

'In dramatic construction there must be variation of pace and rhythm, monotony of any kind being certain to induce boredom.' Comparing at least two plays you have studied in the light of this statement, show how variations of pace and rhythm have been used to attract or heighten the interest of the audience.

Within Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, variations of pace and rhythm are utilized in order to attract or heighten the attention of the audience. However, in order to determine the manner in which variations of pace and rhythm affect the audience, interruptions to routines, the juxtaposition of calm and hysteria, the use of pace to reflect tension and the way in which structure influences the interest of the audience need to be taken into consideration.

Comment [K1]: Clear answer, although a little blunt. It would be better to have gone straight to 'How' rather than simply asserting that rhythm and pace do affect the interest levels of the audience

It is apparent that within both *The Crucible* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, variations of rhythm occur through disruptions to routines, thus evoking an emotional reaction from the audience. Throughout *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Williams employs the character of Blanche as a disruptive element which serves to increase the pace and rhythm of the play. Blanche's initial appearance is described as incongruous to the setting as she is daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace and earrings of pearl, white gloves and hat. Her entrance is seen to disrupt the friendly atmosphere and the presences of the dashes in phrases such as 'This . . . can this be . . . her home?' indicate her disbelief and somewhat superior manner thus, in turn, evoking a reaction of immediate dislike from the audience. Furthermore, Blanche's revelation that she lost Belle Reve serves to quicken the pace thereby indicating a change in the rhythm of the play. As a result of Blanche's statement, Stella states, 'Belle Reve? Lost, is it? No!' The presence of the rhetorical questions as well as the exclamation marks and short monosyllabic phrases serves to significantly increase the pace and therefore the tension felt by the audience as they realise the magnitude of Blanche's revelation. Furthermore, the abundance of exclamation marks and rhetorical questions following Stella's responses depicts the manner by which Blanche's presence disrupts the rhythm of the play, increases the pace and this alters the audience's perception of her.

Comment [K2]: Four clear points identified in the conclusions which are then used to structure the essay clearly

Comment [K3]: Use of key terms like rhythm and the use of 'emotional reaction' for interest shows that answer is clearly linked back to the question

Comment [K4]: Quotations used throughout and smoothly included

Comment [K5]: Evidence to establish this would have been good

Similarly, within *The Crucible*, a disruptive element emerges; however, in this case it is Abigail's hysteria which significantly alters the relatively calm mood and slow pace of the first Act. Abigail's proclamation, 'I want to open myself!' significantly alters the rhythm and immediately attracts the audience's attention. Paralinguistic features such as the fact that she rises, staring as though inspired indicate a distinct change in the positions of the characters as well as the pace in that a partial stream of consciousness of accusations ensues. These changes immediately attract the audience's attention and contrast with the previous monotony. Moreover, Abigail's accusations, 'I saw Sarah Good with the Devil! I saw Goody Osbourne with the Devil! I saw Bridget Bishop with the Devil!' have a similar sentence structure and thereby increase the pace of the play and may consequently cause the audience to vilify Abigail to a certain extent.

Comment [K6]: Literary features analysed in detail and linked to a relevant effect on the audience

Comment [K7]: 'The manner' is a little vague & it would be better to state precisely what manner exactly

Comment [K8]: Although probably acceptable this is not really the same as audience interest & which should be the focus throughout

Comment [K9]: Clear comparisons set up using appropriate connectives

Comment [K10]: Nice use of literary terminology

Comment [K11]: Clear focus back on the audience here

In addition, it is evident that Abigail's outbursts increase in frequency throughout the play and serve to fundamentally alter the outcome. Through phrases such as 'I know not. A wind, a cold wind, has come!' Abigail is able to redirect and suspicion felt towards her and thereby dash any hopes that the play's protagonists (e.g. Proctor) may have of success. Throughout Act III, these outbursts increase in frequency, hence enabling Abigail to systematically destroy any hopes felt by the audience thus increasing anger and resentment towards her. It is apparent that Miller utilizes these changes in pace and rhythm in order to induce a feeling of hatred towards Abigail and subsequently alter and manipulate the audience's feelings towards the Communist witch hunt during the 1950s.

Comment [K12]: I'm not sure it is obviously evident and so it would be a good idea to briefly list some of these outbursts as evidence

However, in contrast it is apparent that Miller utilizes the entrance of other characters, such as Proctor and Rebecca Nurse, in order to restore feelings of calm and reduce the pace within the play. The entrance of Proctor in Act I results in a distinct change of pace and a reversion to a degree of normality after Abigail's threat 'I can make you

Comment [K13]: This pretty much has to be mentioned, at least briefly, in any essay about 'The Crucible' but once again a clearer link to audience interest is needed here

Comment [K14]: Again, connectives link ideas in this essay together in a logical, clear and structure fashion. It would be good if it was made clear that this was another form of interruption

wish you had never seen the sun go down! Despite the sexual tension between Proctor and Abigail, the pace decreases, which is indicated by the absence of exclamation marks. Furthermore, the entrance of Rebecca Nurse decreases the pace. Through these changes in rhythm and pace, Miller emphasises the calming influences of Proctor and Rebecca and thereby evokes sympathy towards them from the audience. The audience thereby perceives these characters as more level headed and sensible amongst the hysteria thereby increasing the respect felt towards these characters and hence further criticizing the other characters.

Comment [K15]: There is an over-reliance on exclamation marks as evidence in this essay.

