

## 2. Planning and research

Your teacher will have helped you study your text and taught you how to approach the topics. He or she will now advise you on how to carry out further research and plan for your task.

- During this phase you can work with others, for example discussing ideas and sharing resources on the Internet.
- Your teacher can give you general feedback during this phase, but not detailed advice.
- You must keep a record of all the source materials you use, including websites.

## 3. Writing up the response

This will take place under timed, supervised conditions.

- It may be split into more than one session, in which case your teacher will collect your work at the end of the session and put it away until the beginning of the next. You will not have access to it between sessions.
- You may be allowed to take an **un-annotated copy** of the text into the session.
- You may be allowed to take in some brief *notes*.
- You may be allowed access to a dictionary or a thesaurus.
- You may be allowed to produce your assessment electronically, but you will not be allowed access to the internet, email, disks or memory sticks.
- During this time, you may not communicate with other candidates. The work you produce must be entirely **your own**.
- Your teacher will advise you on how much you should aim to write.

## 4. Marking

Your Controlled Assessment Task will be marked by your teacher and moderated (supervised and checked) by your exam board.

### General examiners' note

Remember:

- you will get marks for responding to the task, but not for writing other material that is not relevant
- you must produce an **individual** response to the task in the final assessment, even if you have discussed ideas with other students previously.

## HOW TO SUCCEED IN AQA ENGLISH LITERATURE

Your teachers will decide whether you should write about *Romeo and Juliet* in a Controlled Assessment Task (Unit 3) or an Examination (Unit 4). These two units are very different, so you need to be absolutely sure which one you are taking. If you are in any in doubt, ask your teacher.

### Examiner's tip

Refer back to pages 242–3 for more about the assessment objectives you will be assessed on in Unit 3 Controlled Assessment or Unit 4 Exam.

### UNIT 3 CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT TASK

If you take this unit, you have to write about a Shakespeare play and one other text that your teacher will choose. It may be a novel, a selection of poetry, another play or even another Shakespeare play. The two texts will be linked in some way and you are expected to write about both.

### THE TASK

AQA will give your teacher a number of tasks to choose from. There are two main topics:

#### 1. Themes and ideas

These tasks might involve writing about love or hate, conflict or power, families or outsiders. For example: *Explore the ways writers present different kinds of love in the texts you have studied* or *Explore the ways writers present and use ideas of fate and free will in the texts you have studied*.

#### 2. Characterisation and voice

These tasks might involve writing about relationships or parents and children or comic characters or old people. For example: *Explore the ways the texts show differences between young and old people* or *Explore the ways the texts show people changing their ideas and attitudes*.

### YOUR RESPONSE

- You have to complete a written response to ONE task. This should be about 2,000 words, but remember it's quality not quantity that counts.
- You have FOUR hours to produce your work. Your teacher will probably ask you to complete the task over separate sessions rather than in a single sitting.
- Your teacher will give you time to prepare for the task. You can use any resources you like, but do keep a record of them (including websites). You must include a list of these at the end of your task.

- You can work in a small group to research and prepare your material but your final work must be all your own.
- Watch different versions of the play. You can refer to the different versions when you write your response and you will be given credit for this.
- You can refer to brief notes when you are writing your response, but these must be brief. You must hand in your notes at the end of each session and on completion of the task. You can also use a copy of the play without any annotations.
- You can hand write your response or use a word processor. You are allowed a dictionary and thesaurus or grammar and spell-check programs. You are NOT allowed to use the Internet, email, disks or memory sticks when writing your response.
- You can do the Controlled Assessment Task in January or June. When you have finished, your teachers will mark your work and then send a sample from your school to AQA to be checked.

**Examiner's tip**

The Controlled Assessment Task is worth 25 per cent of your final English Literature mark – so it's worth doing it well.

