



# **Examiners' Report**

## **June 2024**

**GCE English Literature 9ET0 02**

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## Introduction

In summer 2024, examiners saw a great deal of extremely thoughtful work from candidates, who had clearly been very well prepared for their exams and knew their texts well.

Most candidates were able to cover all of the assessment objectives thoroughly. This paper takes an integrated approach to the four criteria being tested, so the most successful responses didn't, for example, include separate paragraphs on contexts and narrative methods, but wove these ideas into their central comparative arguments. Similarly, as connections and comparisons are assessed throughout, those candidates who structured their arguments around these, rather than writing about each text independently before making connections between the two, tended to be able to access these marks at a higher level.

This year was the first in which assessments were sat on the two new texts which have been added to the specification (*Attica Locke's The Cutting Season* and *Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire*). A pleasing number of responses were seen on these texts (although fewer on Locke, as the Crime and Detection theme remains the least commonly studied theme of the six), and candidates were able to make insightful and exploratory comments on them. I have included some examples of work writing about these new texts for the relevant questions in this report, which I hope will be useful to centres and candidates.

**AO1** asks candidates to craft an argument in response to the question posed. Their ability to support their ideas with textual examples and use literary terminology appropriately is included as part of this mark. The best responses will maintain their focus on the specific question throughout the essay; weaker answers this series were more likely to include pre-prepared content (for example using ideas that had perhaps been written about previously in mock exams or class essays) which tended to have less relevance to the question being asked. In order to achieve the top levels in AO1, candidates are encouraged to plan their answer before starting to write, in order to create a more fluent and structured progression of ideas.

**AO2** rewards candidates for their analysis of the writer's craft, and how writers use specific methods and techniques in order to shape the meanings of their works. This can be explored in numerous ways, including analysis of the specific words and phrases, discussion of narrative voice and structure, exploration of imagery and symbolism, and more. A discriminating factor here is whether a candidate can show their understanding of what the writer is doing and why and explore the potentially multiple meanings that they have created. When candidates struggle to reach the higher levels in this assessment objective, it is often due to a tendency to focus on plot or character as if they are real, rather than as being constructed by the authors to achieve specific effects. In this series, some candidates in the lower levels had a tendency to leave a gap between what the writer does (for example, using a quotation to 'show' what a writer is doing) without adequate explanation of how this feature actually works.

**AO3** asks candidates to explore the contextual factors that have affected the production and reception of their text. These factors can be interpreted broadly, not only as the historical events or cultural norms of a specific time period, but also including conventions of specific genres, literary movements, biographical influences in the authors' experiences, philosophical ideas, critical perspectives, and more. As well as being able to enumerate these factors, candidates should consider how they have affected the writers and their works and use this to shape their response to the specific question. Weaker responses tended to make sweeping generalisations about contexts, particularly around historical and cultural beliefs, and tended not to have a nuanced understanding of how contexts had affected the writers and their narrative choices.

**AO4** rewards the connections that candidates make between the two novels they have studied. Again, these can be made through a variety of lenses, including connections drawn through themes, characters, contexts, narrative methods, and plots. Candidates are encouraged to connect the texts throughout their essays. Sometimes candidates made use of superficially comparative language ('similarly', 'in contrast') without really going on to explore these connections in detail. Better answers exemplified these connections and went on to tease out specific details.

The levels of the mark scheme each have a key phrase giving an overview of the key feature of an essay in the level; Level 1 essays are likely to be primarily 'descriptive', Level 2 'general', Level 3 'clear and relevant', Level 4 'discriminating and controlled' and Level 5 'critical and evaluative.' By 'evaluation', we mean not a qualitative assessment of which writer or text is better, but a consideration of the multiple potential meanings a text may have, and at the top of Level 5, a candidate may be beginning to assert a critical position based on their consideration of these multiple meanings.

## Question 1

Relationships between women.

Many answers to this question explored the supportive and empowering relationships between women, for example between Celie and Shug in *The Color Purple*, and Louisa and Sissy in *Hard Times*. Others considered rivalries between women, mother-daughter relationships (for example, discussing Emily Tallis as an absent mother who indulged Briony's imagination and Mrs Gradgrind as cold and enforcing Utilitarianism, both resulting in destructive outcomes), and the significance of female friendships. Less successful responses tended to overlook 'relationships' and focus more on the roles of individual women in the novels rather than their relationships with each other. Many strong answers considered the consequences of these relationships, and the broader societal issues writers were able to explore by presenting these to readers.

This section from a low Level 4 response focuses closely on female relationships and makes integrated connections throughout. The answer was given 14+13.

In both 'What Maizie Knew' by Henry James and 'Atonement' by Ian McEwan, female relationships are presented as complex, suggesting an innate closeness between female characters whilst also simultaneously addressing

a distance that can be the result of jealousy, ~~with~~ misunderstanding or due to social differences.

Firstly, both James and McEwan effectively <sup>present</sup> ~~explore~~ ~~the female relatio~~ female relationships through the exploration of the ~~dy~~ dynamics between mother and daughter in both novels. In 'What Maisie Knew' it is made clear from the beginning of the novel that the relationship between Maisie and Ida is distant and unreliable. Ida sees Maisie as simply a pawn in "her ladyship's game" and offers ~~pro~~ Maisie coldness and hostility as opposed to the comfort that Maisie desperately yearns for. By introducing the concept of divorce, James further drives a narrative of separation between Maisie's relationship with her parents, specifically Ida, with the battle for custody ~~a result~~ only a result of revenge towards one another. Both Ida and Beale ~~don~~ do not want Maisie, "for any good they could do to her but for the harm they could, with her unconscious aid do to each other." Therefore, Maisie is left vulnerable at such a young age as she is without secure protection or genuine care from her parents, specifically her mother from whom any sense of maternal love is absent. Comparatively, in McEwan's 'Atonement', the relationship presented between Emily ~~Tattler~~ and Briony Tallis,

is one of warmth and genuine compassion. This is true at the start of the novel where Emily suggests that "to ~~know~~ <sup>love her</sup> Briony was to be soothed," and later voices her concerns for her wellbeing, conflicted as to how she will "protect her against failure." ~~The~~ <sup>This</sup> mother and daughter relationship ~~that~~ presented by McEwan demonstrates a closeness lacking from the ~~ret~~ tainted relationship between Ida and Maudie, ~~present~~ illustrating maternal instinct to protect one's child and provide them with comfort and a loving environment. However, as the novel progresses, McEwan begins to present not only Briony's relationship with her mother but also with the rest of the characters in a more realistic light. ~~Due to~~ As a result of Briony's ignorant and childish misunderstanding, the relationships in Briony's life ~~be~~ come unravelled, leading one to question how secure they were in the first place. This is ~~perhaps~~ foreshadowed with a line said by Briony ~~near the~~ ~~start~~ at the very beginning of the novel which states, "Love which did not build a foundation on good sense was doomed." This implies that perhaps the compassion shown by Emily and the sense of closeness felt by both was ingenuine. This can be compared with James' use of realism as his chosen style of writing, which lends itself to the realistic representation of a distanced

relationship between the mother and daughter, fuelled by bitterness and as a result of Ida's selfish desire to ~~act on~~ in her best on her ~~interest~~ interest tendencies to act on her own selfish desires to ~~chase after~~ seek wealth and social status, rather than care for the wellbeing of her own daughter.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate compares the mother-daughter relationships between Ida Beale and Maisie, and Emily and Briony Tallis, drawing out the differences between the two.

The candidate focuses on the writers and their methods well, but occasionally writes as if the characters are real people.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Focus on the authors and their methods rather than plot and character details.

## Question 2

### Settings

Many strong responses were seen which considered how settings were used symbolically as sites of entrapment or were used to reflect the writers' contextual concerns. Others focused on how settings contributed to the narrative or characterisation, for example, Briony's room with her 'straight-backed' dolls and animals in their 'correct' places were seen to reflect her controlling and perfectionist behaviour, and Gradgrind's school, a plain, bare and monotonous vault mirroring Dickens' view of Utilitarianism. Less successful candidates tended to list settings used in the texts without a sense of the writer's purpose or how the settings were being used in the texts. Some candidates considered the emotional or psychological settings as well as the physical, which was often an interesting angle to discuss.

This section from a Level 4 answer on *Hard Times* and *The Color Purple* was awarded 14+14.

In both the novels, 'Hard Times' and 'The Color Purple', the authors use setting to portray the impacts of environment and ideology on growing children. In 'The Color Purple' Alice Walker <sup>presents</sup> ~~compares~~ the setting of <sup>an abusive household in the deep South to show the impact on</sup> ~~the Gilded Age in America~~ ~~to the supposed civil~~ children as they follow their parents' actions ~~in the~~ ~~Western world in America~~. Dickens ~~strongly~~ contrasts two different social settings to explore the Utilitarianism philosophy of industrial England and the fantastical and creative community of the circus.

In 'Hard Times' Dickens uses binary opposition <sup>to</sup> compare the philosophy of 'Hard Fact' to the less repressive idea of creativity and fancy. This is seen in Dickens' description of the Gradgrind family home 'Stone lodge'; The lexical choice of 'Stone' has connotations of industrialism <sup>and</sup> brutality, as stone would have been an essential material in the thriving cities of England throughout the industrial revolution. Dickens then emphasises the idea of industrialism in Chapter Three, 'Six windows on this side of the door, six on that side; a total of twelve in this wing, a total of twelve in the other wing; four-and-twenty', the repetitive numerical values used 'Six, twelve' depicts ~~the~~ ~~repeated~~ a sense of controlled order and planning. However, as ~~noted~~ Dickens' repetition could be argued to be a

Mochnery of the ~~industrial~~ <sup>rigorous industrial</sup> ~~rev~~ & Society of he  
is emphasising the lack of creativity and imagination  
within ~~him~~ this home. Dickens <sup>then</sup> ↓ also portrays the  
home of the Cradgrind family to be mechanical  
and ~~fact~~ fact driven by the use of similes  
in describing one of the Cradgrind children, Tom.  
The simile 'but gave himself up to be taken home ~~to~~ like  
a machine' explores the idea that ~~as for~~ Tom <sup>is treated</sup> ~~feels~~ ~~to~~  
like a cog in a factory, simply to be used to  
~~produce~~ produce material wealth. Furthermore, the  
verb <sup>choice of</sup> ~~gave~~ 'gave' himself up' make his him seem  
cornered and hopeless, as if he had no other option, this  
presenting the idea that the industrial setting of Stone Lodge  
is nothing less than ~~an~~ an entrapment in a Utilitarian Society.  
~~This repressed~~ The idea of repressed childhood due to  
~~Walker's similes~~ ~~uses setting to present ideas of~~  
environment and setting is also seen in Walker's novel as  
she <sup>shows</sup> ~~presents~~ the Celie's lack of education and knowledge.  
Although Walker uses irregular verbs and ellipsis to depict  
Celie's low level of education 'He be on her all the time',  
Walker also expresses <sup>that Celie understands</sup> ~~that~~ education and schooling is vital  
'in the freedom on young women in the deep South.'  
'I tell Nettie to keep at her books', the declarative  
sentence highlights Celie's understanding of the  
importance of education for young black girls as she believes  
Nettie has the best ~~chance~~ chance is she is educated.

