# Lesson Element

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

## 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 which question to choose?**

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!**

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