**HOW TO GET A GOOD GRADE**

1. Select what you write about carefully. It is better to write a lot about a little. Concentrate on one scene in Shakespeare and one chapter in a novel or a single poem, or on two characters, one from a Shakespeare play and one from a novel.
2. Use short, relevant quotations. Every time you include a quotation, consider the language the writer has used and the probable effect on the audience.
3. Never retell the story. You and your teachers already know it. If you find yourself doing this, stop and refocus on the question.
4. Check your spellings, in particular writers' and characters' names.
5. Always remember that Romeo, Juliet and the other characters in the play are not real. Do not write about them as if they are. They have been created by Shakespeare: he's the important person to consider.

**SAMPLE CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT TASK**

Explore the ways writers present family relationships.

Here are extracts from responses written by two students. Both are writing about the Capulet family in Act 3 Scene 5.

**Extract 1 Grade C response**

In this scene Lord Capulet behaves really badly towards his daughter. For example, when he has been told that Juliet refuses to marry Paris he uses a long list, 'Day, night, hour, tide, time, work, play, Alone, in company' to emphasise just how much time and effort he has put into finding Juliet a suitable husband. Some of the elements in this list are contrasts, which emphasise his efforts even more. He then imitates his own daughter, 'I'll not wed', which must be very hurtful to her. He also threatens her by saying that if she does not do what he wants he will turn her out of the house and he will not care whether she starves or even dies. At the end of the speech we see the real reason why he wants Juliet to marry Paris: he has given him his word and does not want to have to take back his promise, 'I'll not be forsworn'.

Relevant textual detail

Could be developed more

Good point with relevant quotation

Statement of opinion, but not fully justified

How is this evidence of bad behaviour?

Good analysis of language

**Examiner's comments**

- The student clearly understands some of the Shakespeare's ideas and uses of language in the speech.
- Not all points are fully explained and backed up; for example Capulet's efforts to find Juliet a husband aren't really evidence of bad treatment.
- There is a general understanding of how Lord Capulet treats his daughter, though the effect on Juliet and the audience is not considered in much detail.
- This is a grade C response. To improve, this student needs to develop ideas in more detail and to link these details to a more thoughtful consideration of the speech and the scene.

## Extract 2 Grade A response

Clear, detailed statement

In this scene we see a family at war with itself and the role of the father is established as being one of complete power over his child. At first Lord Capulet claims that he has spent all his time, 'Day, night', on his necessary task of finding a husband for his daughter. The contrast creates the impression of universality and utmost importance. Then he provides a brief tour of Paris' most engaging parts, beginning with the fact that he has 'noble parentage': a fact that would undoubtedly impress Lord Capulet as a self-made man. He then denigrates his daughter as a 'whining mammet', a sulking doll or puppet, incapable of independent thought. This is further emphasised by Capulet's statement 'I'll give you to my friend'. His daughter is a commodity to be used in furtherance of his own career; an item with a value. The use of pronouns and the simplicity of the statement provide it with considerable power. The hurt he does her is given an added bite by his imitation of her. Any audience now feels for Juliet's misfortune. Then, as in many family arguments, come the threats ('die in the streets') and finally the truth: Capulet has given his word and claims 'I'll not be forsworn'. Capulet's exit underlines his power. There can be no further argument.

Analytic use of detail

Exploration of themes and ideas

Clear explanation

Awareness of effect on audience

Insight into the core reason

**Examiner's comments**

- The student shows a clear engagement with Shakespeare's ideas and the attitudes of Lord Capulet.
- There is evidence of a sophisticated interpretation and a perceptive exploration of Shakespeare's use of language.
- The student has written a lot about a little but has also explored some of the themes of the text as a whole.
- This is a grade A response.

## UNIT 4 EXAMINATION

If you take Unit 4 in your AQA English Literature course then you will answer a question on a Shakespeare play in an examination. Your answer is worth 20 per cent of your total Literature mark and you will need to spend about 40 minutes on this question.

The Shakespeare question will always have **two** parts. Each is worth 10 per cent of your total mark so you must spend equal time on them.

