1.6 Literature: Drama and Tragedy

AQA 7712 · about 205 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

The Last Harvest

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THE LAST HARVEST

Act Two, Scene Three (extract)

1 (The yard of Fenwick Farm. An October afternoon; the sky is the colour of a bruise. Above the valley, crows lift from the elms in a black, wheeling cloud and do not return.)

2

3 (EDMUND VANE, fifty-eight, stands at the yard gate, a lantern unlit in his hand. ROSALIND, his daughter, watches from the porch. WILL COAKLEY, the farmhand, leans on a hurdle, chewing a stem of grass.)

4

5 ROSALIND: Father, the river's over Marsh Bottom already. Enoch Prewitt rode down to say the sluice at Yardley broke at noon.

6

7 EDMUND: Enoch Prewitt would ride down to say the sky had fallen, if he thought I'd give him supper for the telling of it.

8

9 ROSALIND: The cattle are still in the low meadow.

10

11 EDMUND: Then the low meadow is where they'll stand till I say otherwise. I have brought thirty harvests off this land, and not one flood has had the cheek to cross my fences while I watched them.

12

13 WILL: Beggin' pardon, master, but the old dyke's not held since your father's time. Widow Cole says the crows haven't roosted on the elms these forty year, not till this morning.

14

15 EDMUND: Widow Cole. (He laughs, short and hard.) A woman who reads doom in a kettle's whistle. Will Coakley, take the lantern and see the gate is barred. I'll not have Fenwick land run by the fright of old women and the flapping of birds.

16

17 ROSALIND: (Quietly, to herself) It is not the birds I am afraid of, Father. It is you, who will not hear them.

18

19 EDMUND: What's that?

20

21 ROSALIND: Nothing. (She comes down into the yard.) Move the herd tonight, and lose an evening's grazing. Leave them, and you may lose the herd, the meadow, and the name of a man who was warned.

22

23 EDMUND: I built this farm out of clay and stubbornness, girl, and I'll not be told my judgement by a slip of a daughter who has read too many of her mother's storybooks. The river has tried Fenwick before. Fenwick has always won.

24

25 WILL: (Aside, to Rosalind, as EDMUND turns to go) Every farmer who ever drowned said much the same, miss, the night before the water came up over his boots.

26

27 ROSALIND: Will. Fetch the men from the bottom field, quietly, and bring the herd up by the top track. Do it without asking him.

28

29 WILL: And if he asks me why the beasts are moved?

30

31 ROSALIND: Tell him a daughter's fear weighed more than his pride. He may forgive you for it. He will not forgive the river.

32

33 (WILL exits. Thunder, distant. EDMUND stands alone at the gate, looking out over the darkening fields, the unlit lantern still in his hand.)

34

35 EDMUND: (To himself, half in wonder, half defiance) Thirty years the river has crept to my fences and crept away again, like a dog that knows its master's boot. Let it come tonight, if it dares. Let it see what Edmund Vane will yield, and what he will not.

36

37 (He does not light the lantern. Behind him, unseen, the first crow returns to the elms, alone, and is silent. Blackout.)

1 Look closely at the opening stage direction (lines 1 to 3) and the closing stage direction (line 37) of the extract.

(a) Explain how the playwright's stage directions create a sense of foreboding before Edmund speaks. **(6)**

(b) Analyse the significance of the crow motif that opens and closes the extract. **(4)**

(Total for Question 1 is 10 marks)

2 Focus on Edmund's speeches at lines 11, 23 and 35. Analyse how Edmund's speeches present him as a tragic hero whose hubris the audience recognises before he does.

(Total for Question 2 is 8 marks)

3 Explore the dramatic function of Will Coakley as a source of comic relief and folk wisdom within this tragic extract.

(Total for Question 3 is 15 marks)

4 Consider the contrast between Edmund's speech and the speech of Rosalind and Will across the extract.

(Total for Question 4 is 8 marks)

5 Consider the extract as a whole.

(Total for Question 5 is 8 marks)

6 'Tragic heroes bring about their own downfall.' Using this extract from The Last Harvest and at least one other tragedy you have studied, discuss the extent to which you agree with this view.

(Total for Question 6 is 20 marks)

7 Explore the presentation of female characters as voices of reason or warning in this extract and in at least one other tragedy you have studied.

(Total for Question 7 is 20 marks)

8 'In tragedy, fate always outweighs free will.' Discuss this view with reference to this extract and at least one other tragedy you have studied.

