only able to delve into her fondness of such a memory within her isolated state, and this is potentially what led Kowrossek-Selby to conclude that the setting of the attic room is the most "intimate" of settings, proven by Clarissa's discovery of genuine identity, rather than compared to her existence as "Mrs Richard Dalloway" in the outside world, implying showing the expectation that women must essentially absorb the identity of their husband. Similarly, in *Wuthering Heights*, Cathy longs for physical isolation on the moors as a result of her entrapment at Thrushcross Grange following her decision to marry Edgar Linton (a symbol of patriarchal forces) in order to become "the greatest woman of the neighbourhood". Not only does Cathy seek physical isolation in her illness within the Grange itself, but she also comments on how she longs to escape her "shattered prison", implying her desire to seek extreme isolation from her own body, and exist in a liminal space outside the constraints of society. This reading is further supported by her frenzied, paratextual speech within chapter 12, as she finds "childish deviance" in pulling feathers out from pillows, as if she's attempting to re-animate these birds and free them from their captivity within the pillow, reflecting her own desire to escape to an isolated state within nature. This is ultimately achieved by the placing of her grave alone on the moors, away from both the Earnshaw and Linton households. The fact that her decision to confide with what society expects of her (through marriage to Edgar), has forced Cathy to a state of physical isolation and metaphorical insanity demonstrates the suppressive nature of the patriarchy, a large issue in *Wuthering Heights* as shown by the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act, refusing women the right

to divorce on the grounds of adultery. Therefore, both authors demonstrate the
lack of equality for women in society through their uses of isolated settings.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This candidate constructs a sophisticated argument linking setting to character and contexts. Some responses to this question struggled to focus on settings when discussing aspects of characterisation or gender. This essay maintains a constant focus on the question while exploring wide-ranging ideas.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Make sure that every point you make directly answers the question.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, students should:

- Avoid trying to include pre-prepared material in their answers.
- Answer the question directly and signal this in their introduction and conclusion.
- Focus on the writer and their intentions, rather than on characters as autonomous or real people.
- Plan their response to ensure they can make their overall ideas clear from the start.
- When writing about contexts, avoid generalisations about social and cultural conventions of a particular time period. Try to give specific details and think about how they have influenced the text and writer.
- When evaluating, consider the different possible meanings a text, character, quote or idea can have. Keep an open mind about alternative perspectives.

Grade boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