- Part (a) of each question will ask you to write about a specific extract that is printed in the exam paper. This extract may be a monologue (spoken by one character) or a part of a scene where two or more characters are talking.
- Part (b) of each question will ask you to write about the same topic but as it relates to a different part of the play (there will not be a printed extract in the exam paper to refer to).

## SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

- Part (a) How does Shakespeare show Romeo's thoughts and feelings in the extract below?
- Part (b) How does Shakespeare show Romeo's feelings in a different part of the play?

**ROMEO:**

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear –  
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.  
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,  
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.  
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,  
And, touching hers, make blessèd my rude hand.  
Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight! –  
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

**Examiner's tip**

The first part of each question asks '*How does Shakespeare . . . ?*' The 'how' is important. It means you must consider Shakespeare's use of language, referring to specific words and phrases and the effects these create.

Here are extracts from essays by two students. Both are answering Part (a) of the question on *Romeo and Juliet*.

## Extract 1 Grade C response

Appropriate comment on theme

In this extract Romeo sees Juliet for the first time and it is love at first sight. He is speaking to himself and uses images of light and dark. He compares her brightness to 'a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear' because an Ethiopian's ear would be black and the jewel would stand out against it. This is how staggeringly beautiful he thinks Juliet is and the audience can see that he has fallen in love with her right away. The contrast between black and white is continued with the idea of 'a snowy dove trooping with crows'. Crows are black and so a dove would stand out because it is white. This particular dove is 'snowy' which might imply that it is innocent – just like Juliet.

Explanation of effects on audience

Sustained response to language

## Examiner's comments

- The ideas here are expressed clearly and appropriately.
- The response explains the first of the images and considers the effect this would have on the audience. It is sustained as it considers a second contrast and begins to explore the word 'snowy'.

## Extract 2 Grade A response

Analytic use of detail

In this extract Romeo sees Juliet for the first time. Such is the immediate impression she makes upon him that he sighs with wonder, using the highly romantic exclamation 'O' to indicate how he has been startled into adoration. This is an indication of how passionate he feels: for a second he is speechless and has to convey his feelings with an expression of sheer wonder at Juliet's beauty. Words, quite literally, fail him. When he does find words, Juliet is seen as a dominant figure: it is she who 'doth teach', the combination of soft and hard sounds being continued in the rest of the line 'to burn bright'. Here the alliterative b sounds and the repeated r and t sounds create an impression not just of light but also of heat. The torches may look beautiful burning brightly but they are nonetheless burning. There may be a suggestion that Juliet poses some kind of danger. His sense of wonder at Juliet's beauty contains an ironic foreshadowing of what is to come: 'for earth too dear'.

Exploration of ideas/themes

Clear interpretation

Good analysis of language

Insight and interpretation

## Examiner's comments

- The ideas are expressed cogently and persuasively, with apt text references.
- There is evidence of imagination in the development of the interpretation and a confident exploration of the use of language. The student has written a lot about a little but has also managed to explore some of the themes of the text as a whole.

## HOW TO SUCCEED IN EDEXCEL ENGLISH LITERATURE

The response to Shakespeare in Edexcel GCSE English Literature is a Controlled Assessment Task. You must produce your work at school or college under supervision and within two hours, although you may do some preparation for it in advance.

## THE TASK

The task will ask you to compare and make links between your own reading of the Shakespeare text and an adaptation. The adaptation can be a film, TV production, musical, graphic novel, audio version or a cartoon, but all must be based on the original play. The task will focus on **one** of the following aspects of the play:

• **Characterisation**

For example: *Choose one central character in Romeo and Juliet. Compare your reading of the character with the presentation of the same character in an adaptation.*

• **Stagecraft**

For example: *Choose one dramatic device used in Romeo and Juliet. Compare your understanding of the dramatic device with the way the same dramatic device is presented in an adaptation.*

• **Theme**

For example: *Choose one key theme in Romeo and Juliet. Compare your reading of the theme with the presentation of the same theme in an adaptation.*

• **Relationships**

For example: *Choose one important relationship in Romeo and Juliet. Compare your reading of the relationship with the presentation of the same relationship in an adaptation.*

Note that your answer should include some discussion of dramatic devices. These include a range of theatrical techniques and styles used by the playwright to create a particular effect on the audience, such as soliloquies, monologues; juxtaposition and contrast; use of dramatic irony; use of the stage and props; actions and reactions.

