

General Vision and Viewpoint Comparative Study Q (b) 40-Mark Sample

Macbeth and *Room*

At Leaving Cert English (Higher), candidates must answer on Shakespearean Drama. The Shakespearean play can be studied on its own for SECTION I – The Single Text or as an element in SECTION II, The Comparative Study.

The Higher Level Comparative Modes for Examination in 2023 are:

- i. General Vision and Viewpoint
- ii. Literary Genre
- iii. Theme or Issue

Exam Focus

In Part (b) 40-mark Comparative Study questions, you are required to:

- ◆ respond to the question, comparing your two chosen texts
- ◆ discuss the particular aspect/s of the mode you have chosen
- ◆ explain the impact these aspect/s have on the reader or audience

Selected Texts

Macbeth (William Shakespeare)

Room (Emma Donoghue)

- ◆ The following Part (b) 40-mark sample answer uses *Macbeth* as one of the two prescribed texts for comparison.
- ◆ The candidate would not have chosen *Macbeth* for either the Single Text section or for the Part (a) 30-mark Comparative Study question.

Exam Focus

In the Comparative Study two-part question:

Part (a) requires discussion of **one** prescribed text (30 marks)

- ◆ (Aim for around 400 words over 30 minutes)

Part (b) requires comparison of **two** other prescribed texts (40 marks)

- ◆ (Aim for around 600 words over 40 minutes)

Sample Question

General Vision and Viewpoint

'The general vision and viewpoint of a text can be understood by a reader's response to key scenes or significant moments in that text.'

- (b) With reference to **two other** comparative texts, compare how at least one key scene or significant moment helped you to understand the general vision and viewpoint in these texts. Develop your response with reference to your chosen texts. (40)

Sample Answer

1. The shocking vision presented in 'Room' is completely reversed by the power of selfless love between a mother and son, particularly in moments of courage displayed both by Ma and Jack. In contrast, the disturbing, pessimistic vision in 'Macbeth' is reinforced by the lack of courage displayed by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in key scenes.
2. Important moments in Donoghue's novel illustrate how Ma became 'alive again' when Jack 'zoomed in'. He became her primary focus. Ingeniously, she adapts games, 'Scream' and flicking on and off Lamp, to disguise her frantic attempts to get help from their imprisonment by Old Nick. But when Nick loses his job and there is a chance mother and son may be killed to hide his crime, she begins to prepare Jack to escape by 'unlying'. She compares the sequence of the planned escape to a Dora story: Sick, Truck, Hospital, Police, Save Ma, to help her son remember the different steps of the plan. The little boy's love for his mother makes him determined to become her 'superhero'. In these key moments Ma's strong maternal instincts and her son's act of courage brighten the horrific vision in the novel.
3. In the key banquet scene in Shakespeare's play, Lady Macbeth also uses ingenious methods to protect her husband who has become paralysed into inaction by his sighting of Banquo's ghost. She, like Ma, takes control of the situation to protect the person she loves. She lies to the assembled guests, 'He will again be well'. But Macbeth cannot control himself like Jack. The guests have to be dismissed, 'go at once'. Macbeth only recovers his courage when he can no longer see the ghost, unlike Jack who has to confront Nick. He swears to continue his criminal activity, 'we are yet but young in deed'. This key scene, in contrast to 'Room's reversal, increased my understanding of the brutal vision in the play.
4. In the conclusion of the novel, Ma again shows her deep love for Jack who really wants to return to Room. Seeing his determination, Ma gives in and contacts Officer Oh. Ma then becomes traumatised by the visit. The sight of the open hole where her first stillborn baby had been buried causes her to vomit. But she recovers and follows Jack into Room. Encouraging him to say 'good-bye' to what's left in Room, she also quietly says 'good-bye'. Her bravery is rewarded when Jack realises that Room is 'like a crater, a hole where something happened'. Thanks to Ma's courage, both are free to move on with their lives. This contributes to the reversal of the bleak outlook in the text.
5. In contrast, the key sleep-walking scene in the play has the opposite outcome for me, it darkens the play's vision. The once all-powerful Lady Macbeth is shown, like Ma, revisiting past scenes. However, Lady Macbeth is returning to these events in her memory, not like Ma

in reality. Both women are traumatised, but Ma shakes off the past while Lady Macbeth is consumed by it. She continuously washes her hands in vain, 'Out, damned spot'. I realised that there is no peace or rest for Lady Macbeth, imprisoned in the 'murky hell' of her own making. Unlike Ma, Lady Macbeth's inner strength has crumbled. This dramatic scene highlights the destruction of great potential through the pursuit of wickedness. Lady Macbeth appears a much weaker and less admirable character than Ma, intensifying my understanding of the play's dark, harrowing viewpoint.

(590 words)

Examiner's Comment

- ◆ Introduction gives a clear overview responding to the question and focusing on the contrasting viewpoints in the two chosen texts.
- ◆ Close engagement with both narratives evident in the use of detailed reference to revealing scenes.
- ◆ Discussion is developed effectively and includes interesting personal interaction, e.g. in paragraphs 3 and 5.
- ◆ Assured expression (e.g. 'Ingeniously, she adapts games', 'contributes to the reversal of the bleak outlook').
- ◆ Controlled comparative language throughout. Top-grade response.