In addition, both Miller and Williams explore the juxtaposition of calm and hysteria through variations of pace and rhythm. Within *A Streetcar Named Desire* there is a distinct change of pace between the end of scene three and the opening of scene four. During Stanley's abuse of Stella a great degree of action and events occur thus increasing the pace. Furthermore, the sound of a blow and Stella's cry in conjunction with the ubiquitous exclamation marks within Blanche's speech in phrases such as *I want my sister's clothes! We'll go to that woman upstairs!* the pace is dramatically increased thereby attracting the attention of the audience and heightening their fear for Stella. This is juxtaposed with the opening of scene four during which the pace decreases and Stella is described as having an almost narcotized tranquility. This direct contrast of calm and hysteria serves to emphasise and draw the audience's attention to the difference between the two and instill a sense of hopelessness and uneasiness within the audience.

Comment [K16]: True however a link needs to be made between this and interest. Perhaps our sympathy for these characters captures our attention

Comment [K17]: This time a whole linking phrase is used to indicate that the essay is moving on to consider a second point of this is the second point from the introduction of excellent structure

Comment [K18]: Clear link back to the question

Similarly, within Act III of *The Crucible* there is a constant juxtaposition of calm and hysteria as Proctor's influence serves to decrease the pace of Abigail's cries and Corey's disbelief. This oscillation between calm and hysteria constantly changes the rhythm of the play thereby maintaining the attention of the audience and ensuring they remain enrapt.

Comment [K19]: Connective to join ideas within a given point

Comment [K20]: Some lovely vocabulary

Moreover, although both Miller and Williams use pace to alter the level of tension it is apparent that there is no clear correlation between the pace of a scene and the level of tension evoked within the audience. Within *A Streetcar Named Desire* the fast pace and, to an extent, immediate nature of Stanley's rape of Blanche reflects the manner in which a fast pace can induce a feeling of high tension. Blanche's repetition of the word *Oh!* in response to Stanley's accusations results in a fast paced dialogue between the two and may serve to evoke sympathy towards Blanche from the audience due to the fact that she is effectively rendered helpless. Furthermore Blanche's hysterical cries of *Stay back!* and *Some awful thing will happen! It will!* are filled with relatively short phrases with exclamation marks thereby increasing the pace as well as the tension felt by the audience.

Comment [K21]: Another linking phrase to introduce a new point of the third point from the introduction

In contrast, arguably the pivotal moment of *The Crucible* when Elizabeth agonises over whether to betray Proctor as a lecher is one of the slowest paced moments in the play. Throughout Elizabeth's speech there is the presence of breaks or dashes for example when she states *She were - before - glanc[ing] at Proctor for a cue* and *He -* as well as *Abigail Williams -* The presence of the dashes indicates a change in pace from the frantic accusations preceding it and the slow moving nature of the scene would be perceived by the audience through Elizabeth's constant glancing at Proctor for guidance. This slow moving pace also serves to attract the attention of the audience as it maintains a level of suspense and, hence, increases tension as the fate of many characters rests on Elizabeth's reply.

Comment [K22]: This is a nice complex point of that high pace does not necessarily equal high tension because slow paced scenes can create equally high levels of tension and audience interest

Comment [K23]: Multiple quotations to support points

Furthermore, the structure of the plays serves more clearly to alter the interest of the audience. *The Crucible* is seen to have a somewhat regular rhythm with each act building up to and ending on a tense moment. This is evident within Act II as the act focuses upon the relationship between Elizabeth and Proctor thus inducing feelings of normality amongst the audience. However, upon Cheever's arrival at the end of the act to take Elizabeth the sense of normality is disrupted and the pace increases, the audience's attention is thus attracted as Proctor proclaims *Now Hell and Heaven grapple on our backs and all our old pretence is ripped away.*

Comment [K24]: Again linking phrase to introduce the final point in the essay, which was also the final point in the introduction

This regular rhythm of a climax at the end of each Act is, however, interrupted in the last Act which encompasses numerous climactic events including Proctor's decisions to confess and immediate withdrawal when he states "I have given my soul! Leave me my name!" This change in rhythm immediately captures the attention of the audience and thus allows Miller to highlight the tragedy of the situation. Moreover, the fact that the play concludes with a break away from the general rhythm indicates Miller's message regarding the lack of hope and the consequences of the Salem witch hunt and hence, the 1950s Communist witch hunt.

Comment [K25]: The nature of this tragedy needs to be explained briefly

Comment [K26]: It is again unclear why a change away from the regular rhythm of a clear climax at the end of each Act would indicate a lack of hope. This point needs to be more clearly explained

In contrast, *A Streetcar Named Desire* has an irregular structure with continuous and unpredictable changes in pace and rhythm. However, the play is seen to be somewhat cyclical in that it concludes and opens with a relatively slow pace and the arrival and departure of Blanche. Williams employs this method in order to direct the audience's attention to the fact that the play itself is cyclical and the same events are likely to re-occur thus reinforcing the tragic element of the play. Moreover, the slow pace is seen to evoke feelings of uneasiness amongst the audience.

Comment [K27]: It is unclear how this valid point about a cyclical structure links to audience interest or indeed variations in rhythm. The fact that the variations in rhythm are unpredictable would have been a better basis for this point than the cyclical nature of the play as that could have been linked more clearly to the interest of the audience

Ultimately, it is apparent that both Miller and Williams employ variations in pace and rhythm in order to attract or heighten the interest of the audience. Through these variations, both playwrights are able to direct the audience's attention to their key messages and subsequently alter the audience's perception of prominent characters.

Comment [K28]: It would be better to focus here on the key issues addressed by the question of the interest of the audience, rather than the messages of the playwrights