## PREPARING YOUR RESPONSE

When preparing, you will be able to use a range of resources available at your centre, which will include such things as the Internet, TV, videos and film, live performances and notes made in class.

You must complete your tasks individually, without intervention or assistance from others. However, you will be able to use: copies of the text without any annotations written in them; notes (bullet or numbered points), but not a prepared draft or continuous phrases/sentences or paragraphs); a dictionary or thesaurus; grammar or spell-check programs.



**Examiner's tip**

If possible, see several different adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* and compare the ways they treat the story and characters.

**HOW TO GET A GOOD MARK**

To get a good mark in this response, it is important that you:

- respond to the chosen drama text critically and imaginatively
- make comparisons and explain links with your own reading
- look at different ways that a production or adaptation expresses ideas
- consider what Shakespeare means and how he achieves his effects
- support your ideas by including evidence from the words of the play.

**ACTIVITIES**

The following approaches will help you to explore *Romeo and Juliet* in preparation for the controlled assessment.

**Activity 1: Characterisation**

Draw up a page with two columns, one for Romeo, one for Juliet, and list key headings under which to note down your ideas about each character. Include references from the text that support them. Do the same for the main characters in the adaptation, e.g. Tony and Maria in *West Side Story*.

**Activity 2: Stagecraft**

In a group, plan the production of a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. Give each member of the group a non-acting role in the production, such as producer, stage manager, costume and make-up, and set designer. Decide on the three most important decisions or tasks that each member has to undertake, and make notes on each of these.

**Activity 3: Theme**

As you study *Romeo and Juliet*, decide on **two** important themes and use them as headings for two columns. Underneath, note moments in the play that deal with these themes, giving your ideas and any reference from the text that supports them.

**Activity 4: Relationships**

Note down your key ideas about Romeo and Juliet's relationship. Try to divide them into positive and negative aspects, to help you form an overview. Use references from the text to support your ideas.

**SAMPLE CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT TASK**

Choose one central character in the Shakespeare drama text you have studied. Compare your reading of the character with the presentation of the same character in an adaptation.

Use examples from the text in your response.

Here are extracts from essays by two candidates who had each watched the film *West Side Story* and compared this with *Romeo and Juliet*.

**Extract 1 Grade C response**

States intentions in clear but rather simple way

I have read Shakespeare's play and seen the film *West Side Story*. I am going to compare the two male leading characters, Romeo and Tony. Both of these are in love with a girl from a different background, and both die at the end, which makes the girls very sad. Romeo is a Montague and Juliet is from the Capulets. There is rivalry between these families, and Shakespeare makes this clear right from the start in the Prologue: 'Two households, both alike in dignity. . . . From ancient grudge break to new mutiny'.

Important quotations

The situation is different in *West Side Story* because Tony and Maria come from different groups. Maria is a Puerto Rican who has come to America and Tony is from New York. She is advised to 'Stick to your own kind!' Both Romeo and Tony are involved with a group of friends who often fight. Romeo kills Tybalt in a quarrel and Tony kills Bernardo when there is a battle between the Jets and Sharks.

Appropriate comparisons

Romeo and Tony are both young men who try to calm the situation. Romeo is wealthy and people look up to him. Tony also takes responsibility and wants to stop the fighting. Romeo and Tony are both presented as very attractive to women. Tony is shown in the film as really good-looking so you are not surprised Maria falls for him. In both *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*, Romeo and Tony don't seem to like violence, but because of bad luck and quick tempers, they get pushed into things which end in death: 'I am fortune's fool!'

