

Paper 2 – Example Drama Question
Standard Level
May 2004

2b)

Through an analysis of some of the characters in two or three plays you have studied, compare the ways in which the struggle between internal and external forces is presented.

In Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, characters continually display conflict and struggle between internal forces which are their true feelings and motivations, or their individual sense of morality and integrity which opposes the external forces of society's rules and expectations as well as the reality which surrounds them. Such struggle between internal and external forces is illustrated through the use of themes, characterization, and tension.

A theme which clearly exemplifies such struggles is the idea of fantasies and dreams overriding the harshness of reality which is one of the most prominent themes of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Throughout the play, Blanche DuBois appears to be engrossed in her own fantasies in the hope of obscuring the biting truths of reality. Beauty is a façade which Blanche constantly wraps herself in by wearing costume jewellery and summer furs. Such elaborate clothing enables Blanche to maintain the hopeful dreams which reside within her as it gives the impressions of glamour and wealth. Having been raised in an aristocratic society, Blanche attempts to maintain this image despite her new and incongruous surroundings, being the slums of New Orleans. Additionally, Blanche's awareness of her slipping looks forces her to hide her age by either shying away from the merciless glare of light or by dampening it, as seen when she places the paper lantern on the bulb in the bedroom of the Kowalski household. This distortion of the truth, be it her appearance or age, illustrates the theme of fantasies overriding the gritty truths of reality and thereby presents the conflict between the internal and external forces of Blanche's actions. The significance of the costume jewellery suggests the frivolity of her nature, but also demonstrates the falseness of this beautiful and youthful pretence. This theme is reinforced by specific diction used to name Blanche's former home. *Belle Reve*, meaning beautiful dream in French, is based on a mortgage. Metaphorically, the loss of the house is also the loss of Blanche's reverie-like life within aristocratic society. Moreover, the use of the French language also suggests a romanticism of her internal nature which distances Blanche away from the unpleasant truths of reality.

In *The Crucible*, the theme of individuals fighting an unsurpassable force and power also embodies the struggle between internal and external forces surrounding characters. The protagonist, John Proctor, is constantly conflicted between his own individualistic sense of morality, contrasting to (and) that of Salemite society. Proctor faces unbeatable adversaries; however, he continues to fight both society and religion in the name of morality. Proctor is a rational character who sees the absurdity of baseless allegations. However, he is a single individual opposing the belief system in which a whole society is based, therefore he must approach the issue with caution. This is seen when Hale is investigating both Proctor and Elizabeth in Act Two. The basis to his judgement of whether Elizabeth can be seriously charged is how religious they appear to be. After asking several questions, Proctor is flushed with resentment but continues to try to smile. Although Proctor knows these questions are ludicrous, he continues to entertain Hale with his attempt to smile. The struggle between Proctor's internal conscience and external forces of society's expectations are evident with his uneasiness throughout the scene as well as the cold, resentful manner in which he addresses Hale.

Additionally, from an alternative interpretation, Abigail is also a character who is fighting an unbeatable force. From a feminist reading of the play, one may interpret Abigail's treacherous actions to be the result of desperation. Although

Comment [K1]: Clear focus on the question right from the start, although the length of this sentence is confusing

Comment [K2]: The OPs need to be outlined in a little more detail to avoid creating the impression of a cursory list.

The candidate also appears to have focused more on the way in which a sense of struggle is created and should instead have focused on the effect that the struggle is having as it is generally a good idea to move beyond simply how something is created to comment on why it is there and what overall effect this may have

Comment [K3]: Although the structure here is clear, the candidate has been asked to focus on characters rather than theme and so is missing the point of the question somewhat

Comment [K4]: This would have to just be -wraps because you use the -in later

Comment [K5]: Good precise quotation smoothly included

Comment [K6]: Good detailed evidence before this point and there is an attempt to link back to the question here, although the link to external forces could have been a little more clear.

