A LEVEL ENGLISH LITERATURE

Lesson Element

Managing comparison and question choice in Section 2 of the Drama and Poetry pre-1900 Examination

Instructions and answers for teachers

These instructions should accompany the OCR resource **'Managing comparison and question choice in Section 2 of the Drama and Poetry pre-1900 Examination' activity** *which supports OCR A Level English Literature*

The Activity:

This resource comprises of 2 tasks.

The Specification is the document on which assessment is based and specifies what content and skills need to be covered in delivering the course. At all times, therefore, this Support Material should be read in conjunction with the Specification. If clarification on a particular point is sought then the clarification should be found in the Specification itself.

Associated materials:

'Managing comparison and question choice in Section 2 of the Drama and Poetry pre-1900 Examination'

Lesson Element learner activity sheet

Drama and Poetry pre-1900 (Exam 1), Choosing your question in Section 2

In the Examination, candidates will be required to refer to **one drama text** and **one poetry text** from the following lists:

Drama	Poetry
Christopher Marlowe: *Edward II*	Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*
John Webster: *The Duchess of Malfi*	John Milton: *Paradise Lost Books 9 & 10*
Oliver Goldsmith: *She Stoops to Conquer*	Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *Selected Poems*
Henrik Ibsen: *A Doll's House*	Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *Maud*
Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*	Christina Rossetti: *Selected Poems*

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Introduction

As a teacher, you may have chosen the texts for study on behalf of your cohort, to reflect their best interests: they may have been affected by the availability, for example, of filmed or staged productions of plays, or as part of a stratagem which makes sure that when you look across the whole 'portfolio' of texts, including coursework, they will study a balanced and varied range of writing.

Establishing the Contextual relationship between your two texts

Candidates will have studied two texts, which may draw on a similar context, or may have highly contrasting contexts.

Q: Is it easier if my two texts are close in date?

Let's look at two examples: Two texts quite close in date and (apparently) in context

First Example

Text A: A Late Jacobean Drama (c. 1620)
Reflecting theatrical practice at the end of the Jacobean Period (indoor Theatre, verse -forms and song, perhaps political comment and popular morality. Also reflecting attitudes to political and moral corruption and mediterranean morality. Tragic.

Text B: Epic Narrative Poem written during the Commonwealth (c. 1655)
Reflecting language and religious views of educated Protestant group, and extensive classical learning. Epic, tragic.

Despite the fact that the two texts may be close in date, and that the two authors may seem to have a lot in common (they went, perhaps, to the same university, and had much the same background of classical education) the texts reflect completely different moral worlds: Author A writes for a popular audience, B, an educated one: the genres are quite different (Author B probably disapproves of the theatre as immoral, for example) and the social and religious purpose of the two texts may be quite different.

Between the two texts there are:

- similarities of language
- similarities of historical background

but

- contrasts of genre
- contrasts of authorial purpose
- contrasts of style
- contrasts of medium

which give you lots to say when making contrasts in the examination.

One (possibly minor) advantage of the close dates is that 'historical background' may seem easier to tackle in class because it forms a continuity, rather than demanding an approach to two different periods.

Second Example

Text C: A Prologue and Tale by Chaucer (c.1380)
Reflecting late Mediaeval attitudes to marriage, to women and their authority in general, to 'courtly' love, and to human behaviour. Comic.

Text D: An Eighteenth Century play (c. 1780)
Reflecting social manners, the rituals of courtship and romance in a relatively affluent social group, the behaviour of the wealthy with regard to fashion and social advancement. Comic.

Though these two texts may be separated by 400 years in date, there are more similarities between their concerns than between those of texts A and B. Both try to reflect society back to the audience for amusement: both are concerned with love, status and the situation of women.
Though two completely different social worlds will have to be explored in terms of historical context, the human contrast overlaps strikingly.

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So between these two texts there are:

- contrasts of context and social structure
- contrasts of style
- contrasts of language
- contrasts of genre

but also

- similarities of concern

Either approach works: each similarity between the texts is a help, but so are differences. The crucial thing is <u>to be aware of them</u>.

Task 1

Looking at your chosen set texts

Try to establish the similarities and contrasts between your own chosen texts using this grid:

Set Text	Political Context	Social Context	Theatrical Context	Biographical/Authorial Context

Managing Choice in the examination

This examination is perhaps unusual in that you will be offered a choice of six statements unrelated to any specific text: some may be about human nature as exemplified in literature, but they will be general. Six propositions will be offered - here is an example (taken from a previous examination session).

      a) *'People will do anything, no matter how foolish, to get what they want'*

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers represent ambition. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text. **[30]**

Or   b) *'Sins and vices demand punishment: sinners expect it: readers and audiences demand it!'*

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers explore ideas of guilt and punishment. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text. **[30]**

Or   c) *'Strong emotions demand intense and vivid expression.'*

In the light of this view, consider the uses which writers make of passionate language. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text. **[30]**

Or   d) *'We are little battlefields: in us, reason and emotion are constantly at war.'*

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore conflicts between reason and emotion. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text. **[30]**

Or   e) *'The skull lies only a very little way beneath the skin'*

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore ideas of mortality. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text. **[30]**

Or   f) *'Mockery makes us wiser'*

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers make use of humour. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text. **[30]**

Look at the options above. The most important part of the question is the quotation: it gives candidates a clear proposition on which to base their argument. Their decision – and the crucial one is <u>which question to choose</u>?