Needs development to consider events/people that cause them to act as they do

**Examiner's comments**

- This extract indicates a sound response. There is an appropriate emphasis on comparison of the two characters and situations.
- The writer responds personally and gives her/his own views.
- To raise the grade, the answer needs to refer to the text closely and discuss the plots in a less narrative way. Points need fuller development.

## Extract 2 Grade A response

Clear opening shows awareness of context

The film of *West Side Story*, released in 1961, maintains much of the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* but is adapted and set in New York to reflect the mid-twentieth-century and its popular culture. The central characters (Tony and Maria) take the place of Shakespeare's pair of 'star-crossed lovers'. This study explores how the writers shaped their heroines.

Strong comparison with very clear points

The most obvious difference is that of age. Shakespeare's text showed that Juliet was still only thirteen years old, an age which I, as a modern reader, certainly found very shocking. Maria's age is not stated, but she is probably about eighteen, even if portrayed as rather naïve, seen particularly when she sings, 'I feel pretty!' The age difference is reflected by the fact that Juliet is closely watched over by her nurse and her parents, while Maria is protected by her brother Bernardo, the leader of the Sharks, and by the other girls, especially the somewhat older Anita. Maria and Juliet are both more down-to-earth and practical than the highly idealistic and impulsive young men with whom they fall in love, both of whom are capable of violence and are responsible for deaths (Bernardo and Juliet's cousin, the 'fiery' Tybalt).

Effective use of language

Helpful contrasts

Perceptive link

The relationship of the two lovers is central in both. At the Capulet ball in *Romeo and Juliet*, all of the characters speak in blank verse, but when Romeo and Juliet converse, they speak in sonnet form. Although this contrast in diction cannot be replicated in *West Side Story*, throughout the dance, both gangs dance a mambo; however, Tony and Maria dance a cha-cha and stand out by the language of their dance.

**Examiner's comments**

- It is clear that the writer has a very good understanding of both *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*.
- The comments show a very high ability to make close reference, whether to Shakespeare's text or to elements of the film script and staging.
- The candidate has clearly grasped, at an assured level, the similarities and parallels, and has also pointed out clear contrasts.
- The writer's language is marked by well-chosen vocabulary and confident, fluent sentence construction.
- This is a grade A response.

## HOW TO SUCCEED IN WJEC ENGLISH LITERATURE

If you are entered for English Literature GCSE (or English GCSE) you will be assessed on Shakespeare in a Controlled Assessment Task. This task will be a linked assignment, which means you need to write about the Shakespeare play you have studied, in this case, *Romeo and Juliet*, and some poetry you have studied in class. The play and poems will be linked by a theme. The possible themes are:

- love
- family and parent/child relationships
- youth/age
- power and ambition
- male/female relationships/role of women
- hypocrisy/prejudice
- conflict
- grief.

The exam board will specify which themes are set for the year you take the exam, and your teacher will decide which theme to focus on, according to the Shakespeare play and the poems you have studied.

**THE TASK**

The examination board will provide teachers with 'generic tasks'. These are general tasks that your teacher will modify to suit the class and the texts you are studying. For example, the generic task could be:

Many plays and poems are concerned with the relationship between men and women. Choose one relationship in a Shakespeare play and link it with the way a similar relationship is presented in poetry.

Your teacher will modify the task and may break it down into three sections, such as:

Look at the way Shakespeare presents the relationship between Romeo and Juliet at key points throughout the play.

Consider the way romantic relationships are presented in some of the poems in the collection. Choose one poem to write about in particular, but make references to others.

What is your personal response to the literature you have studied? In your answer, explore links between the poetry and *Romeo and Juliet*.

**ACTIVITY**

Think about how you would approach the task above, and write a plan for your response to the first part of the task.