Therefore Walker's use of setting in the deep South of America is used to portray the reality of many black people (especially women) within the 1900s as their education was not seen as a necessity. <sup>Thus</sup> shown through ~~the~~ the setting of School the neglect of black women from education, as Celie is removed due to her pregnancy, enforces the idea that black women were often seen as inferior and unimportant.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This passage from the essay includes very detailed and controlled AO2 analysis for *Hard Times*. The analysis of the physical settings is particularly good.

Towards the end of the paragraph the candidate brings in the second text and connects it thematically but loses focus slightly on the question of setting.

Because this section is slightly imbalanced in favour of one text, elsewhere in the essay the candidate must make sure they answer the question more directly on *The Color Purple*.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Make sure you analyse your quotations in detail, thinking about the meanings the writer is trying to create through their language and use of narrative and literary techniques.

### Question 3

#### Identity

There were many well-argued essays exploring ideas around identities. Less secure answers tended to list characters and their identities, while stronger answers tended to integrate comments on individual characters with a broader discussion of the writers' commentaries on colonialism or community and their effects upon identity. Thoughtful and nuanced comparisons, with candidates making connections between the ways characters lose (and then regain) identity, and between characters who are caught in an 'in between space', where they cannot connect to either culture. One candidate made a nuanced link between Marlow and Parvaiz, exploring how both characters lose their connection with one culture, but fail to find it in another. Some candidates commented on loss of identity and civilisation in *Heart of Darkness* while in *The Lonely Londoners*, characters had to reassess their identities and find ways to assimilate into a new culture. Some considered how characters could be stripped of their identity and explored ideas of how the concept of 'the other' might be created and imposed on a person. Preconceptions that mark other cultures as savage or through fetishisation were also discussed, as well as the failure to see people of other nations as individuals, only through a generalised, racist lens. The best responses kept a clear focus on how the texts presented the changing identities of characters, rather than seeing identity as a fixed point.

This Level 5 response on *Heart of Darkness* and *The Lonely Londoners* scored 18+18.

Text 1:

The Lonely Londoners - Sam Selvon

Text 2:

Heart of Darkness - Joseph Conrad

Both Selvon and Conrad explore identity as a key theme in their novellas. However, due to the time period in which *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and *Heart of Darkness* (1899-1901) were written in, identity is defined differently. Conrad was writing at a time when colonisation and empire were rampant, especially during the Scramble for Africa. Therefore, the <sup>identity of the</sup> Congolese native is seen through a colonial lens but for Conrad, the meanings of identity is always changing ~~and~~ and this can be seen through Kurtz. On the other hand, Selvon wrote ~~the~~ ~~novel~~ <sup>Londoners</sup> *The Lonely* during a time of migration in which many of his characters were the first to board the Empire Windrush and so unlike Conrad,

Selvon explores the migrant experience and ~~loss~~ identity in London. However, both novellas are in conversation with each other as the pain and suffering caused by colonisation, directly affects the way in which 'the boys' are perceived by the English. Selvon ~~portraying~~ shows how colonial language and stereotypes affect identity through Harris.

Selvon and Conrad explore how identity changes. In Heart of Darkness, <sup>due to</sup> Conrad's ambiguous portrayal of Kurtz, the intended has no knowledge of his abhorrent dealings.

She was in love with "original Kurtz", a man who was "a musician", "an artist" or even "a universal genius". Conrad lists Kurtz as having been many different people whilst acknowledging that "he was the veriest savage of them all," which perhaps defines his final identity. The final Kurtz took the form of a "phantom" like presence: "there was nothing either above or below him." Kurtz is no longer governed by God or even his own conscience; he is too consumed by greed and unearthly power - attributes which are intrinsically linked to King Leopold II. Kurtz has retreated so far into "his heart of

"darkness" that he is no longer human and left as "a hollow man". It could be argued that Kurtz's identity is intrinsic to the way meaning is shared in Heart of Darkness. Perhaps, Conrad is criticizing his ability to find meaning in "the kernel" of the story because arguably it is hollow like Kurtz. Therefore, meaning can only be found in "the messy halo". ~~the meaning is~~ Just like the mist, Kurtz's identity is always changing as does the meaning of the novella.

Unlike Conrad, Selvon explores how identity changes due to the internalisation of colonial stereotypes through Harris. Harris "look like an Englishman man going in the city, with bowler and umbrella." Selvon's writing conveys how Harris is absorbed every aspect of British culture and etiquette in attempt to erase himself however, "only thing, Harris face black" and this ~~is~~ ~~the~~ part of his identity is unchangeable. ~~Selvon~~

Furthermore, Selvon employs an RP English for Harris instead of his Creole vernacular which Fire criticises: "You forget that I know you from back home". This idea of home is crucial as it is what has shaped Harris' identity. But not only

does Harris emotionally reject his Jamaican identity, he physically avoids Fire and Tanty at his fête, demonstrating the lengths he would go to in order to eliminate his past self in order to assimilate. ~~Readers may~~ Readers may question why Harris chooses to wear a facade and arguably, it is because he is fearful that "the English will say we are still uncivilized." Perhaps the reasons for Harris wanting to change his identity are encapsulated within Trevor's adjective "uncivilized". This, <sup>arguably</sup> ~~harks~~ back to Kurtz labelling the natives as "brutes" and "savages" demonstrating how, over fifty years later, colonial language ~~is~~ still has the power to permeate into ~~the~~ a post colonial society and cause intergenerational trauma. Harris' facade is also reflective of ideas explored in Fanon's 'Black skin white masks' (1952) which details whiteness and blackness and how their colonial associations affect the way migrants see themselves. ~~is~~ ~~is~~



This candidate takes an evaluative approach to the theme of identity, considering how it changes and is affected by contextual factors. By looking at 'the intended's' view of Kurtz, and Harris' attempts to appear more English, they consider how characters can have multiple identities within the same text.

This section of a Level 5 response scored 18+18.

Thirdly, the authors differ on their own depiction of identity and accurate portrayal of different identities. In *HojD*, the black characters don't have speaking parts but are collectively symbolic of a larger oppressed peoples. This serves to ~~criticise~~ criticise the "horror" of colonialism and the "darkness" of the mission by making a clear analogy of dark being evil and placing the events in "the heart of darkness". However by silencing the characters this effects their identities are also claimed by Marlow and a Colonial perspective, a post-colonial reading would argue that this places the novel amongst colonial texts as Conrad's point of the "savagery" being like "you", doesn't lift the narrative of savagery but rather covers the white "civility" to the the same place. In ~~the~~ *The Lonely Colonisers* however, Selvors use of Creolized English is utterly empowering, giving voice to a community

than unrepresented ~~in the same~~, so personally to convey the unarticulated desires of his characters. "Moses sit down and pay for his fare he take out a white handkerchief to blow his ~~arm~~ nose." §, one of the opening lines this is an example of the creolized English and also the metaphor for the entire novel. Moses 'pays his fare', a Marxist reading would highlight this. Moses is there to work and pay and struggles throughout to achieve this. The ~~the~~ "handkerchiefs turn blank", this symbolises the narrative of reverse colonialism and Moses' ~~are~~ wrongly perceived 'invasion' of London and ~~to~~ having a "colonial" identity. Therefore, Selvon and Conrad both attempt to depict the horrors of colonialism ~~by~~ by different means, ~~one more~~ ~~The effectiveness~~ ~~is~~ And crucial to their own context.



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Examiner Comments

This example shows a sophisticated evaluation of post-colonial readings of Conrad. Rather than assert a single reading, the candidate is able to consider different interpretations.



For marks in Level 5, consider different ways that your texts could be interpreted.

This paragraph from a Level 4 essay on *Home Fire* and *Heart of Darkness* scored 15+16.

Shamsie uses Karamat's political philosophies to symbolise the sentiment of migrants being unwelcome in their former colonisers' homeland. Karamat's policy of the revocation of citizenship of dual nationals echoes the Nationality, Asylum and Immigration Act of 2006, a policy later utilised by Sajid Javid, a politician. The characterisation of Karamat was based on, to revoke Shamima Begum's citizenship in 2019. This grounds the feelings of cultural otherness and alienation in reality. Eamonn reflects how his father was denounced in the press after entering a Mosque, headlines stating "Lone Wolf's Pluck Revealed". This ~~is~~ draws of the sentiment that Britishness and "Muslimness", a Neologism Isma uses, <sup>which ~~refers~~ <sup>alludes</sup> to the 'ness' in Britishness</sup> are intrinsically oxymoronic and cannot coexist. In order for Karamat to be accepted in the political sphere, he must denounce parts of his ~~total~~ cultural and religious identity in favour of his British National identity. ~~By~~ By viewing Western and Eastern ~~of~~ identities as paradoxical, Karamat is forced into a stereotype.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

In this paragraph, the candidate successfully integrates AO2 analysis and AO3 contextual discussion. The idea of Lone's character being forced to renounce his Muslim identity in order to be perceived as British is very thoughtfully explored.



Use contextual comments to help your analysis of the text; ask yourself what they add to your understanding of plot, character or theme.

## Question 4

### Narrative voices

Perhaps because the question was not focused on theme but on a specific narrative method, there was a very strong focus on AO2 in responses to this question. Candidates were able to explore the social and power dynamics revealed through narrators and their voices and make thoughtful connections to the contextual influences on the writers. One response explored how typical the narrative voices were for the time, exploring the ways Conrad's narrative voice deviated from the norm – this was a productive way to include meaningful context. Other fruitful approaches included consideration of characters who lacked voice, having their stories told for them and exploration of the effect of the choice of character for the narrative voice (in particular, whether the story was narrated from the point of view of oppressed or oppressor, and the effects this has). Comparisons of Selvon and Conrad were able to thoughtfully consider colonial dialogue between past and present, and many candidates commented on elements of narrative voice such as the use of frame narratives, modernist approaches, the use of creole, and Shamsie's multi-modal storytelling. There was some illuminating discussion of criticisms (which for this paper are rewarded as a contextual factor) from the likes of Achebe among others to consider how writers use narrative voice to either bring to light or silence the voices of minoritised people.