(Total for Question 8 is 20 marks)

9 'Tragedy exists to provoke pity and fear in its audience, not to punish its protagonist.' Using this extract and your wider reading, evaluate this view of the purpose of tragedy.

(Total for Question 9 is 20 marks)

10 Discuss how the rural, agricultural setting of this extract reflects wider social and economic anxieties, comparing this with the use of setting in at least one other tragedy you have studied.

(Total for Question 10 is 15 marks)

11 'Tragedy is created more by the audience's response than by the hero's actions.' To what extent do you agree with this view? Refer to this extract and to your wider reading of tragedy in your answer.

(Total for Question 11 is 25 marks)

Mark scheme · 1.6 Literature: Drama and Tragedy

Question 1

(a) **L3** Perceptive, detailed analysis of how the writer's staging choices (visual imagery, the crows' unusual behaviour, colour) create dramatic irony and unease for an audience who senses danger before Edmund does. **5-6**

(a) **L2** Clear explanation of how specific details (e.g. the 'bruised' sky, the wheeling crows) build atmosphere, supported by relevant textual reference. **3-4**

(a) **L1** Simple, mostly descriptive comment on the stage directions, with little explanation of effect; limited terminology. **1-2**

(a) **L0** No rewardable material. **0**

(a) Indicative content:

- The simile 'the colour of a bruise' (l.1) suggests injury and violence before any character has spoken.
- Crows lifting and failing to return (l.1) is a conventional omen of disaster, alerting the audience rather than the onstage characters.
- Because the stage direction precedes all dialogue, the audience's sense of foreboding is established before Edmund's confidence is heard, creating dramatic irony from the very first moment.
- Candidates might compare this to the way other tragedies use unnatural animal behaviour or disturbed weather (e.g. owls, storms) as portents of coming disaster.

(b) **L2** Clear explanation of the motif as a frame (opening and closing the extract) reinforcing cyclical, ominous structure and foreshadowing Edmund's fate. **3-4**

(b) **L1** Simple identification of the crow motif as symbolic, with limited development. **1-2**

(b) **L0** No rewardable material. **0**

(b) Indicative content:

- Crows leaving in a wheeling cloud (l.1) and one returning alone and silent (l.37) frames the extract, suggesting the natural world 'closing in' on Edmund.
- The single silent crow at the end mirrors Edmund's isolation ('EDMUND stands alone', l.33) and foreshadows his eventual abandonment or downfall.
- The motif works structurally as well as symbolically, giving the extract a circular, ominous shape typical of tragic foreshadowing.

Question 2

Level 4 Perceptive, well-structured analysis exploring how language, dramatic irony and structure combine to present Edmund as a tragic hero whose hubris the audience recognises before he does, using precise textual reference and assured expression. **7-8**

Level 3 Clear, well-supported analysis of how Edmund's rhetoric (repetition, absolute claims, imagery of mastery) constructs pride and hubris, with appropriate terminology. **5-6**

Level 2 Some relevant explanation of Edmund's pride and certainty, with general reference to language. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple, largely narrative comment on Edmund's character with little textual support. **1-2**

Level 0 No rewardable material. **0**

Indicative content:

- Edmund's absolute claims ('not one flood has had the cheek', l.11; 'Fenwick has always won', l.23) show excessive pride, a defining feature of the tragic hero's hubris.
- His rhetorical, almost boastful register, including the personification of the river as a cowardly 'dog that knows its master's boot' (l.35), elevates him above the other characters and asserts mastery over nature.
- Dramatic irony: the audience has already seen the omens (crows, failing dyke) that Edmund dismisses, so his confidence appears misplaced and his downfall inevitable.
- His refusal to light the lantern (l.37) can be read symbolically as a refusal to see or accept warning, reinforcing hamartia as a fatal flaw of pride and wilful blindness.
- Candidates may connect this to established tragic heroes who ignore warning before their fall; credit any valid, relevantly used comparison.

Question 3

Level 4 Perceptive, sophisticated analysis of Will's dual role as light relief and prophetic or choric voice, exploring how this combination is characteristic of tragic drama's use of subordinate characters to shape audience perspective, with assured, well-substantiated argument. **12-15**

Level 3 Well-developed analysis of how Will's language and function, as comic relief and choric commentary, affect tone and audience response, using precise reference and terminology. **9-11**

Level 2 Clear explanation of Will as a lower-status, comic or folk-wisdom figure, with relevant reference to the text. **5-8**

Level 1 Simple, mostly narrative comment on Will's role with limited reference. **1-4**

Level 0 No rewardable material. **0**

Indicative content:

- Will's dialect-inflected, informal prose ('Beggin' pardon, master', l.13) provides light relief against Edmund's grand rhetoric.
- His aside (l.25) delivers blunt folk wisdom directly, functioning like a chorus figure who comments on the danger the protagonist cannot see.
- His practical obedience to Rosalind, moving the herd secretly (l.27, l.29), shows sense prevailing among the socially 'lower' characters even as the protagonist's pride blinds him.
- Comparison to the wider tragic tradition of a servant or subordinate figure who blends comedy with insight is creditable, though any valid parallel should be rewarded.
- Candidates might discuss how such characters help regulate tone and pacing in tragedy, offering the audience brief relief before rising tension resumes.

Question 4

Level 4 Perceptive, precise analysis of how the writer uses contrasting registers to position the audience's sympathy with Rosalind and Will (voices of reason) against Edmund (voice of pride), heightening dramatic tension and tragic inevitability. **7-8**

Level 3 Well-supported explanation of how the contrast in language, elevated imagery and rhetoric against plain, practical statements marks status and foreshadows the coming conflict between pride and good sense. **5-6**

Level 2 Clear identification of some differences in register and vocabulary between Edmund and the other characters. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple comment that the characters speak differently, with little development. **1-2**

Level 0 No rewardable material. **0**

Indicative content:

- Edmund's speeches (ll.11, 23, 35) use extended imagery, repetition and absolute statements, giving him a heightened, almost poetic register befitting a tragic protagonist.
- Rosalind and Will speak in short, practical, urgent prose ('Move the herd tonight...', l.21; 'Fetch the men...', l.27), aligning them with reason and the audience's own sense of danger.
- The contrast creates dramatic irony: the audience trusts the plain, urgent voices over the grand, dismissive one, so the audience anticipates Edmund's downfall.
- Will's aside to Rosalind (l.25) functions almost as a chorus, voicing folk wisdom the audience shares.
- This echoes a long tragic convention of contrasting a high-status protagonist's elevated language with the plainer speech of subordinate characters.

Question 5

Level 4 Perceptive, well-integrated explanation of how at least two conventions (for example hubris and dramatic irony) operate together in the extract to establish it firmly within the tragic genre. **7-8**

Level 3 Clear, accurate explanation of at least two named conventions with relevant, specific reference to the extract. **5-6**

Level 2 Some accurate use of tragic terminology, loosely linked to the extract. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple, general reference to tragedy with little use of terminology. **1-2**

Level 0 No rewardable material. **0**

Indicative content:

- Hubris: Edmund's excessive pride and certainty that Fenwick 'has always won' against the river (l.23).
- Hamartia: his fatal flaw of pride and blindness leads him to ignore clear warnings from both Rosalind and Will.
- Foreshadowing: the omens (crows, failing dyke, thunder) prepare the audience for disaster.
- Dramatic irony: the audience knows more than Edmund about the danger he faces throughout the extract.
- The unlit lantern (l.3, l.37) as a symbol of wilful blindness, a conventional tragic image of a character who will not 'see'.
- Candidates might also note the beginnings of catharsis by anticipating the pity and fear the audience will feel as events unfold beyond the extract.

Question 6

Level 5 Sophisticated, well-substantiated argument; sustained, precise analysis of dramatic method; assured, illuminating comparison with a second tragedy; confident engagement with context and alternative interpretations; conceptualised, critical style throughout. **17-20**

Level 4 Well-structured, developed argument with sustained, accurate use of terminology; perceptive analysis of language, form and structure; effective, well-integrated comparison with a second tragedy; some awareness of context and/or differing interpretations. **13-16**

Level 3 Clear, relevant argument with reasonable use of terminology; some effective analysis of how form, structure or language present the tragic hero's downfall; a reasonably developed comparison with a second tragedy. **9-12**

Level 2 Some relevant knowledge and understanding; largely narrative or descriptive; occasional use of terminology; limited comparison with a second tragedy. **5-8**

Level 1 Little relevant knowledge; simple, unsupported assertions; limited use of terminology; minimal or no reference to a second text. **1-4**

Level 0 No rewardable material. **0**

Indicative content:

- Edmund's downfall, implied beyond the extract, stems from his own pride and refusal to heed warning, supporting the view that tragic heroes are agents of their own destruction.
- Candidates might compare Edmund to other tragic protagonists whose ambition, pride or self-delusion precipitates ruin, provided the comparison is specific and well evidenced.
- Counter-argument: external forces (the river and weather, Rosalind's inability to persuade him, inherited responsibility for the farm) also contribute, so downfall may be presented as a combination of flaw and circumstance rather than pure agency.
- Stronger answers may question whether 'bringing about one's own downfall' oversimplifies tragedy, drawing on critical debate about whether character or circumstance is the primary cause of tragic suffering.
- Credit any valid, well-evidenced named tragedy used comparatively; reward range and precision of reference over sheer quantity of texts mentioned.