You might want to:

- choose three or four points from different parts of the play that you think clearly illustrate the relationship between Romeo and Juliet
- look closely at the way Romeo and Juliet speak and behave in these parts of the play, and at how this suggests the character of their relationship.

#### PREPARING YOUR RESPONSE

- You will have up to fifteen hours to prepare your response, then up to four hours to write it up.
- While you are doing your research and planning, you will have limited supervision; you may use research materials, you can work with others in your class, and your teachers will be able to give you general advice.
- Any worksheets your teacher provides to help you will be sent to the external moderator, and your teacher will have to tell the exam board about the support you have had.
- You are allowed to take an A4 sheet of notes into the final assessment with you. This will be checked to see that it is not a draft or detailed plan of any kind.

#### WRITING YOUR RESPONSE

- Once you start writing, you will be formally supervised (a bit like in an exam).
- You may complete the assignment over several sessions, in which case, your teacher will collect the work in at the end of each session.
- You are not allowed to discuss your work with others (students or teachers) during this part of the assessment.
- You will be allowed to use a dictionary or thesaurus if you need to, and you may be allowed to produce the work on a word processor.
- The approximate length for this assignment is 2,000 words but quality is more important than quantity.

#### HOW TO GET A GOOD MARK

Be prepared to discuss characters and relationships sensitively in both the Shakespeare play and the poetry. You will be expected to show detailed knowledge of both, through well chosen, brief quotations and direct reference to the texts, in order to back up the points you make.

You should show your understanding of how the texts are written, by exploring, for example, the use of language and its effects. Do not try to simply identify literary features, for instance writing 'There are several metaphors used' or something similar. These features are only of interest if you explain why and how they are used and the effects they create.

Do explain the links and connections between the texts carefully.

#### SAMPLE CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT TASK

Look at the way Shakespeare presents Juliet's relationship with her mother in *Romeo and Juliet*. Consider the way Lady Capulet speaks and behaves with Juliet at different points in the play, and the different ways in which Juliet responds.

Consider the way some of the poets in the collection present relationships between parents and children. Write about the way the relationship between a parent and child is presented in one poem in particular, but make reference to others.

What is your personal response to the literature you have studied here? In your answer, explore the links between the poetry and *Romeo and Juliet*.

#### Extract 1 Grade C response

Shows an awareness of characters and relationships

The relationship between Juliet and her mother starts out as Juliet being a very good and obedient daughter to her mother, Lady Capulet. It seems that the Nurse is closer to Juliet than her own mother. We see this when Lady Capulet is sent by her husband to tell Juliet about marrying the County Paris and she has to get the Nurse to help her out. When she is talking to Juliet she tells her she should marry Paris and Juliet just says:

Relevant reference to support the point made

Direct reference in the form of a quotation is appropriate

'I'll look to like, if looking liking move.  
But no more deep will I endart mine eye  
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.'  
This means she will just do what she is told. This shows that Juliet is a very obedient daughter at this point in the play. As soon as Juliet meets Romeo at the party everything changes and she starts keeping secrets. She doesn't let on to the Nurse why she wants to know who Romeo is, and then when she is on the balcony talking to Romeo after the party she acts as if she's still a good obedient girl, when the Nurse calls her and she calls to her, 'I come', when all the time she is planning how she can meet Romeo again, and even asking him to marry her!

Comment needs to be more developed, perhaps by discussing Juliet's words in more detail

Apt support for judgement of character

#### Examiner's comments

- This starts with a clear focus on the question and shows awareness of the relationship between Juliet and her mother at the beginning of the play.
- There is some use of apt reference to the events of the play to support the points made.
- To improve the grade, better use could have been made of the main quotation, by looking more closely at the impression it gives of the relationship between Juliet and her mother.

- More focused comments on Juliet's speech and behaviour would have improved this opening to the response. For example, thinking of other ways, as well as 'good' and 'obedient', of describing her.
- Additional close reference to actual text could be included.
- This is a grade C response.