This Level 5 response on *Heart of Darkness* and *Home Fire* scored 18+19.

Additionally, both writers use narrative voices to fully explore the mental deterioration of characters. In 'Heart of Darkness' this is done through both Marlow's own narrative, which becomes increasingly fragmented as his <sup>mental</sup> deterioration <sup>worsens</sup>, hence differing from contemporary 'smooth prose' such as George Eliot's 'Middlemarch'. However, Marlow's narrative voice also provides an interesting perspective on Kurtz's mental deterioration. Marlow is originally very ~~being~~ excited about meeting Kurtz who becomes his principal motivation for his journey, however, Conrad uses prolepsis to begin to show how Kurtz has deteriorated and become corrupted as he now loves 'shopping, money' from the Congolese, and can't really be controlled.

Kurtz's mental deterioration is therefore extremely obvious when Marlow finally meets him. He is no longer the innocent, idealogical, intelligent man who just wanted to make money for his intended. Now he has become a shell of his former self and a symbol of the motif of ~~the~~ darkness first introduced by the title. ~~He~~ Kurtz has become like other tyrannical colonisers such as Leach Ram and Henry Morton Stanley. Even Kurtz's famous

'last words' 'the horror! The horror!' show how to him he and his life ~~are~~ have deteriorated into a horrific situation which he cannot even really bring to fully divulge. Mar Conrad using Marlow's narrative voice to describe Kurtz's deterioration is very impactful as his understanding of Kurtz mirrors that of the reader and so the reader's mental image of Kurtz changes from a respected commander to a corrupt, mad coloniser much like Eliot describes in his poem 'The Hollow Men'. Moreover, as the reader never sees inside Kurtz's mind it allows him to remain this figure of 'an impenetrable darkness'. Differing from Conrad, Shamuse provides the reader with an inside perspective on mental deterioration ~~for~~ through Aneeka's narrative section. From other narrative voices such as Ismael, the reader knows that Aneeka is very intelligent, headstrong and astute, however her narrative section provides the reader insight into how this has completely changed due to the death of her twin. Porfir was incredibly important to her, as shown by how she chooses him, a radicalised jihadist, similar to many young people from the UK and Europe who have been radicalised by ISIS ~~ideas~~ recruiters, such as Shamima Begum,

over Isma. When he dies in a bomb outside the British embassy, she is distraught. Her narrative section differs from all others in the book as it is fragmented and composed of prose, fictional tweets, fictional news reports and fictional newspapers. This reflects her mental deterioration which is caused by grief but exacerbated by the Islamophobic news articles which call her 'hojabi' and foraitz ('peruy pasha', hence reflecting the wider issue of Islamophobia in British media as 59% of media articles about Muslims contain harmful stereotypes. Moreover, through her unorganised narrative voice the reader also sees how she turns that grief into a source of motivation and protest, hence living up to her role as Antigone. Therefore, both authors use narrative voices to explore and show the mental deterioration of characters. However, unlike Conrad does this through an outside perspective of Marlow who observes and witnesses Kurtz, hence acting much like the reader, Stausie uses multiple narrators to give an inside perspective on Ineeka's mental deterioration. However, both are extremely effective.

In conclusion, both authors use narrative voices to comment on ~~such~~ contemporary social issues and explore changes in the characters' psyche such as enlightenment and mental deterioration. However, there is a big difference between the two authors. Conrad sticks mainly to just using Marlow, as a focusing character in his novels such as "Lord Jim", as the principal narrative voice, whereas Stausibie uses multiple narrative voices to give both ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> perspectives of the bourgeoisie occident and the proletariat ~~orient~~ <sup>orient</sup>, as well as giving an intimate insider perspective into any mental change. Overall, both authors use narrative voices to evoke pain and increase understanding, which also encourages the reader to critique and examine their society and ~~social~~ <sup>social</sup> institutionalised discriminatory, however arguably Stausibie does this to a more extreme extent as Aneka and Eanann actually protest against Islamophobia, as seen ~~in their~~ <sup>through</sup> Koranati's narrative voice, whereas Marlow just shares the thoughts with the sailors and the reader rather than acting, as the cyclical structure and sporadic interjections of the frame narrative remind the reader.



This is the ending of a wide-ranging essay which seamlessly integrates contexts, interpretation, argument and analysis.

This response scored full marks.

Text 1:

Heart of Darkness

Text 2:

The Lonely Londoners

Whilst Conrad distances himself from the narrative, via the technique of a frame narrator to make a critical comment about the philatropic pretence of colonialism, Selim seems to introject his readers into the inner lives of his Lonely Londoners such that the ~~narrative voice~~ <sup>storyteller merges</sup> with his characters, and <sup>Selim's musings</sup> the latter's sweet relationship with London is given both a voice and readership.

Conrad's use of the metaphor of the kernel of a cracked nut reflects his use of a frame narrator, both that, just as "the meaning of an episode was not inside the kernel, but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a

draw horns out a hare", so too does Conrad's frame narrator ~~bring out~~ ~~bring out~~ the novel into the context ~~which~~ of the whole colonial endeavor which brings out the "hare" of Marlow's journey into the darkness of the Congo. Indeed, Conrad uses the frame narrator to introduce his readers ~~to~~ to the ironic hypocrisy behind the colonial narrative: "hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and after the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire." Selim's use of the word "torch", "messengers" and "sacred" create a semantic field of the Philistine intent behind colonialism outlined by King Leopold II when he argued that the aims of the "great Civilizer Mission" were "noble." Conrad directly contrasts this to the words "hunters" and "pursuers" such that the true metric of colonialism is revealed: "to earn their percentages." Conrad's hyperbolic glorification of the "greatness" of such colonizers seems to laugh at the sacred narrative bestowed upon them such that they are not, as King Leopold argues, ~~to~~ installing the values of Christian civilization, but rather, they are sowing "the germs of empire." Thus, Conrad's frame narrator seems to take on the critical stance of Conrad himself who later calls the congress "the vilest

scramble for love". Whilst Conrad uses his frame narrative to directly criticise the philanthropy behind colonialism, ~~the~~ Selim closes the gap between story-teller and character, allows for free-indirect style to encompass the overlapping experiences of his Londoners whose suffering is often at the hands of Conrad's colonial legacy. Rather than shedding light upon the pretence of colonialism, Selim chooses to expose the stereotypes and myths to which black people have been confined: "the English people believe that everybody who came from the West Indies came from Jamaica." Selim's re-appropriation of the power of the narrative allows for the expression of his migrants' individual experiences, breaks free of the structures and strictures imposed by the English literary canon. ~~Indeed, when Selim first started to write, he was travelling on the same~~

Selim's use of a mixed, creolised language not only makes room for the narrative of his Londoners but also serves to represent the "double consciousness" this experience, with that, according to Du Bois, a person is aware both of the perspective of the colonised/coloniser and of the indigenous culture. By using a hybrid mix of "Strategic English" and native languages, Selim brings to light the hybrid nature of post-colonial identity; characterised

by a sense of "inhospitality" a term coined by A. Khabba to describe a psychological state of limbo between two cultures, or feeling unhomed in one's own skin. This is most poignantly captured by Selim when he describes Galehad talking to "the color of his hand" as if it is a person. By alienating the color black from ~~himself~~<sup>Galehad</sup>, Selim both demonstrates the absurdity of a color "causing" bitterness in the place, even that it can be separated from the individual, but also the psychological torment migrants undergo as they inherit feelings of inferiority towards their own identity from a colonial legacy: "You know it's that cause a lot of misery in the world." This Selim's narrative voice is both a medium for the expression of suffering ~~to~~<sup>inherited</sup> from colonial conquest, but also itself represents a crisis in identity, a double consciousness in which Galehad is torn between two cultures, ~~unwillingly~~ speaks English so as to integrate, but confined to his own color which excludes him from society: "You know it will take me some time to understand exactly you say. The way you white Indians speak!" Conrad, on the other hand, does not permit his characters to wear the grunts and animal movements of "savages" to become characters in the novel. Their narrative, as Achebe agrees, forms the backdrop

against which a white narrative voice may express its psychological anxieties with the heat of the Congo. Indeed, where Conrad criticises colonialism, he does so with ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ the Congo as the "sinister backdrop" in front of which may be enacted the "sordid force." This is best epitomised by comparing the character of Kurtz with the white woman's "native capacity... for suffering"; Kurtz's madness is depicted by Conrad as belonging to the "immense wilderness" itself, his body inseparable from the lands which colonisation seem to dominate, as his Legation writes "penetration into the virgin lands." This creates what Achebe calls a semantic field of "black mystery": "she was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent... the feared and mysterious life", Conrad strips her of her narrative voice and de-humanises her with that she ~~too~~ becomes part of the "backdrop" behind which the horrors of Kurtz and thus the colonial endeavour may unfold.

Although Selim recognises the power of the narrative voice with that Kurtz's presence throughout the novel is a "a voice... very little more than a voice... all of them were so little mother voices" ~~which~~ responsible for instilling the philanthropic

narrative of colonialism into chronicles, he fails to use the power of his oral narrative mode to offer an alternative perspective; ~~he~~ fails to grant his black characters their own presence and identity and thereby contributing to the very "mentalism" which Edward Said claims uses black characters to bring out the virtue of whiteness and justify any "aggressive" military action which was advantageous. Selim however inverts his oral narrative mode; draws upon the style of the calypso to create a lyricism which encompasses the unique experiences of Windward migrants. In a post-modernist use of meta-fiction at the end of the novel, Selim refers to Moses as he ~~contemplates~~ "ever" "wondering if he could ever enter a bare minaret." By recognising the power of "newspaper and radio" to "write this country", Selim makes room for his oral narrative which explodes the restrictive literary canon's "straight English" to encompass the narratives of all his tender's, his mixed narrative style an embodiment of their post-colonial identity.



This is a sophisticated and wide ranging answer which connects the topic of 'narrative voice' to a number of different themes and ideas that the writers are exploring.



Pinning down the central ideas of the writers and their texts linking these to the question will ensure you stay focused on the main topic you are being asked to consider.

## Question 5

Sense of danger

This question received very few responses. These had a tendency to enumerate violent episodes, but did not always consider how the writers had created a sense of danger by exploring their narrative methods.

This Level 4 response compares *The Cutting Season* and *The Moonstone*. It was given 14+13.

