



Unit AS 1: Section B

The Study of Drama 1900-Present

Stewart: Men Should Weep

In this Unit there are 4 Assessment Objectives involved – A01, A02, A03 and A05.

A01: Textual knowledge and understanding, and communication

In this examination, the candidate should be able to articulate informed and relevant responses that communicate effectively knowledge and understanding of a selected play.

This AO involves the student's knowledge and understanding of the play, and ability to express relevant ideas accurately and coherently, using appropriate terminology and concepts. Quality of written communication is taken into consideration in all units.

A01: Stewart: Men should weep

Act One scene One

This play is set in the east end of Glasgow in the 1930s.

We are immediately introduced to Mrs Maggie Morrison, who is a weary mother of six and a carer for her elderly mother-in-law. The audience learn of her daily hardships as she struggles to feed and clothe her children. Nevertheless, she is a caring woman who prioritises her family and her responsibilities to them.

The Morrison's home is a hub of activity with boisterous children, demanding Granny and a steady stream of visitors.

Maggie's sister, Lily, is a frequent visitor to the Morrison home. She offers practical help with the children and often supplements the groceries; but she also offers advice to Maggie – often in a forthright and uncompromising manner.

The conversations between Maggie and Lily reveal the inner strength of Maggie as she defends her husband, her marriage, her children and her parenting skills in the face of Lily's criticisms. But we also learn that Maggie has difficulty in facing harsh truths. For



example, she is reluctant to bring her young son Bertie to hospital. She perhaps fears that Bertie's tuberculosis is fatal or that Bertie will be removed from the family home by the authorities.

From Lily's comments we learn that Maggie's eldest daughter (Jenny) is gaining a reputation in the neighbourhood for "rinnin aroon wi the lads" and that Maggie's eldest son (Alec) is a gambler, has violent tendencies and a history with the police. Lily and Maggie have an intensely loving sisterly relationship and Lily clearly wants the best for her sister. It is perhaps because of this that Lily is quite brusque with her brother-in-law, John Morrison. Lily blames John for the lack of money in the household and the squalor her sister and nieces and nephews have to live in. John seems willing to work but cannot secure a permanent job.

The neighbours, Mrs Harris and Mrs Wilson call to share the news that Alec and Isa's home has "collapsed" and the residents of their street have been evacuated. Maggie is immediately concerned about her son but John is less so. Maggie has to insist that John go to find Alec and offer him and Isa refuge in their home.

Maggie, despite having a generally good relationship with her neighbours, tries to confirm her superiority over Mrs Harris by asserting that young Mary Harris is not to play with her daughter Edie until Mary's alleged head lice have been cleared. Maggie regrets the offence she has caused as soon as the neighbours depart.

Act One scene two

John returns with Alec and Isa. Alec and Isa had been out dancing and drinking when the tenements on their street collapsed and they are quite drunk. Alec's declarations of love for Isa are rebuffed.

John seems to have little patience with Alec and is critical of his son. He is resentful that Alec needs to stay with them. John's insults about Alec are echoed by Isa who seems more interested in flirting with her father-in-law than dealing with her inebriated husband.

Once Alec and Isa are dispatched to bed, John and Maggie are left alone on stage. It is clear they have a strong and loving marriage. They confide in each other about their fears for the future and their concerns about their oldest children. John is very upset when Maggie reveals that Jenny intends to leave home. This news, and the fact that Jenny can be heard laughing with a man outside, provokes John to anger.

John interrogates the petulant Jenny about where she has been and who she has been with. The situation quickly escalates as father and daughter exchange insults. The hostility reaches a climax when Jenny announces her plan to leave the family home. John strikes Jenny, unaware that his younger daughters have been awoken by the argument. The scene ends with John silently brooding, unable to communicate even with Maggie.

Act Two scene one

A week later, the neighbours Mrs Harris and Mrs Bone are sitting with Granny while Maggie is at the hospital with Bertie. Maggie's sister-in-law, Lizzie, arrives to take



Granny back home with her. It is clear that Lizzie resents having to care for her elderly mother-in-law and is only doing so because of the promise of Granny's pension. Mrs Harris and Mrs Bone's comments reveal that Lizzie is materialistic and uncaring and has previously fallen under the scrutiny of the police for embezzling money. The neighbours leave shortly after Lily, Jenny, Alec and Isa return. Lily reprimands Jenny and Isa for their impudent and ungrateful remarks about living in the Morrison home; she also prevents Lizzie from taking food from the cupboards in lieu of Granny's pension money for that week. It is clear that Lily's priority is her sister and she will not sit back while others ridicule her or attempt to take advantage of her.

Granny pitifully admits that she does not want to leave Maggie, but Lily cajoles her to leave with Lizzie by listing the many other concerns and responsibilities that Maggie has.

As Granny and Lizzie prepare to leave, Maggie returns from the hospital, distraught. Lily is immediately concerned for her sister, who reveals that Bertie is to remain in hospital as he has tuberculosis. Alec shows his mother a little compassion but Jenny makes Maggie feel worse by confirming that she is still leaving because she refuses to live in such poverty. As Jenny opens the door to leave, John returns. Ironically he had delayed coming home to avoid seeing Jenny leave.