In the exam, candidates will have five or ten minutes in which to think about their choice of question. This is a crucial few minutes.

Task 2

For each of the chosen texts in turn, score with ticks those propositions which you think you could talk about in relation to that text.

Put the ticks for your drama text on the left, and your poetry on the right.

Do not try to compare them in your mind at all at this stage.

Now 'stand back' from the list and see where the overlap comes: which questions have attracted the most ticks for both texts?

Now is the time to start planning your answer!

Note: This exercise can be done with any of the past question lists for the legacy F663 Examination, since the format of the paper will only change to allow Candidates more time, and to extend the range of texts on offer both for Shakespeare and for Section B. for convenience, past question options are included with this resource.

Principal Examiner's reports consistently indicate that time spent choosing and reflecting on contrasts between texts, and on the exact choice of question in the Examination, pay dividends in answer quality.

F663 Section B 2010

January 2010

5   "Flawed characters are always more memorable than any moral lessons that literature seeks to draw from them."
In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers present characters' flaws and failings. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text.   **[30]**

6   "Of all the emotions that drive us, fear is the strongest."
In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore the power of fear. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text.   **[30]**

7   "The more intense the passion, the more bitter its effects."
In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore intense emotion. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text.   **[30]**

8   "The pleasures of pursuit are greater than the thrill of conquest."
In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers present seduction and its consequences. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text.   **[30]**

9   "Vanity drives us, and can all too easily destroy us."
In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore the power of vanity. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text.   **[30]**

10   "By inviting us to laugh at foolishness, writers encourage us to laugh at ourselves."
In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers use mockery and humour. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text.   **[30]**

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June 2010

5   "There is a tension between the attractiveness of wrongdoing and fear of its consequences."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore aspects of wrongdoing. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

6   "For women, sex is a means to an end, for me, it is an end in itself."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore differing attitudes to sex. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

7   "It is the process of argument and persuasion which most strongly engage us."

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers use argument and persuasion. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

8   "The struggle with God is all-consuming and passionate."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore relationships with God. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

9   "It is their weakness which makes heroic characters interesting."

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers present heroic characters. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

10   "Pride is inseparable from foolishness."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore the nature of pride. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

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F663 Section B 2011

January 2011

5 "Appetite – whether for power, knowledge, sex or money – is a destructive force."

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers present appetite. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. **[30]**

6 "Love is a restless emotion, driving growth and change."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore the power and effects of love. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. **[30]**

7 "Life is a game of chance in which skilful players risk everything."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore risk and chance. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. **[30]**

8 "Temptation arises from a willingness to be tempted."

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers present temptation and its results. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. **[30]**

9 "Happiness – a state to which all aspire, but which few will ever reach."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers present the search for happiness. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. **[30]**

10 "Irony exposes the gap between the way things appear to be and the way they are."

In the light of this view, consider the uses writers make of irony. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. **[30]**

June 2011

5 "Evil characters are lonely characters – and their isolation fascinates us."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers portray the isolation of evil characters. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. **[30]**

6 "Desire dazzles and destroys people like moths in a candle-flame."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers present intense desires and their consequences. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists **[30]**

7 "Women are the subtler sex: more varied in their attractions, more ingenious in their stratagems."

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers present women. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. **[30]**

8 "Masks, poses, facades, deceptions – all are weapons in the battle of life."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers present disguise and deception. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. **[30]**

9 "In literature, the main purpose of setting is to intensify the presentation of character."

In the light of this view, discuss the effects writers create by their use of settings. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. **[30]**

10 "We are both fascinated and repelled by the obsession of others."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers portray obsession and its effects. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. **[30]**

F663 Section B 2012

January 2012

5   "Words can entice us, can compel us, can ensnare us."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers present persuasive or seductive use of language. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists. **[30]**

6   "We admire defiance and disobedience – especially in the face of the inevitable."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore defiance and disobedience. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

7   "There is a fine line between heroism and foolishness."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore heroism. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

8   "Because we know we must die, we live all the more intensely."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers portray the idea of living life to the full. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

9   "Laughter is always dangerous."

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which use humour. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

10   "Love is the most selfish of emotions."

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers explore love. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

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June 2012

5   "People will do anything, no matter how foolish, to get what they want."

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers use ambition. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

6   "Sin must bring punishment. Sinners expect it; readers and audience demand it!"

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers portray sin and punishment. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

7   "Strong emotions demand intense and vivid expression."

In the light of this view, consider the uses which writers make of passionate language. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

8   "We are little battlefields; in us, reason and emotion are constantly at war."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore conflicts between reason and emotion. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

9   "The skull lies only a little way beneath the skin."

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore the awareness of death. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30]**

10   "Mockery makes us wiser."

In the light of this view, discuss ways in which writers make use of satire. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.   **[30**

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