Collins in 'The Moonstone' uses the power of setting to evoke a sense of danger and fear throughout his novel. By setting the main crime at the Verinder household, Collins makes his novel a part of sensational fiction, as he allows a heinous crime to take place in the British countryside. The prologue begins with the ~~lines~~ line, 'I address these lines - written in India - to my relatives in England', depicting a sense of danger and despair. 'written in India', showcases how

far away the unnamed narrator of the prologue is, immediately make the readers question the narrators safety. Throughout the novel, the Moonstone is referred to as the 'yellow diamond', the adjective 'yellow', indicates a sense of otherness, hinting at how the tarnished diamond infringes upon British society. The diamond is also described as the 'devilish Indian diamond', perhaps hinting that the ~~British~~ diamond is evil, hence why people steal it for greed. The shimmering sands have an eerie connection to the tarnished stone as initially characters thought that was where the diamond was hidden, the Sands are also where Rosanna Spearman committed suicide. The locations that Collins have used were said to be heavily impacted by the Roads Murder case 1860. In a similar way, Locke in 'The Cutting Season' uses the power of setting to create a sense of danger whilst highlighting how the troubles of the past are relevant today. The deviation of Locke's novel is set in 'Belle Vie' which translates to 'the Beautiful life', ironic due to the lands past as a slave plantation. In chapter 1, Owen reminds us that 'Belle Vie, its beauty was not to be trusted', perhaps foreshadowing the heinous crime that will be committed later on, this is later reiterated in

the line 'the shadows of Belle Vue', a direct reference to when it was a plantation. Locke was writing this novel around 2012, when novels such as 'Naughts and crosses' by Malorie Blackman were on the rise as they depicted a different view on race. It can be argued that Locke was inspired by Blackman, as majority of her novels are centred around race. By using 'Belle Vue' as the backdrop for a modern day crime, Locke essentially argues that the 'shadows of Belle Vue' can not be forgotten - Both Collins and Locke use the power of setting to showcase a sense of danger and fear. Collins essentially warns his Victorian readers that crimes can happen anywhere, whilst Locke showcases the dangers of the past.



In this section of the essay, the candidate explores how the writers use setting to create a sense of danger. There is a sharp focus on the task, with detailed analysis of the writers' methods.



As this candidate has done with setting, you could consider what specific techniques both writers use in order to achieve a specific effect and use these as a point of comparison.

## Question 6

### Social divisions

Candidates were able to take a range of approaches to the idea of social divisions, with consideration of social class, divisions related to gender, marginalised groups, social mobility and those excluded from it. One candidate suggested that Lady Audley's 'invasion' of the upper classes, brought about by her advantageous marriage, was an offence to society. Similarly, it was felt that Smith and Hickock invaded the peace of the lifestyle and idealism of the American Dream. Techniques of narrative and perspective were considered as means of contrasting the lifestyles of the characters. The comparisons of the luxurious and comfortable descriptions of the settings of the homestead and the court set against the origins of Lady Audley and Hickock and Smith served to evoke some sympathy for these characters as well as suggesting the dangers of such divisions in society. The candidate concluded that both authors looked to the stark contrasts between classes as the root of criminal behaviour within the two novels.

This Level 5 response comparing *Lady Audley's Secret* with *The Cutting Season* scored 18+16. (A section has been missed out from the middle of the essay)

Both Africa Locke and Mary Elizabeth Braddon through the 'Cutting Season' and 'Lady Audley's Secret' explore societal divisions through <sup>victim</sup> characters as victims of societal hierarchies to explore their respective contemporary societal and racial injustices.

In 'Lady Audley's Secret', the eponymous character Lady Audley represents a threat on patriarchal order. Formerly "Helen Talboys", Lady Audley assumes various names throughout the novel including "Lucy Graham" showing a consistent desire

to define and redefine herself. Through these different names Braddon further provides insight into the limited roles on offer to women in the Victorian era, as she changes from impoverished daughter, to abandoned wife, to governess, to "Lady Audley" in the novel, highlighting how a woman's power in society is negotiated by that ~~of~~ of the male figure within their lives, despite Lady Audley, and by extension Braddon's, attempt to derail this status quo. However, the rigidity of this societal hierarchy founded on patriarchal values can be observed through Lady Audley's return to the "deprivations and humiliations of poverty"; articulating the indelible overarching force of upper class domination, as the effective imposter Lady Audley is sentenced to a life in a mental hospital despite her and attempts at social mobilization, pathologizing female ambition due to its unlikelihood within the rigid societal structure. This provides a link to the Victorian belief of the 'Doctrine of Separate Spheres' which outlines a belief that men and women serve different purposes within society; theorizing women to be innately more religious and morally finer. This was

mainly observed through the upper class as the more working classes could not afford to live this way, yet it still remained moderately influential. It is for this reason, Robert Ardley as a representation of the idle upper class, despite evident clues such as "a bruise by four fingers of a powerful hand" appearing incongruent to her "delicate wrist", fails to identify Lady Ardley as a serious suspect in the ~~suspect~~ disappearance of George Talboys as his "uneasiness" displays a lack of willing to challenge the draft and, while working class Lady Ardley kicks against ~~social~~ societal structures, while Braddon nimbly discreetly highlights the capability of women, exacerbating social divisions within the novel, a reflective microcosm of Victorian un-egalitarian society.

Africa Locke in 'The Cutting Season' articulates social divisions within the United States through her articulation of the 'American Dream' as a mechanism of deceit. Migrant workers from Guatemala and Mexico largely make up the workforce of the "Groveland Corporation" within the novel separated by a gate from Belle Vie. The death of Inés Avalo, a cane planter for Groveland serves to show how the

idealized 'American Dream' is not achievable for all, a concept which promises individual rights and freedom to all within the democratic sphere of the United States, which since the 1846-8 Mexican-American war has enticed Southern Americans to cross the border for a chance at prosperity. Inés embodies this as we discover she ~~is~~ embodies the work ethic ascribed to migrant workers as she attempts to send money home for her family. However, Locke's grotesque and visceral image around her death as her "throat was cut in two", and remarks a putrid smell around the body creating a vivid sensory experience for the reader, ~~emphasizing the~~ which serves to emphasize the injustice surrounding her death, as she lay in front of Belle Vie, a picturesque representation of white American wealth and prosperity, coming at the cost of migrant populations. This emphasizes contemporary social divisions within America as the 'American Dream' manipulates a mechanism of intrigue for a chance at prosperity and better freedoms which is rarely achieved as exemplified through the "harsh wine" between Groveland Farm and

Bene lie.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This is a very detailed and well argued comparison, considering how social divisions along class and gender lines create tensions in the novels.

The candidate did not start to compare the two texts for some time after their introduction, meaning their mark for AO3/AO4 was lower than AO1/AO2.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Try to compare as you go along, rather than leaving comparisons until later in the essay.



In the American justice system, ~~and~~ a ~~topic~~ poignant topic of relevance in the modern day following the likes of the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in recent years. The Clancy's, a generationally wealthy family that are ~~well loved~~ ~~in the area,~~ particularly due to 'beloved in Ascension Parish', particularly for their funding of 'mostly black schools' (p147), took advantage of this position of social power that they have due to ~~both~~ their wealth, high status and trust ~~among~~ within the black community ('The Clancy's, they've always looked out for Black people' - Betty Collier, p302) to exploit and persecute Donovan for the sake of Raymond's own 'political career', manipulating a man of lower status by coercing him into a plea deal, Donovan stating that 'he says its a good deal for someone like me', highlighting the separation between the lower income Black South and the higher powers of society represented by the rich white male family of the Clancy's, showing an ~~power~~ extensive division in society that ~~black~~ black people such as Donovan are ultimately powerless to. This would have been a topic deeply personal to Locke, who was born in the mid 1970s to two black parents who had both been actively involved in the civil rights movement

that began in  
~~at~~ the late 1960s, ultimately naming the author after the 1971 Attica Prison Riot in New York. Subsequently, the topic of both police violence and societal injustices are deeply personal to Locke, having grown up herself as a minority in Texas, subsequently living within a time of great social tension and division, a theme encapsulated by the ~~the~~ narrative of Donovan.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This is a very clear and relevant paragraph, considering how social divisions in American society are explored in the novel. Contemporary contexts are well integrated into the paragraph.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

When writing about historical contexts, you can explore the time the novels were written, and also make links to contemporary issues and ideas.

## Question 7

### Isolation

Candidates chose to explore isolation from different perspectives. Many candidates used setting as a starting point to discuss isolation, considering physical isolation and its impact on behaviour or the mental state of characters. For example, responses on *Never Let Me Go* considered how the clones were kept hidden from the rest of society; some responses on *Frankenstein* considered Victor's isolation as allowing his ambition to go unchecked, and the creature's as instrumental in his quest for vengeance. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, a few responses argued that Offred's isolation provided her with a freedom of sorts, as well as considering how the regime used segregation and isolation of various groups to maintain control. Some argued that isolation was damaging, or a form of control; others argued that it ignited rebellion in characters.

Another popular approach was to consider the extent to which isolation was chosen or imposed, and considered the causes and consequences of isolation, with some strong answers exploring the way that isolation can be both forced and voluntary, and can be harmful and yet healing. Some looked at it through a more psychological lens and considered how writers had communicated this through symbols and motifs within their work (such as setting, use of colour, intertextual references).

This is the introduction of a Level 4 essay on *Frankenstein* and *Never Let Me Go*.

Text 1:

Never Let me Go

Text 2:

Frankenstein

Both Ishiguro and Shelley were against the dangers of isolation and how that can lead to moral corruption and the pursuit of unethical scientific creations, which create the creature in *Frankenstein* and the clones in *Never Let Me Go*.

Both Shelley and Ishiguro demonstrate how ~~the~~ isolation imposed on ~~both~~ the creature and the clones can result in intense yearnings for human connection and companionship. However ~~at~~ the both end the novels differently whereby they explore the different reactions to isolation which is either rebellion (*Frankenstein*) or submission.



ResultsPlus  
Examiner Comments

This introduction successfully puts forwards a clear argument in which the candidate opens up the question and focuses on the key ideas they will develop in the essay.



Your introduction is key to focusing your essay on the task. Why not practise writing just the introduction for some past questions?

This extract from an essay on *Never Let Me Go* and *Frankenstein* scored 16+15.

Both Shelley and Ishiguro explore isolation from an exclusive society. The clones are viewed as disposable; exploited by society's cruelty, then disregarded. Their existence is feared, ~~as~~ this is highlighted through Madame's reaction to them ~~as~~ like 'spiders' suggesting an uncomfortable aura evoked by Kathy and the clones. This metaphor is used to present the clones as unwanted, like insects invading a developed world. Ishiguro may be reflecting his own isolation from society, feeling like an outsider in ~~an~~ English England, from a Japanese background. This point of difference may have inspired alienation.

of his clones, he expresses the brutality of a narrow minded society. Similarly, Shelley explores the creature's isolation from a brutal society. As the creature seeks love from the DeLacey family, he is accepted by the blind man. Yet Felix shows a 'transport of fury', attacking the creature for his external appearance. ~~this~~ Shelley may be ~~representing~~ representing societies innate nature to prejudge and exclude those that don't fit our perfect description of what it means to be human. The blind man accepts the creature for his innocence, yet Felix - representing of modern society - shames him as he can see him for what he truly ~~seems~~ is perceived to be: a monster. Shelley and Ishiguro criticise societies prejudicial culture, exploring the harsh nature of isolating outsiders.