Question 7

Level 5 Sophisticated, well-substantiated argument, sustained precise analysis of dramatic method, assured comparison with a second tragedy, and confident engagement with context and alternative interpretations of gender and voice in tragedy. **17-20**

Level 4 Well-structured, developed exploration with sustained, accurate terminology; perceptive analysis of language and structure; effective, well-integrated comparison with a second tragedy; some awareness of differing interpretations. **13-16**

Level 3 Clear, relevant exploration with reasonable use of terminology; some effective analysis of how the female character's role is presented; a reasonably developed comparison with a second tragedy. **9-12**

Level 2 Some relevant knowledge and understanding; largely narrative or descriptive; occasional use of terminology; limited comparison with a second tragedy. **5-8**

Level 1 Little relevant knowledge; simple, unsupported assertions; limited use of terminology; minimal or no reference to a second text. **1-4**

Level 0 No rewardable material. **0**

Indicative content:

- Rosalind is presented as perceptive and practical, urging action while Edmund dismisses her warnings; she is denied authority despite being proved right by events implied beyond the extract.
- Her aside ('It is not the birds I am afraid of, Father. It is you, who will not hear them', l.17) shows insight that the audience shares but Edmund does not hear.
- Candidates might compare Rosalind to other female figures in tragedy whose warnings go unheeded, or who variously warn, enable or witness the male protagonist's downfall.
- Candidates may discuss how tragic form often positions women as marginalised commentators on male hubris, and evaluate whether this extract follows or challenges that convention.
- Different interpretations might consider Rosalind as a corrective, clear-sighted figure or as a conventionally powerless bystander, depending on the reading taken and how far she is shown to act decisively (l.21, l.27, l.31).

Question 8

Level 5 Sophisticated, well-substantiated argument; sustained, precise analysis of dramatic method; assured, illuminating comparison with a second tragedy; confident engagement with context and alternative interpretations of fate and agency.	**17-20**
Level 4 Well-structured, developed argument with sustained, accurate terminology; perceptive analysis of language, form and structure; effective, well-integrated comparison with a second tragedy; some awareness of context and/or differing interpretations.	**13-16**
Level 3 Clear, relevant argument with reasonable use of terminology; some effective analysis of how fate and choice are presented; a reasonably developed comparison with a second tragedy.	**9-12**
Level 2 Some relevant knowledge and understanding; largely narrative or descriptive; occasional use of terminology; limited comparison with a second tragedy.	**5-8**
Level 1 Little relevant knowledge; simple, unsupported assertions; limited use of terminology; minimal or no reference to a second text.	**1-4**
Level 0 No rewardable material.	**0**

Indicative content:

- The extract can be read as fate (the river, the omens, the failing dyke) versus free will (Edmund's choice to ignore warnings and not move the herd).
- Edmund's refusal to act is a free choice, suggesting his own will, not impersonal fate, seals whatever follows, complicating a purely fatalistic reading of the extract.
- Candidates should be rewarded for a balanced, evidenced argument that weighs both fate and agency in their chosen comparative text, rather than an unsupported assertion of either extreme.
- Top answers may engage with the idea that 'fate' in modern tragedy is often reframed as social or psychological determinism rather than supernatural destiny, and test this against The Last Harvest and their chosen second tragedy.
- Candidates might note that Rosalind's intervention (moving the herd secretly, ll.21-31) represents an alternative exercise of free will that works against the fatalistic pull of the plot, complicating the statement further.