Comment [K7]: -Dream like would probably be better although I can see that you are playing on the word -Reve we don't really use the phrase -reverie-like in English

Comment [K8]: Nice alternating structure and clear link back to the question

Comment [K9]: You can't really be -conflicted or he might -face constant conflict between

Comment [K10]: Such as if

Comment [Kev11]: Good, detailed references to the text

Comment [K12]: A stronger point that is more obviously related to the question about the struggle between internal and external forces

Comment [K13]: Good attempt to include this

Comment [K14]: Caused by what? You hint at this later but I think it should be made more clear

Proctor and Abigail's affair superficially seemed to be purely lustful and physical, Abigail may truly love Proctor as she says, "you loved me then and you do now!" The use of the exclamation mark and the monosyllabic words illustrate certainty and passion. Her fervent emotions oppose society's rules of conduct which prevents her from being with Proctor. Her actions which convey this theme clearly illustrate the friction between internal forces of desire and the external forces of society's beliefs, rules, and expectations.

Comment [K15]: Good specific analysis

Characterisation is another tool used to illustrate the struggle between internal and external forces. In "A Streetcar Named Desire" the character development of Stella Kowalski reveals her to be far more sympathetic than initially portrayed. In the first scene of the play, Stella appears to be part of a colourful, lively, and spontaneous life, with faint redolences of bananas and coffee and the sound of a tinny piano being played with the infatuated fluency of brown fingers. Such figurative language and rich imagery portrays the slums of New Orleans in an attractive and appealing light. Although she has a background obviously quite different from her husband's, Stella appears to be invigorated by her surroundings as she laughs breathlessly. She is freed from the restrictions previously imposed upon her within aristocratic society, now able to catch a breath.

Comment [Kev16]: Good link back to the question

Comment [K17]: Good structure and clear link back to the question

Comment [Kev18]: Good, smooth use of quotations throughout

However, as the play progresses, the audience becomes increasingly sympathetic towards Stella for she also appears to be trapped within her own idealistic fantasies feeling a need for a male figure in her life, values enforced by the patriarchal society of the 1940s. On the night of the poker game, Stanley becomes drunk and eventually beats Stella. She is then taken away to the neighbour's apartment. Despite the violent beating, Stella quickly returns to Stanley in an embrace with her eyes going blind with tenderness as she catches his head. This false reliance on Stanley and on the passion that he provides illustrates Stella's entrapment in such fantasies. The blinding tenderness may metaphorically reflect her inability to see the restriction of the lustful relationship she has with Stanley. The passion and vivacity of the coloured lights in their relationship overcomes the violence and crudeness of her life in the slums of New Orleans. Moreover, her actions are also influenced by external forces which exhibit her submissive and weak nature but create conflict. In the presence of Stanley, Stella attempts to adapt to the crude ways of the slums, but in the company of Blanche, Stella seems to regress back to her aristocratic ways as seen when she says, "Mr. Kowalski is too busy making a pig of himself - your face and your fingers are disgustingly greasy. Go and wash up and then help me clear the table." The imperative used illustrates her attempt to gain some control and power in the relationship. After commenting on the way in which he eats, Stanley reacts violently by hurling the plate to the floor and Stella begins to cry weakly. This sudden change in emotion clearly demonstrates the struggle between the internal forces and the external forces of Stella's character.

Comment [Kev19]: Correct paragraphing, even though this is the same point the paragraph is already long and the "However" indicates enough of a change in focus to justify the beginning of a new paragraph.

Comment [K20]: Is it false? Does she really have any other choice?

Comment [K21]: Interesting idea

Comment [K22]: Again a possibly a new paragraph here too

Conversely, in "The Crucible", the character Reverend Hale undergoes much character development which exemplifies the struggle between internal and external forces. The first mention of Reverend Hale describes him as a young doctor on his first call. However, he is scoffed at as his methods are depicted as painfully acquired - catchwords and diagnostic procedures [which can] now be put to use at last. It is evident that Miller initially portrays Reverend Hale in a foolish light, not to be taken seriously with the use of catchwords - further ridiculing the Salem witch hunts and by extension, McCarthyism. The opening portrayal of Hale is meant to symbolise those who thought it was patriotic and holy for a man to make such vengeful accusations.