Both Novelists use location to explore a physical boundary from respective societies. Ishiguro uses Hailsham to reflect a protected bubble of children within humanity, it is used to point out how adults often keep children in an unrealistic fantasy, denying them a chance to experience and understand the reality of the world. These intentions are depicted through Hailsham, as it stands in a 'hollow'. This description portrays it as segregated

from the real world, almost below it. Ishiguro may use this image to highlight the clones segregation, but also that they are inferior through a physical use of levels. This further develops a divide between Society and Hailsham. The woods is a device of Panoptic power, which provides a physical obstacle between clones and real life as they ~~to~~ 'cast a shadow over the whole of Hailsham'. Ishiguro's description determines ~~Hailsham~~ a menacing image surrounding the clones and physically divides them from ever being accepted into the real world. Shelley uses physical distance to establish both Victor and the creature's isolation. Victor locks himself in a 'cell' in 'solitude' in the crafting of 'lifeless clay'. As he creates the creature and breaks boundaries, he is isolated from a stable society. Consequently, the creature is born distant from humanity - ~~pre~~ predicting his downfall and ~~inevitable~~ <sup>inevitable</sup> chase to fit in, yet rejection. The use of England and Ingolstadt provide a physical distance from Victor's childhood in Geneva, reflecting isolation and a drive away normality, towards insanity.



This candidate integrates all four assessment objectives really well here.

This essay on *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Frankenstein* was awarded full marks.

Both 'Frankenstein' by Mary Shelley and 'The Handmaid's Tale' by Margaret Atwood explore isolation as a means of oppression used against their respective protagonists. Whilst 'isolation' itself indicates an absence of something, both novels examine 'isolation' by lack of access, and the consequent loneliness. For example, ~~Offred~~ Offred overtly belongs and fits into the community of Handmaids, she is not entirely deprived of human connection and rather has access to this, it is simply restricted by the social hierarchy-enshrined by the regime. Similarly, the creature (or 'monster') in 'Frankenstein' is gifted ~~the~~ a wealth of freedom upon escaping Victor, and essentially gains access to a world of freedom, however finds himself isolated and restricted by a lack of experience, his inability to communicate and his absence of social norms.

prepare a seismic obstacle in his pursuit of discovery. Thus, we can see both texts are unified in that it is exposure that creates the isolation felt, for Offred, she desperately longs for conversation external to 'the accepted greeting among [them]' the false, somewhat theatrical exchanges between the Handmaids, ~~in the text~~ for the creature he longs for a ~~more~~ 'venerable companion' exacerbated by the 'benevolent smiles' and explicit love and care amongst the DeLacey family. The ~~man~~ mise-en-abyme narrative form adopted in both texts creates a framing narrative, which serves an expository function of exposing the layers, duality and nuance of the debate. In Frankenstein, Victor's 'intra-diegetic' perspective is overshadowed by the extra, and meta, diegetic perspective of Walton and the creature respectively. Whilst within the narrative the varying voices do have exchanges, the vast majority of their stories are told from a first person narrative. This complicates the portrayal of isolation through the simple co-existence of other characters, though arguably, as previously mentioned, it is their short and minimal communications with one another that only hasten feelings of isolation. Whilst Walton serves a catalytic function, ~~he is the character chosen~~ by essentially becoming the deliverer, or vehicle of the tale, it is a significant choice by A. Shelley for him to be conveyed as the least (overtly) lonely. The relationship between Walton and Mrs. Saville is demonstrated ~~at~~ in the opening pages of the novel to ensure that he is not entirely isolated, and in fact his 'love

and kindness' lie in his relationship with his ~~sister~~ sister: 'an 'affectionate brother', he self-claims. The epistolary form of the novel ~~only~~ demonstrates ~~a~~ layers within the mise-en-abyme form, contributing to the characterisation of Halton. In the Handmaid's Tale, it is significant to consider the self <sup>reflexive</sup> ~~reflective~~, past tense perspective, though also important ~~that the~~ ~~is~~ that when considering this, readers are aware Atwood ~~is~~ ~~help~~ isolates readers by withholding this, the fact only becomes clear at the end of Offred's narrative and at the beginning of the historical notes, in which Prof. Pieixoto wields an arguably God-like role in manipulating and ~~under~~ ~~mining~~ the facts of Offred's story. Overall, it's clear that both writers are united in their methods of construction <sup>of</sup> isolation, the coexistence of a layered narrative, alongside multiple first person accounts in each respective text with the duality of community and love and loneliness, and isolation in each, forming a clear ~~parad~~ paradox and reinforcing the semantic field's throughout each ~~is~~ of longing and want - which can ~~is~~ be decisively linked to feelings of isolation.



In this section of the essay, the candidate discusses how the authors use narrative voices to create a sense of isolation.



Even thematically focused questions can be approached through the lens of a specific narrative technique.

## Question 8

### Threats to society

Once candidates had made clear what they interpreted as threats to society and indeed the nature of the societies they were writing about, this question produced some excellent responses. Some candidates successfully considered the problems resulting from attempts to avoid perceived threats to society. Others compared Shelley's portrayal of the monster's rebellion compared to Ishiguro's portrayal of the clones' complicity, and Atwood's presentation of the impact of the Gileadean regime on all facets of society. Some took the view that the societies depicted in the texts constituted threats to our own societies, whilst others explored the way in which threats to Gileadean or post-Enlightenment society were dealt with in the texts. For *The Handmaid's Tale*, some wrote of Gilead's oppressive regime and prevention of learning and communicating, and use of capital punishment as their way of responding to potential threats to their society. There was some comment on how even the founders of Gilead broke their own rules and how they were themselves a threat to the society they had created in which they held all the power.

Less successful responses tended not to pin down exactly what 'threat to society' they were discussing but wrote in more general terms. There was also a tendency to focus exclusively on women's roles and threats to women's freedom, which while it could be an interesting and relevant facet to explore, was not always shaped to consider the threat to society posed by this.

This response on *Frankenstein* and *The Handmaid's Tale* scored 17+17.

**Text 1:**

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

**Text 2:**

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

Within the gothic fiction "Frankenstein" by Mary Shelley, and the post-modern "The Handmaid's Tale" by Margaret Atwood, threats that enclose time, are presented to readers in a didactic way. Both authors ultimately center said didacticism upon ~~religious~~ threats relating to religion and threats relating to male power. However, Shelley's threats relating to religion focus far more on elements that she, a devout Christian, believed tarnished the role of God. Additionally, the male power within the science fiction "Frankenstein" is centered more around a threat of male hubris. Atwood, contrastingly draws on post-modern notions of anti-authoritarian views to critique male power.

and religion as a tool and a threat used in the commodification of women. Arguably both authors differing approaches to the threat of weaponised religion and male power may be due to their vastly different worlds they experienced, due to the almost 200 years between each novel publishing.

On one hand, Shelley subverts the creation story within Frankenstein to illustrate the way in which "playing God" ~~is malignant~~ incites malignancy. The principle Victor Frankenstein states that he wishes to have a "new species bless [him] as its creator and source" mimicking God in his genesis-style language. Upon creating his new species Victor ~~the~~ creates a "brood" upon the Earth, and abandones his creature. The latter abandonment results in the creature seeking Victor out and stating to him that he "ought to be thy Adam, but [he] rather [is] the fallen angel". Referencing Milton's epic poem "Paradise Lost" the ~~the~~ creature aligns himself with the blasphemous Satan in the creation story, perhaps due to the way in which Victor cast him out.

Additionally ~~it could be posited that~~, the creature states that he was once "benevolent" ~~and "good"~~ before saying that "satan had his companions" but he is "abhorred". Shelley, in clinging to the character of the creature with the fallen angel, whilst juxtaposing language that suggests the monster was once good, potentially draws upon John Locke's philosophy of "tabula rasa". The latter is a theory that suggests children are blank slates, and that nature is learnt not inherited. (considering this within the context of Victor as a "curled creator" <sup>and failed parent</sup>) it could be posited that Shelley warns of the dangers of playing God, as Victor demonstrates this failing. Furthermore, in presenting the subversion of the creation story Shelley perhaps also suggests that scientific enlightenment, prominent within contemporary 19th century <sup>society</sup>, has the potential to result in malignant weapons. Ultimately Shelley ~~yet religion as a tool and a threat~~ <sup>presents</sup> tarnishing the role of God, and thus religion as a potential threat to her readership.



indicating at the way in which they are expected to submit without resistance to the republic of ~~the~~ Gilead but also deliberately missing out ~~the~~ the root of the passage about "interlocking to earth." This ironic use of satirical language by Atwood ~~helps~~ is reinforced when Offred states that the handmaids are "~~not~~ sacred vessels", highlighting their de-humanisation and commodification. A post-modern reading of "The Handmaid's Tale" would suggest that Atwood uses satirical biblical language to indicate that Gilead is a parody of theocracy, and to exacerbate the fear of right, christian conservatism that she witnessed throughout her lifetime, especially with the rise of Reaganism in the US. Ultimately Atwood and Shelley both demonstrate religious threats, however whilst Shelley seems to defend the role of religion Atwood critiques it.



This detailed introduction and first section of the essay shows an evaluative approach to the question, and makes detailed connections between the two texts.



'Evaluation' means considering the different meanings and interpretations of the texts, quotation, or ideas.

This Level 4 answer on *Frankenstein* and *The War of the Worlds* scored 13+13.

In both the scientific masterpieces of 'Frankenstein' and 'The War of the Worlds', both Mary Shelley and H.G. Wells illuminate the threats that are evoked onto society. By doing this, there is a multifaceted range of ways that the threats are illuminated, such as the threat of the creatures, threat of ~~different~~ <sup>science</sup> and threats of locations. By this creates a sense of suspense and evokes ideas of why these aspects threaten society, and how they foreshadow disaster in the novels.