Question 9

Level 5 Sophisticated, well-substantiated evaluation directly interrogating the statement; sustained, precise analysis of dramatic method across texts; assured comparison; confident, critical engagement with context and differing interpretations of tragedy's purpose.	**17-20**
Level 4 Well-structured, developed evaluation with sustained, accurate terminology; perceptive analysis of language, form and structure; effective, well-integrated comparison with a second tragedy; some awareness of differing critical interpretations.	**13-16**
Level 3 Clear, relevant evaluation with reasonable use of terminology; some effective analysis of how pity, fear or judgement of the protagonist are presented; a reasonably developed comparison with a second tragedy.	**9-12**
Level 2 Some relevant knowledge and understanding; largely narrative or descriptive; occasional use of terminology; limited comparison with a second tragedy.	**5-8**
Level 1 Little relevant knowledge; simple, unsupported assertions; limited use of terminology; minimal or no reference to a second text.	**1-4**
Level 0 No rewardable material.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Aristotelian catharsis: tragedy is often argued to exist to purge pity and fear in the audience rather than to morally punish the hero, and candidates might test this idea directly against the statement.
- In the extract, the audience's pity is generated by dramatic irony (the audience sees what Edmund cannot) and fear is generated by the accumulating omens (ll.1, 13, 33, 37).
- Counter-view: many tragedies do read as morally punitive, since hubris appears to lead to a deserved downfall, so tragedy's purpose may be both didactic and cathartic rather than purely emotional.
- Candidates might bring in critical perspectives on catharsis, or more modern views that tragedy interrogates suffering rather than punishing it, to evaluate the statement with precision.
- Strongest answers will interrogate the terms of the question itself, considering whether 'pity and fear' can genuinely be separated from ideas of justice or punishment in their specific chosen texts.

Question 10

Level 4 Perceptive, sophisticated discussion of setting as integral to the tragic action in both texts, with well-substantiated comparison, precise contextual knowledge and assured critical vocabulary. **12-15**

Level 3 Well-developed comparison of setting in both texts, using precise reference and appropriate contextual and structural terminology. **9-11**

Level 2 Clear explanation of how setting relates to social or economic anxiety in at least one text, with some comparison attempted. **5-8**

Level 1 Simple, mostly narrative comment on setting with limited comparison or contextual awareness. **1-4**

Level 0 No rewardable material. **0**

Indicative content:

- The farm setting, dependent on land, weather and inherited status ('thirty harvests', l.11; 'your father's time', l.13), reflects real anxieties about agricultural precarity and generational responsibility.
- Edmund's identity is bound to the land ('I built this farm out of clay and stubbornness', l.23), so its potential loss threatens not just property but selfhood, a common tragic pattern.
- Comparison possibilities include declining estates, failing businesses or precarious homes in other tragedies as settings that mirror a protagonist's crisis; candidates should choose a text they know well and argue precisely.
- Candidates should evaluate how far setting functions symbolically, nature as omen or judgement, versus realistically, as economic hardship, in their chosen texts.
- Well-argued answers will show how setting is integral to, not merely background for, the tragic action in both texts compared.

Question 11

Level 6 Sophisticated, conceptualised and original argument sustained throughout; exceptionally precise and illuminating analysis of dramatic method across texts; sophisticated, critical engagement with differing interpretations and the terms of the question itself; flawless, scholarly expression. **21-25**

Level 5 Assured, well-substantiated argument; precise, sustained analysis of language, form and structure; skilfully integrated comparison with a second tragedy; clear engagement with context and differing critical interpretations. **17-20**

Level 4 Well-organised, developed argument; accurate, purposeful use of terminology; effective analysis of dramatic method; integrated comparison with a second tragedy; some engagement with alternative interpretations. **13-16**

Level 3 Reasonably clear argument with relevant textual support; developing use of terminology and structure; some, mostly separate, comparison with a second tragedy. **9-12**

Level 2 Some relevant, mostly narrative or descriptive points; occasional terminology; limited, undeveloped reference to a second tragedy. **5-8**

Level 1 Very limited, largely irrelevant or assertive response; minimal terminology; little or no reference to wider reading. **1-4**

Level 0 No rewardable material. **0**

Indicative content:

- The view invites debate about whether tragedy resides in the hero's choices and actions, an action-centred view of dramatic structure, or in the audience's constructed emotional response of pity and fear.
- In the extract, tragic effect depends heavily on the audience knowing more than Edmund through dramatic irony (ll.1, 13, 33, 37 versus ll.11, 23, 35), suggesting response is central to how tragedy is generated here.
- However, Edmund's specific choices, refusing to move the herd and refusing to light the lantern (l.37), are also necessary conditions for whatever tragic outcome follows, suggesting action and response are interdependent rather than separable.
- Candidates might engage with critical positions that emphasise plot and action as central to tragedy against more audience-centred or reader-response theories that emphasise the constructed emotional experience, to interrogate the statement precisely.
- The strongest answers will resist a simple either/or conclusion, using precise, integrated reference to this extract and at least one other tragedy to argue a nuanced, original position.
- Credit sophisticated recognition that the question's framing may itself present a false binary between action and response, with well-argued synthesis rewarded highly.