### Extract 2 Grade A response

'I'll look to like, if looking liking move.  
But no more deep will I endart mine eye  
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.'

Clear focus, overview, evaluative

These words, spoken by the thirteen-year-old Juliet in response to her mother's suggestion (or order!) that she should marry 'the valiant Paris', would be typical of that of a daughter of that time, portraying Juliet as compliant and submissive to her parents' demands. The rhyming couplet and regular rhythm and rhyme used here almost give it a sing-song quality, as if Juliet had rehearsed what she says. As soon as Juliet falls in love at first sight with the gatecrasher Romeo, before she is even aware that he is of the age-old enemy Montague family, all that changes. Within hours, when she secretly meets Romeo after the party, in the balcony scene, she is fully prepared to forgo her family, '. . . be but sworn my love / And I'll no longer be a Capulet', in order to be with Romeo. Her rapidly developing maturity is evident in her confidence in proposing to, and offering to arrange, her marriage to Romeo:

Appreciation of style and effect

Tight summary of events/overview

'If that thy bent of love be honourable,  
Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow'  
Her earlier obedience to her mother is a distant memory, it seems, as she can now contemplate life with no one but Romeo.

Well-integrated reference

Point made and supported with evidence

#### Examiner's comments

- This answer really hits the ground running, with supported evaluation right from the start.
- The analysis of the stylistic features of the first quotation is detailed, astute, and appreciative.
- The response is confident and assured, and is concisely and clearly expressed, with not a word wasted.
- Quotations and details are blended into the text, showing high level of control of material.
- This is a grade A/A\* response.

## HOW TO SUCCEED IN OCR ENGLISH LITERATURE

The Shakespeare task in OCR English Literature will be tested by controlled assessment. This means that you will be required to write your essay on Shakespeare, in school, under controlled conditions using notes you have made earlier.

### THE TASK AND YOUR RESPONSE

- The task will ask you to show an understanding of Shakespeare's play by referring to particular scenes as they were acted and directed in either a film, staged or audio version of the play that you have watched or heard.
- Your teacher will know what the task is before you start to study the play and will give you advice on how much time you should spend preparing for it. (This time will include formal teaching, research, watching videos/live performance of the play, writing notes, etc.)
- In total, the final writing of the task is expected to take up to three hours and can be done over more than one session.
- Your final written response should be about 1,000 words.
- You will be allowed to have a clean copy, without annotations, of the play with you while writing your assessment. You can also refer to notes made in advance but these should be short bulleted points, not a full draft essay.

### HOW TO GET A GOOD GRADE

- Focus clearly on the terms of the question and ensure that any notes you have made also do this.
- Base your answer on the scene identified in the question but remember to show an understanding of its significance in the play as a whole.
- Show a thorough knowledge of the both the written text and the performed version by using quotations and close reference to details of the performance in your response, wherever relevant. Often short quotations are as effective as long ones, particularly if you embed them fluently into your writing.

#### Examiner's tip

This Shakespeare task is worth 10 per cent of your total GCSE English Literature exam, so it is worth working hard to get a good grade.

### ACTIVITIES

The following activities may help you prepare for writing your response. If possible, work in pairs or small groups so that you can discuss your ideas in full. Remember, you will know the task in advance so make bullet-point notes for reference for when you write your final essay.



**Activity 1**

Think about how the film/stage/audio version of *Romeo and Juliet* reflects or alters the view you formed from reading the text. For example, Baz Luhrmann's film is a very conscious attempt to put the play in a contemporary setting.

- List the main differences between the film and Shakespeare's text (e.g. the use of guns, video screens, etc.).
- Discuss how these modern additions alter the mood of the original play.
- How far do they fundamentally change the story and how far are they simply superficial changes?

**Activity 2**

Think of ways in which you could convert the scenes you are going to write about into your own immediate world.