In 'Frankenstein', the obsession that Frankenstein holds with ~~the creature~~ <sup>creating the</sup> creature ~~illuminates~~ evidently foreshadows the threat that the creature will impose on society. By juxtaposing the creature 'yellow skin (that) scarcely covered the work of muscles' with the 'hair of lustrous black, and flowing', it's evident that because of his strange features society will be scared of him. Shelley contrasting these features evokes a thought of what does the creature look like, and how can he be a threat on society. As Victorian beauty standards implied now someone was viewed in society, the contrasting features make the reader gasp and feel shocked because of his thin, 'yellow skin'. As it is ~~not~~ not normal. However, when the creature is described as having '~~black~~ lustrous, black hair',

the reader is unsure as whether the creature fits society's standards and is a threat. Because of the way that ~~both~~ <sup>the</sup> creatures look in both novels, ~~it's up to the~~ trying to decide whether there ~~is a~~ <sup>is a</sup> threat to society is inherently difficult.

Wells also portrays the creatures as ~~change~~ <sup>a threat</sup> through ~~there~~ their looks. The intense description of the 'greyish rounded bulk, the size, perhaps, of a bear' illuminates the inhumanity of the creatures. <sup>this is</sup> Unlike in Frankenstein where the description of the 'black hair' and 'teeth of pearly whiteness' make the creature sound more human, and there isn't an instant judgement of the threat of the monster. The simile 'perhaps, of a bear' evokes a sense of danger immediately in 'War of the Worlds', as bears typically have connotations <sup>of</sup> strength and danger. Additionally, the unusual <sup>tragic irony of</sup> descriptions of the Martians as 'big, greyish, rounded bulk' speculates Wells' personal speculation of how life could form on Mars. These descriptions illuminate the potential threats that these 'ugly brutes' have on society, as the instant marginalisation from the 'disgust and dread' that society ~~to feel~~ towards the Martians, <sup>this is also evident in</sup> ~~what it could be~~ 'Frankenstein', when the 'beauty of the dream

vanished'. ~~But~~ This illuminates that society has marginalized both the creature and the Martians because of their looks. However, it could be questioned why ~~it is~~ do the creatures threaten society, as they haven't done anything to threaten people, they have just been portrayed as ugly. This marginalisation ~~could be blamed on science~~ ultimately leads to ~~character~~ <sup>society.</sup> feeling threatened in certain locations.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This paragraph skilfully compares the appearances of the creature and the Martians, considering the ways in which they are depicted as threats to society.

## Question 9

### Uncertainty

Candidates discussed a range of themes, including hidden violence and power struggles as well as uncertainties about the role of women and sexuality. Many explored uncertainty regarding the 'other' and 'foreigners' when it came to *Dracula*. Some candidates also brought in references to the supernatural being inherently uncertain and were able to link this to contextual considerations around the nature of the gothic genre and its explorations of uncertainties. Narrative uncertainty was examined well by those candidates writing on *Beloved*. The most confident responses could range between uncertainty experienced by characters in terms of identity, the presentation of the supernatural and narrative uncertainty. The best responses also considered post-colonial readings regarding *Dracula* as emblematic of things feared by Victorian society.

Many candidates used gender identity and sexuality as a way into this question, for example considering the concept of the New Woman in *Dracula* and *Dorian Gray*, and the uncertainties around feminine and masculine sexual identities. One very strong essay explored the writers' use of disease imagery in *Dracula* and *Dorian Gray*, connecting this with 19th century fears of STDs. Others noted Dracula's 'invasion' of England reflecting the rise in immigration and the fear or uncertainty of the implications of this. Some suggested that Faraday could be seen as the invader in his clumsy desperation to impose himself on the Ayres family, thereby attempting to transcend class boundaries. In one excellent response, the candidate wrote of the presentation of female sexuality in *Dracula* and how this created "fright and uneasiness" in the Victorian reader as, like Harker with the vampires, men found this both alluring and repulsive. Lucy's desire to be married to all three suitors and later sexualised behaviour as she transformed was used to illustrate this also. Sybil too was seen to entrance Dorian as he seemed to worship her in spite of her inferior social class. This was considered to create uncertainty as the idea of women holding any kind of power over men would be destabilising in Victorian society and create fear that a man may act without reason under the spell of these sexualised 'new women', presenting a threat to themselves, their masculinity and society as a whole. This suggested the women were villainous rather than blaming the men for objectifying women and forcing them to take accountability for their actions. Candidates saw the uncertainty here in how men might be led to behave by such women and what the implications might be for society if such women were not 'dealt with'.

This response on *Dracula* and *The Little Stranger* achieved full marks.

Finally, both novels compare to traditional Gothic novels by having the past return to violently disrupt the present and create <sup>incertainty</sup> ~~uncertainty~~ both for the reader and for the novel's "modern societies". In 'Dracula', Stoker depicts a central dissonance between the wildness and primitivism of Transylvania and the East (conveyed most notably through the presence of superstition) and the emblems of scientific progress pervading within ~~Dracula~~ London, making regular reference to facts of modern technology such as "Ordinance Survey" maps, "photography" and "ambulatory apparatus of morphia". This juxtaposition of past and present is inevitably disorientating for the reader, conveying the limitations of their industrialised and mechanised modern world: whereas 'Dracula's' London is an epitome for technological advancement, Waver says ~~the~~ the gentry house that Harker's Hall represents an old-fashioned place within modern society, drawing a reader's attention to its odd differences (the lack of main electricity and running water, for example) and markers of the Victorian era such as the "call-bells" and "speaking tube" that later come into "every middle-class life". In *The Little Stranger* as Dracula is the personification of its archaic and the irrational, Waver portrays ~~the~~ the figures as former aristocrats who "can't or won't adapt" to the changing world around them but who are simultaneously

haunted by their past. For example, one could argue that 'Dracula's' wolves and vampires falling from the ceiling are reminiscent of planes being shot down (explosive his "war chills") while Wares' linguistic rapping of the scene with plowse, monosyllabic verbs such as "drop", "rip" and "zap" mirrors the kind of gunshots. Similarly, while 'Dracula's' 'Crew of Light' attempt to deminish the past from the present by dispatching him back to Transylvania and equipping him with weapons of modern technology, Wares has her ripen animal victim attempt to "return to an era", haunted by the "little change" (a term coined by Simone de Beauvoir in 'The Second Sex' to describe a mother's experience of a newborn baby) that is her dead daughter, whom she is bound to eternally love but will never know. Hence, in both texts, uncertainty is craped through the uneasy friction between past and present, with the characters ~~that~~ lives defined by a tension of the archaic and their values torn between tradition and modernity.

In conclusion, uncertainty is instrumental in both texts not only in the reader's response to the novels but in the vulnerable positions of the characters within them. Pairing ideas of uncertainty with similar notions of transgression, morality and time allows the theme to assume a deeper symbolic purpose and illuminate undercurrent fears of change: in 'Dracula' of immigration, mechanization and the suffrage movement; in ~~the~~ 'The Little Stranger' of the post-war dismantling of hierarchical boundaries that had previously ensured the power of society's elite.



This candidate considers how uncertainty is a key trope of the gothic genre, and uses this at the centre of their concluding argument here.



Using genre conventions can be a useful way of writing about contexts.

This response was given 16+16, the top of Level 4.

In both ~~Both~~, 'Dracula', written in 1897 by Bram Stoker, and 'Beloved', written by Toni Morrison in 1987, ~~mean~~ the authors create uncertainty in their novels through the use of the supernatural <sup>and the</sup> setting ~~and mystery~~. In 'Dracula', Stoker reflects the Victorian-Christian context in which it was written, addressing Victorian anxieties such as ~~the uncertainty surrounding the~~ <sup>uncertainty surrounding the</sup> ~~existence of the soul~~ existence of the soul. In contrast, Morrison's ~~reflects~~ novel reflects her post-colonial concerns of giving a voice to <sup>historically the most</sup> ~~the~~ disenfranchised, black women, and sheds light on the brutality of slavery, thus addressing American uncertainties and ignorance surrounding the history of slavery.

Throughout both novels, the writers create uncertainty through the use of the supernatural. In 'Dracula', Stoker presents the reader with 'undead', vampiric characters, like Dracula and his brides. Stoker conveys the idea that there is a certain ambiguity to Dracula, which is illustrated through Johnathon Harker's description of Dracula's ~~his~~ hands as 'as cold as ice'.

Stoker's use of this simile creates a sense of discomfort, as Dracula's hands seem unnervingly cold, 'more like ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> hand of a dead than a living man'.

Stoker's additional simile creates the impression that there is a dead or otherworldly quality to Dracula, relating to the Gothic convention of the

supernatural, <sup>and the liminal</sup> whereby Dracula exists somewhere between the boundary of life and death. This uncertainty surrounding the nature of Dracula's existence is further enforced by Harker's exclamation that he may be 'the only living soul' within the castle. This links to Victorian concerns surrounding the existence of the soul and the afterlife, as the publication of Darwin's 'On the Origin of Species' in 1859 undermined certainty surrounding the soul, generating much anxiety from English society. ~~After~~ At the end of the novel, when Dracula is vanquished, Mina describes 'a look of peace' on Dracula's face, relating to the idea that Dracula existed along the boundary of life and death, thus killing him finally, <sup>restored his soul, allowing him</sup> ~~allowed him~~ <sup>admittance to</sup> ~~the afterlife~~ <sup>and</sup> 'peace' in death. Therefore, Stoker may create a sense of ambiguity through the supernatural, liminal aspect of Dracula in order to placate Victorian anxieties and uncertainty surrounding the existence of the soul by reaffirming the existence of the soul.

Similarly, in 'Beloved', Morrison creates uncertainty by utilising aspects of the supernatural, such as the ghostly presence of Beloved. Initially, the supernatural appears to manifest itself through the house on Bluestone Road, which is illustrated in

phrases such as '124 was spiteful' and 'screamhouse house'. Morrison's personification of the house suggests that it is occupied by an otherworldly, ghostly spirit, ~~who~~ characterised by the malevolent and violent ~~and~~ occurrences, like slamming Here Boy, the dog, into the wall. However, later in the novel, this spirit ~~seems~~ 'takes flesh' and walks 'out of the water'. Morrison's use of biblical language, such as 'flesh', and imagery of baptism ~~thereby~~ makes the ghost-like 'woman' seem Christ-like, associating her with more positive imagery that contradicts the earlier violence. Additionally, the idea that this is a 'fully dressed woman' reflects ~~the~~ Gothic ideas of transgression and crossing boundaries, suggesting ~~Beloved exists as a liminal creature~~ that this spirit takes on a more tangible form and exists as a liminal being. In contrast to Stoker, who associates Dracula with the anti-christ and evil, ~~Ms~~ Morrison's presentation of Beloved is more uncertain and ambiguous, with violent actions that contradict her christ-like portrayal. This may reflect Morrison's <sup>feminist,</sup> post-colonial concern of shedding light on the brutality of slavery, which haunts the characters and, more physically, the house, <sup>perhaps</sup> suggesting Beloved is neither good, nor ~~bad~~ evil as <sup>she represents</sup> ~~an~~ <sup>collective</sup> complex history of

Slavery and its affects on black women. This contrasts with 'Dracula', where the dichotomy of good and evil is less uncertain, compared to the ambiguity and uncertainty of *Beloved*.