Comment [K23]: This needs to be explained a little more. Exactly what does this show us about the conflict between internal and external forces

Comment [K24]: Again good clear structure and link back to the question

Comment [K25]: This needs to be explained a little more

However, as the play progresses, it becomes apparent that, unlike many other characters in the play, Hale changes as he is different now - there is a quality of deference, even guilt, about his manner now. At this point in the play, Hale is torn between his beliefs and the truth of the circumstance, illustrating the effect of the external forces upon his internal ideologies and beliefs. Such strain is seen again, as Hale is given certain stage directions of

Comment [K26]: Nice link back to the question and nicely expressed

leading and a great pain. This desperation and torment he suffers from is the struggle between what he used to so strongly believe in as opposed to the objective truth. Ultimately, Miller portrays Hale in a nobler light, having him openly denounce these proceedings then slam[ming] the doors behind him once Proctor is arrested. The action of slamming the door is an intense image, reflecting Hale's outrage and anger, as well as Miller's contempt of McCarthyism. Through this character development, Miller expresses how the internal forces of conscience and morality overcome the external forces of social expectations and belief. This struggle and friction is particularly significant as it is meant to provide inspiration for social reform in his contemporary circumstance.

Comment [K27]: Good analysis of specific features

The dramatic effect of tension is also employed in order to reveal the struggle between internal and external forces. Williams uses heightened emotions in order to create such tension in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Stella's entrapment within her own delusional fantasies becomes most apparent in the very last scene of the play as she attempts to negate the possibility of Stanley raping Blanche; she says, "I could not believe her story and go on living with Stanley". However, the syntax in this quotation suggests that there is a possible element of truth in Blanche's story and Stella subconsciously cannot deny this. As the scene develops, tension rises, with Blanche's hysteria and insanity becoming increasingly evident as echoes sound in threatening whispers. As Blanche is finally taken away by the doctor to the mental asylum, Stella watches her sister, sob[bing] with inhuman abandon with something luxurious in her complete surrender to crying. Such exaggeration of emotion does not only come from the loss of her sister, but also is derived from the guilt she feels of having sent her to the mental asylum, as well as the self-pity of having to live with a man who may well have raped her sister. The true events of the rape are the external forces causing friction with Stella's internal instinct to deny the allegations of Stanley raping her sister and are evident with this outflow of emotion with this intense ending to the play.

Comment [K28]: Exactly what reform is he referring to? The link to McCarthyism needs to be made clear

Comment [K29]: Once again, well structured

Comment [K30]: It is usually better to use simple and straight-forward language where possible. In this case, "denies" would be a much clearer choice here.

Comment [K31]: Exactly what is key about the syntax needs to be made clear or it seems to be the placement of "and go on living with Stanley" at the end which suggests its importance: it is as if nothing can be allowed to get in the way of this. Living with Stanley is a given and all else must fit in around this

This tension is also established through the use of violence in *The Crucible*. Mary Warren is a character who is constantly a victim of hostility and physical violence throughout the play. She is one of the girls who makes vengeful accusations against the other women of Salem with Abigail Williams. Since the beginning of the play, Mary Warren is subjected to Abigail's violent nature and it is clear that Abigail has authority and control over the rest of the girls as she is seen smashing [Betty] across the face. With the use of physical brutality, Abigail is vilified and is clearly identified as the play's antagonist. Once Proctor's wife is arrested at the end of act two, Proctor becomes determined to free his wife and expose the truth of the witch hunt by having Mary Warren testify against Abigail and the other girls. Although Proctor is the noble and heroic protagonist of the play, it appears that Mary Warren is forced to do so, just as she was to do Abigail's bidding, through the employment of violent threats. Proctor, grasping her by the throat as though he would strangle her, threatens Mary Warren, coercing her to tell the truth. Despite Miller's political message to promote what is moral and honourable, he also depicts the layman, being manipulated by fear and violence. For Mary Warren, the ethical and principled thing to do is no longer of significance, so long that she is able to protect herself from physical harm. In this particular context, it is evident that the external forces of society's domineering power over the individual is able to defeat the internal forces of conscience and individual's sense of morality, through the use of violence and fear.

Comment [K32]: This is the one opening sentence which isn't linked back to the question and, therefore, seems to go a bit off topic. Here the candidate seems to be talking about the role of violence or the ways in which tension is created rather than the struggle between internal and external forces.

Comment [K33]: Again a slight development of this idea would be good

Comment [K34]: There is, however, a clear link back to the question here.

Through the use of themes, characterisation, and the dramatic device of tension, both Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller are able to convey the struggle between internal forces and external forces which surround the characters of their plays. Although this struggle is often the conflict which develops the plot of the plays, it is also used to reflect the struggle between internal and external forces surrounding the audience, for this parallel is necessary in order to inspire and promote social reform.

Comment [K35]: This idea is rushed a little and needs to be more thoroughly examined