- Think of characters you know who show the same characteristics as those in Shakespeare's play.
- Role-play or 'hot-seat' the scenes from the perspective of these contemporary characters.
- How does the film version help you to appreciate the complexities in the characters and their actions?

**Examiner's tip**

Remember, there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way for a Shakespeare play to be performed and produced. However, you must be prepared to justify your own opinions with close reference to the text and to the detail of the film/stage/audio version.

**SAMPLE CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT TASK**

Remind yourself of Act 1 Scene 5 and Act 2 Scene 2 in the text and in a performed version of the play.

Using these scenes as a starting point, explore how the characters of Romeo and Juliet are portrayed in the performed version(s) you have studied.

Here are extracts from essays by two students who had each watched the Baz Luhrmann film *Romeo and Juliet*.

**Extract 1 Grade C response**

Clear understanding of events; appropriate quotations

In Shakespeare's text Romeo first sees Juliet at Capulet's party and immediately falls in love with her. 'Did my heart love till now?' Tension is built up when Tybalt wants to challenge Romeo but is stopped by Capulet as Romeo is 'a virtuous and well-governed youth . . .'

When Romeo and Juliet meet they speak to each other in the words of a sonnet, which makes their meeting seem rather formal. In the second scene, Romeo has jumped into Juliet's orchard and overhears her confessing her love for him ('What's in a name?'). This leads to them exchanging vows and deciding to get married straight away.

The film version is different. At the start of the ball scene, a voice says 'Thy drugs are quick' which comes from somewhere else in the play; just like some modern parties there's a lot of drugs being taken.

More comment needed, rather than description

The next scene takes place in and around Juliet's swimming pool. The action is light-hearted as they both fall in while they're declaring their love for each other. This made me think that they're really just ordinary teenagers and made the thought of their deaths later in the play much sadder.

Could make more of this point

Shows some awareness of the rest of the play

**Examiner's comments**

- This response shows the candidate has a secure knowledge of the text of the play and what happens in it.
- There is a sensible use of appropriate quotations to support the account of the action and a sound awareness of the difference between the film and the original text.
- In order to reach a higher grade, the candidate would need to make more detailed comparisons between the original and filmed versions. He/she would need to link the comments to explain more fully how the two versions complement each other in showing the complexities of the characters and how different interpretations of them can shed light on the key issues of the play.
- As it stands, this is a grade C response.

## Extract 2 Grade A response

At the start of the scene in the film, a voice says, 'Thy drugs are quick'. This is a line taken from Romeo's last words at the end of the play, reminding the audience of the tragic outcome awaiting the two young lovers.

Good link to rest of play

Perceptive understanding of imagery

Juliet's angel costume suggests her purity and reinforces the imagery of light and brightness which is associated with her ('she doth teach the torches to burn bright . . . so shows a snowy dove . . .'). The film contrasts the innocence of the meeting between Romeo and Juliet with the coarser nature of the other characters - Tybalt's unpleasantness is emphasised by the devil's horns he is wearing.

Good, perceptive understanding of the play as a whole

The scene that follows allows the audience to take a different view of the characters from that which they may have gained from reading Shakespeare's text. It takes place mainly in Juliet's swimming pool (and not orchard). There is much comedy: Romeo appears rather accident prone and Juliet is portrayed as being very positive and independently minded - later in the play her strong will leads to her arguing with her father and agreeing to Friar Laurence's plan for her to feign death which ultimately leads to the tragedy of the two 'star-crossed lovers'.

Appreciates how costumes can emphasise key details of character

**Examiner's comments**

- This is a very good critical appreciation of well-selected details of the play and performed version.
- The candidate shows an excellent awareness of how the events of this scene relate to the wider issues of the play as a whole and of how the different versions emphasise and illuminate key points.
- There is a clear understanding of the text and perceptive explanation of how Shakespeare's language and imagery help to convey character.
- There is also clear explanation of how elements of the performed version (costumes, in particular) reinforce the effects of the language.
- This is a grade A response.