This example integrates all four assessment objectives very well.

## Question 10

### Social status

Class and financial status were a major focus in responses to this question, as well as considering the social status of women as affected by social class and patriarchal attitudes and values. Many commented on the dwindling finances threatening the Ayres family and their home as well as the way in which Dorian sought out lower class, murkier sides of London for satisfaction with the opium dens and Sybil. The status of women was discussed, many exploring how Lucy, not adhering to expectations, contemplated marrying three men while Mina wanted to work and learn so she could be 'useful' to her husband. Some argued that Dracula, in spite of his wealth and lineage, was marked as an undesirable foreigner, coming from Eastern Europe with traits common to Jewish people, and therefore seen as an outsider and threat to the Victorian audience. This was opposed to Van Helsing and Morris who were deemed "acceptable foreigners". The slave narrative in *Beloved* was also discussed, with thoughtful analysis of Morrison's presentation of social status within the African American community, and the struggle of previously enslaved people to gain a sense of social status (Paul D's memories of Mister, and the response to Sethe's wish to marry were useful moments) and the use of historical events to reflect the 1980s context.

Many candidates were able to make really good use of contextual issues relating to contemporary society and the ways in which social status is framed in the novels. Effective responses were seen on *Dracula* and *The Little Stranger* which provided evaluation of Englishness and the threat to the aristocracy, from a number of angles, with some candidates considering Farraday as an unreliable narrator charting the fall of the Big House while others considered Harker and Mina as the ascending middle class triumphing over the polluted aristocracy of *Dracula*.

This answer was placed on the border between Levels 3 and 4, scoring 14+12.

In Stoker's 'Dracula', whilst the eponymous Count is feared and seen as the 'other' when in England, where the novel begins in Transylvania the Count has high social status and henceforth control. We see this explored through the Count's exploitation

of Jonathan Harker. In a traditional gothic horror novel there is usually a damsel in distress, trapped by the evil character, however in the case of Stoker's novel this stock character's role is gender-flipped and fulfilled by Jonathan, who becomes entrapped by Count Dracula, the ordinary man exploited by one with a higher social status. Throughout the first 4 chapters Jonathan refers to Dracula as 'the Count' this strongly ~~impresses~~ ~~the~~ read embeds in the reader's mind Dracula's social status, creating a motif, through the first 4 chapters, of high social status linked with fear and control. Dracula ~~seems to~~ appears to have a powerful effect over Jonathan particularly, as the tension begins to rise and Jonathan realises he is trapped at Castle Dracula. When the count looks at him with a 'mocking smile' suggesting he knows more than Jonathan, he has mapped out his fate and has control of him, his look seemed to 'drive [Jonathan] mad.' Stoker uses his character's raw, terrified emotion to imply the Count's control over him, suggesting the Count has exploited Jonathan's mind, taken ownership of it. Jonathan is no longer a sane man but a 'mad' damsel in distress. Despite the epistolary ~~letter~~ format of Stoker's novel, which should give the character writing in 1st person the control of the narrative, we as readers feel the power of Count Dracula, despite Jonathan being the narrator, this is ironic and perfectly

encapsulates the so-called control of Dracula over Jonathan, ~~that~~ the man with the higher social status exploiting an ordinary man.

~~Wilde switches the control of the narrative~~ Similarly, Wilde switches the control of his narrative at a crucial moment of a character of higher social status exploiting one below them, but he does it in a different way. When Basil Hallward the painter and friend whom worships ~~the~~ Dorian Gray gets shown his painting and how it has changed, Wilde uses free indirect discourse to ~~show~~ switch the narrative from 3rd person to 1st, in order to show Basil's reaction to his artwork. In Basil's mind the painting 'was some foul parody, some infamous, ignoble satire' the reader is shown Basil's shock and horror at the changed painting. The change in control of the narrative is ironic, whilst the reader can see Basil's thoughts and fears as he has control of the narrative, Dorian Gray the character with higher social status is using this moment to exploit Basil. The narrative switches back to 3rd ~~person~~ its omniscient narrator and Dorian Gray murders Basil, this appears sudden and shocking. The reader ~~has~~ been lured into a false sense of security by seeing Basil mind tricked into believing

anyone other than the character with higher  
social status had control, as we see Basil exploited  
through his trust for <sup>higher status</sup> Doris and Cray.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This paragraph is a good example of taking an answer from 'clear' to 'detailed and discriminating'. It has well chosen examples and a good level of detail in the AO2 analysis.

This Level 5 response on *Dracula* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was given 19+20.

**Text 1:**

The Little Stranger

**Text 2:**

The Picture of Dorian Gray.

<sup>10</sup> In 'Dorian Gray' and 'The Little Stranger', Waters and Wilde explore the complicated relationship between the upper classes and working classes of Victorian and 1950s England. Although the working classes of Waters' novel are the only ones who really benefit from social mobility, both authors highlight how the working classes are not only exploited by the upper classes, but strangely enough feared and seen as a threat. Whereas Wilde could be said to comment on the class hierarchy of Victorian England as a satirical observer, Waters' portrayal is arguably far more sympathetic of both classes, and provides more empathetic insight into the meaning of 'social status' in 1950s England.

<sup>11</sup> In both novels, Waters and Wilde examine the nature of

social mobility, and whether or not it is truly possible to improve one's social status through hard work. In 'The Little Stranger', Waters uses Betty's character development to highlight how she ~~has~~ <sup>has</sup> improved her social standing, thereby implying a positive future for working-class women. <sup>In chapter 1 of</sup> the novel, Betty speaks in eye dialect, with terms like 'me dad' and repetition of 'it', highlighting her petulance and perhaps her immaturity. By contrast, Waters portrays the eighteen-year-old Betty as eloquent and fashionable, with her 'fashionable swing' poodle skirt - a popular 1950s fashion trend and working in a bicycle factory, earning money and gaining financial independence. Waters may have taken inspiration from the 90% of 1940s single women, who worked in factories during WWII, as a method of <sup>gaining</sup> social status for the working-class Betty. Waters could therefore be said to highlight how the working-classes of <sup>the</sup> 1950s were able to gain social status through moving from home work and labour jobs to factories, and gaining financial independence too. This is in direct contrast to Wilde, who highlights the Vane family's poverty and the tragedy of 'Peggy and Kinsey's' deaths to foretell on their lack of improvement in social status. The symbolism of Mrs Vane's hands cleverly highlights her working-class social status - the adjective 'brimstone-whitened' alludes to the difficult factory work the Victorian working-classes did in workhouses, ~~to~~ only to be underpaid and underfed, while the adjective 'false-jewelled' highlights the effort Mrs Vane goes to, to gain the appearance of someone who has improved her social status, but

Wilde points out that Mrs. Jewellery is clearly false, her efforts are fruitless. Both James and Sibyl Vane are in the workforce, as a sailor in Australia and a working actress, yet both are paid so poorly they are unable to elevate their social status through hard work, unlike Waters' characters. ~~So is~~ whereas Waters arguably portrays a more positive future for the working classes, Wilde, <sup>perhaps</sup> highlights the opposite, that they will never have the chance to improve unless paid or treated fairly.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This candidate successfully applies Marxist critical readings as a way of exploring social status in their texts.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Critical approaches can be a useful way to explore alternative interpretations and are rewarded in AO3 as contextual factors (as AO5 is not assessed on this paper).

## Question 11

### Religion

There were some very good answers to this question exploring the use of religion to both manipulate and oppress, but also the use of religion as a source of comfort and inspiration. The effects of religious orthodoxy on the lives of women was a popular approach for *Wuthering Heights*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Many also chose to focus on how men use religion as a means to exert control and how authors explore the hypocrisy of piety. Candidates writing about Hardy explored Tess's spirituality compared to the hypocritical attitudes of Victorian society and the warped religious stances of Angel and Alec, sometimes exploring Hardy's pagan symbolism in comparison to the more overtly religious views in the novel. Responses on *Wuthering Heights* were able to consider the extent to which Cathy and Heathcliff could be seen as sacrilegious yet present their own spirituality, often with reference to Romanticism as a broader context. Catherine's freedom on the moors was referred to often. This was seen as a rejection of sanctioned religion and an expression of her spirit in connection with nature. Her destruction was considered a result of containing her according to her expected role in society and forcing her to behave in a manner dictated by social expectation. Candidates writing on *Mrs Dalloway* were often very subtle in their analysis of Woolf's presentation of post WWI Christianity, and Woolf's use of religious imagery to describe Clarissa's struggle for identity (particularly the idea of her bedroom as that of a nun) was frequently discussed and analysed fruitfully. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, there were thoughtful responses exploring ideas such as Mariam being 'freed' by religious observance or finding fulfilment in completing a spiritual journey that began with being an outcast 'harami' and ended with an act of heroic sacrifice. Links between religion, education, social class, spirituality and landscape were often well made.

There was some contextual generalisation about religious beliefs and the historical contexts for some of the novels, e.g. failing to distinguish between the version of Islam used by the Taliban and broader Islamic beliefs; conflating Taliban and Soviet rule in Afghanistan; imprecision around the historical Georgian setting of *Wuthering Heights* as opposed to its Victorian time of writing. More successful answers wrote about contexts with precision and nuance.

This answer of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* scored 18+17, a high Level 5 mark.

Both authors present the deaths of the protagonists as unjust, <sup>further</sup> exploring ideas of the unjust nature of religious ~~and~~ beliefs. Tess is presented as 'A pure woman' across the novel, even accepting her capture gracefully as shown through her accepting tone in stating 'tis as it should be'. Following her government execution, Hardy

uses his authorial narrator to challenge the circumstances of her death stating 'justice' was done' 'the president of the Immortals' ceased 'his sport with Tess'. The sardonic tone created through the double qualifications on "justice" arguably demonstrates Hardy's disagreement with her death, arguing with the religious beliefs which put her there, criticising society's belief system and suggesting it acts as mere 'sport' for men to defeat women. On the other hand, Hester presents Marjorie's innocence through having her wear 'white cotton trousers', using colour imagery to connote purity. This purity contrasts with her conviction of a public death as stated by the Kullah who argues 'Sharia is not vague on this matter' despite him stating that he believed her husband 'was a man of disagreeable temperament'. This dichotomous response and resort to Sharia law - extremist Islamic law designed to oppress women by the Taliban following their invasion - demonstrates the

arguably unjust nature of Mawani's death. Thus, Hosseini arguably criticises religion through suggesting Mawani's death to be unjust. Therefore, both authors use present religious and spiritual beliefs as leading to the unjust deaths of the protagonists, allowing Hardy and Hosseini to criticise religion in their societies.

In conclusion, both Hardy and Hosseini arguably use religious and spiritual beliefs to explore an ~~idea~~ <sup>discourse</sup> between modernity and femininity, both commenting on oppression, double standards, and the unjust nature of religious beliefs as presented through both the <sup>justified</sup> deaths of the antagonists, and the <sup>unjust</sup> deaths of the protagonists. Overall, Hardy explores this discourse through religion as it symbolises the oppression of feminised rural England by the masculine industrial world, while Hosseini aims to present the lines of the 'thousand splintered eyes hidden behind [Kabul's] door' as explored in the 17th century poem by Saib-e Tizi.



This concluding argument considers how the authors explore religious and spiritual beliefs around death.

## Question 12

### Disappointment

A range of approaches to the idea of disappointment was seen, with many focusing on the disappointments experienced in marriage, in love, disappointed expectations, and disappointment felt towards other characters. Many candidates demonstrated impressive engagement with feminist literary theory and a sophisticated understanding of how female characters and gender roles are portrayed with regard to disappointments. There were some very good discussions relating to narrative voice and disappointment which lead to further discussions about other themes such as isolation or uncertainty. Contexts were successfully linked to the question in many essays, for example disappointed political hopes in Afghanistan and the Taliban; feelings of futility infusing the Modernist context; the isolating effect of the Yorkshire moors in *Wuthering Heights*. Less successful responses had a tendency to list moments of disappointment (sometimes minimising the impact of key events such as Tess' rape or Sorrow's death by labelling them as 'disappointments' for characters) without fully developing ideas around authorial intent and message.

Candidates commented very well on *Mrs Dalloway's* elliptical, modernistic form as representing Clarissa's disappointed life, and the post war context; Mr Earnshaw's treatment of his children; Tess's initial attempt to save her family from poverty and her wish for a Christian burial for Sorrow; Septimus's relationships; Mariam's expectations from Jalil, and Nana's disappointments in her lot in life.

This response on *Mrs Dalloway* and *Wuthering Heights* scored 13+13, a Level 4 response.

Both writers use entrapment as a result of societal expectations to highlight disappointment. Woolf writes a character called Septimus who suffers with PTSD. However, this wasn't a diagnosed disorder during the Post war world and therefore Septimus was seen as crazy. Rezia, his wife, looks after him and shows multiple signs of entrapment within her love for him. She left her life in Italy to be with him and constantly states her need for "Help!" Rezia tells Septimus "I am so unhappy Septimus" as she feels people looking and judging them yet her marriage to him forces her to stay and care for him. Once married, women were expected to stay married and have children as domestic roles were highly valued during this era. However, Rezia feels entrapped by her marriage as her quality of life is low and she is told that "nothing's the matter" with Septimus causing her to feel

restricted and disappointed by her marriage.

Woolf masterfully uses this couple to highlight the ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> misunderstanding of mental health leading to judgement and how the pressure of society can result in a feeling of entrapped and low of appreciation towards your partner.

Brontë takes a similar approach as

Cathy marries Edgar for wealth and status yet feels entrapped by the marriage.

Cathy ~~is~~ accepts Edgar's proposal after her stay at Thrushcross Grange and tells Nelly, her maid, about how Edgar "will be rich" and she will be the "greatest woman".

Heathcliff overhears this and due to his lack of wealth, she decides to leave. Brontë

uses Heathcliff's love for Cathy to demonstrate the importance of wealth and his

disappointment towards receiving Cathy's new found value towards it forces him to leave Wuthering Heights. However, Cathy tells

Nelly after this that "it would degrade me to marry Heathcliff" but she states

"he's more myself than I am". This clearly emphasises Cathy's awareness of the

Georgian expectation to follow wealth and obey to purity due to such value yet this

entrap her real feelings towards HeathClegg.  
HeathClegg suffers due to her choices, he  
states how she is part of ~~his~~ his "world"  
and feels betrayed by her choice of Edgar.  
The little boy they used to mock for crying  
and whining to his parents. Brontë uses  
HeathClegg's disappointment and Cathy's  
restriction to lead to eventual death and  
madness as ~~she~~ wealth is painted to  
outweigh feelings of love and adventure,  
causing an entrapment of life which  
leads Cathy into physical and psychological  
suffering.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This candidate takes an approach focusing on key moments of disappointment in the texts.

This script was given a mark of 17+16, on the border between Levels 4 and 5.

Text 1:

'Tess of the D'Urbervilles'

Text 2:

'A Thousand Splendid Suns'

Both Thomas Hardy and Khaled Hosseini present disappointment as being a result of social, political, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> cultural influences, along with the heroes' character flaws in their novels. This is exemplified by the authors' portrayals of parental relationships, <sup>the</sup> patriarchal effects on women through religion and marriage, and ~~the~~ the unwritten rules and customs adhered to by their respective societies at the time. Hardy's novel, 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' (TDUD), written in 1891 and set in late 19th century Victorian England depicts the disappointment experienced in Tess's life as predominantly being a result of her loss of chastity. Conversely, Hosseini's 'A Thousand Splendid Suns' (ATSS), written in 2007 and set in ~~the~~ late 20th and 21st century contemporary Afghanistan, depicts the disappointment experienced in ~~the female protagonists, Laila and Mariam~~ as its heroine Mariam's life, as being a product of her illegitimacy.

Both writers present the female protagonists' parents as being irresponsible, subsequently cementing their misinformed perceptions of their respective societies, and ultimately leading to a disappointing trajectory of life for both Tess and Mariam. However, while Hardy demonstrates Tess paints Tess's parents as being misinformed themselves, Hossaini illustrates ~~the~~ the effects of Mariam's own parents' experiences ~~on~~ in raising her. For instance, in describing his noble ancestry, John (Tess's father) exclaims that 'There's not a man in the country o' South Wessex that's got grander and nobler s'cellingtons in his family than I', demonstrating his immediate sense of pride in learning of his family history. ~~The~~ Hardy's use of the malapropism 's'cellingtons' also suggests John's ignorance, lack of education, and resultant ineptness as a father as it is this discovery alone that leads him and Joan (Tess's mother) to send Tess to 'claim kin'. Therefore, it is perhaps the basis of a patriarchal society that allows men to use their power to their advantage and search for wealth, which was common in the Victorian era, which is what ironically causes Tess's own father to inadvertently catalyse her suffering. ~~It~~ This is ironic, as rather than Tess's father protecting her, he sets her up for disappointment in a world that is unknown to her. Furthermore, John's thanking of the 'lad' in saying 'Here's for your labour', paints him, as well as Tess as a victim of patriarchal society from the perspective of a 21st Century reader due to his obliviousness in the relentless search for aristocracy being a notion that is never ending. It could ~~thus~~

therefore be argued that he is not aware of the fact that his 'project' for Tess will provide a disappointing experience for her, cementing the notion that he himself is misinformed. John's ~~ego~~ inflated ego after this discovery <sup>also</sup> ~~Further~~ disappoints Tess ~~as she~~ 'in whom a slow heat seemed to rise at the sense that her father was making himself foolish in their eyes', demonstrating her embarrassment. Similarly, in 'A Thousand Splendid Suns' Jalil (Mariam's father) can be seen as prioritising the preservation of his reputation over his duties as a paternal figure ~~to Mariam~~ with Mariam's best intentions at heart. For instance, though Jalil 'showed her how to cast her net, how to reel in the trout' and 'taught her rhymes', ~~but~~ he deceived Mariam about the 'world' 'beyond the Kolba'. ~~Jalil~~ While Jalil demonstrates qualities that are associated with a conventionally 'good' father here, ironically subverting Mariam's disappointment at her mother's treatment, this is quickly usurped as Mariam was able to see 'a flash' of Jalil's face in the 'upstairs window' of his house in Herat, illustrating the notion that her illegitimacy embarrassed Jalil and meant that Mariam would only hear 'stories' of 'ice-cream'. The fact that Jalil used his power to place Mariam and her mother Nana ~~in~~ in the Kolba on the periphery of Herat, meant that 'she would live the first fifteen years of her life in walking distance of Herat', which ~~frankly~~ ~~a~~ for a child, ~~was~~ ~~incredibly~~ would likely be incredibly disappointing. Moreover, the opening of 'A Thousand Splendid Suns' is set against the

political climate of 1964 Afghanistan, where Muhammad Zahir Shah, and followed by Muhammad Daud Khan were in power, ~~advocating~~<sup>enforcing</sup> for a new constitution called the 'new democracy', where women's civil rights, creativity, and education for men and women were all advocated for. Thus, it is disappointing that to 21st century readers that despite Mariam growing up in a prosperous time in Afghanistan, she is unable to experience such prosperity. Unlike Mariam, Tess from a young age is expected to provide for her family and be act as a responsible figure, demonstrated by how she has to collect her parents from 'Rollin's Inn' and 'Ester how [she] could go with [Abraham]' to deliver the beehives to the market place instead of her father. Conversely, Mariam's mother Nana ~~asked~~ prohibited Mariam from ~~even~~ placing herself in society, asking 'what's the sense schooling a girl like you?'. This exemplifies Nana's belief that women were punished for their biologically assigned gender, and that their only role in society was to 'endure'. This is reinforced by Nana teaching Mariam that 'like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman', which could suggest that like the magnetic forces controlling a compass, it is the external forces in society that control Mariam's life and pre-dispose her to disappointment. The notion of having a pre-disposition to disappointment is also denoted to by Tess's home town Marlott, ~~due to the name~~. This is because Hardy may have used onomastic symbolism in that 'Mar' translates to something

that is spoiled, and 'lot' translating to luck, suggesting that Tess's fate is set out for her ~~before~~ at the outset. Though it could be argued that the choice to raise Tess in Marlott ~~is~~ puts her parents at fault ~~for her~~ and disappoints her, their lack of social and economic mobility suggests factors beyond even their control. Therefore, in 'A Thousand Splendid Suns' and 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles', the female characters' parental figures are presented as contributing to Marjani and Tess's disappointment.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate considers a number of different types of disappointment and links these closely to contextual factors and societal norms.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Contextual factors can often be linked to your main points and flagged in your introduction before discussing them in more detail later in the essay.

## Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Plan your answer carefully before you start to write.
- For AO2, explain how a chosen example creates a specific effect when analysing your quotes.
- Focus on the writer and their methods & intentions, rather than treating the characters as real people.
- Avoid making generalised contextual comments. Try to link contexts to a specific point in your essay and how the context helps you understand the meanings of the text.

## **Grade boundaries**

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