Lily ushers Alec and Isa out of the room so that Maggie and John can be alone. Maggie cries for Bertie while John grieves for the departure of Jenny. John's despair and regret at their impoverished life is foregrounded in the final, poignant lines of the scene: "Ye end up a bent back and a heid hanging in shame for whit ye canna help."

Act Two scene two

The action resumes one month later with Alec and Isa quarrelling about the fact they are still living with Maggie and John. Alec's solution to their lack of money rests with betting on the dogs and criminal activities. (It is revealed that the two have been mugging people.)

Isa's efforts to make Alec jealous result in him grabbing her by the throat, only to quickly apologise for his actions. Recognising that she has regained the upper hand, Isa continues to taunt Alec.

Maggie arrives home exhausted. Alec vents his anger at Maggie and defends Isa's idleness, before claiming that he is suicidal to secure his mother's affection and support. Maggie argues with Isa and the two exchange insults. Just as John returns home, Maggie slaps Isa. John seemingly defends Isa, which infuriates Maggie. In a heightened emotional state Maggie complains about her workload, especially in comparison to John who is still unemployed. John and Maggie continue to argue about Alec, and Maggie's favourable treatment of her eldest son. John and Isa are united against Maggie and so she leaves.

Alone, Isa flirts once again with her father-in-law, but John resists her advances. Edie and Ernest arrive home, ready for dinner. John tells them to tidy the flat. Maggie returns with provisions for the dinner. Noticing Ernest's scuffed boots, she berates him for his carelessness as they do not have the money to replace his footwear. Upset, Maggie leaves the room. John tries to placate the two younger children, who are clearly not used to seeing their mother so angry, with empty promises of a better life.



Having calmed down, Maggie re-enters the kitchen and apologises for her outburst, and the four eat their dinner.

Act Three

It is Christmas Eve. The stage directions indicate a financial improvement in the Morrison home: there is a wireless and Christmas decorations; Maggie has a new dress and Ernest has new football boots. Granny has also returned from Lizzie's.

John arrives home from shopping with a gift for Maggie – a red hat. John now has a job driving a van, and the Morrison household is much more optimistic and happy. The neighbours – Mrs Harris, Mrs Bone and Mrs Wilson – Maggie and Lily chat convivially for a while but there is an undercurrent of envy from the neighbours who have not failed to notice the extra money in the Morrison household. They discuss the fact that Bertie is still in hospital but Maggie insists that his health is improving. Alec returns home and seems agitated at not being able to find Isa. He is rude to the neighbours but Maggie defends his attitude.

When Alec leaves again to search for Isa, Maggie follows him out. In her absence, the neighbours Mrs Bone and Mrs Harris inform Lily that they have seen Jenny and that Jenny was “a right mess”. As Maggie returns she overhears Jenny's name being mentioned and she voices her wish that Jenny would call with them – especially now their circumstances have improved.

Maggie shows her appreciation to Lily for all of Lily's kindness throughout the years of hardship before the two sisters go shopping.

A little time later Isa returns to the tenement and packs her belongings. She is about to leave when Alec arrives. Alec is furious that Isa has been away overnight and accuses her of being with another man (Peter Robb). Isa confirms that she has been with another man and that she is leaving Alec. Alec responds violently – at first with a knife, then by choking Isa. He suddenly realises what he has done and begs Isa not to leave him. Isa says that she has invented her affair simply to motivate Alec “tae get a move on oot o this!” Alec is relieved and placated until he spies Isa's suitcase. Again, Isa convinces Alec that their marriage is secure but this is merely a ploy. When Alec is distracted, Isa trips him and makes her escape. Outraged, Alec pursues her, threatening to “get” both Isa and Peter Robb.

Maggie and Lily return from their shopping trip and quickly ascertain that Isa has deserted Alec. Lily finds the knife that Alec had but she hides it from Maggie and reassures her sister that Alec will be fine. Lily is furious that Alec has upset her sister but she tries to convince Maggie that Alec's poor behaviour is not a result of anything she has done as a mother. Maggie, however, is distraught and does blame herself despite Lily's attempt to comfort her. Once again Maggie thanks Lily for her ongoing love and support.

Jenny calls and Maggie is delighted to see her but scolds her for not making contact earlier. Jenny confides that she has had a tough time since leaving them (and even contemplated suicide) but is now living with a man who is “kind, an generous”. Jenny has been to visit Bertie in the hospital and knows that Bertie will not be allowed to return to the Morrison tenement – his release is dependent on them living in a damp-free Council house. Jenny has a plan for the family to rent a house until a Council



house is available and she produces cash to finance the move.

John returns but is standoffish with Jenny for the heartache she has caused by leaving. Jenny shares her plan for their new home but John declares that he will not be supported by his daughter's "whore's winnings". Jenny persuades her mother to admit the truth that Bertie won't be released from hospital until suitable accommodation is found – Maggie has kept this from John, apparently in denial herself.

John comes under attack for his refusal of Jenny's money, first from Lily, then from Jenny. Jenny cries that their reunion and her good intentions have not been as she had hoped.

In the final moments of the play Maggie, "(with uncharacteristic force)", contradicts John's decision and she takes the money from Jenny. Maggie makes it clear that they will move to the house that Jenny has promised. Defeated, John slumps into a chair and Jenny goes to comfort him. In spite of the truth of the words she had spoken to John, Maggie is full of remorse for their harshness.

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The portrayal of a working-class family's struggles in 1930s Glasgow is presented in a realistic way by Stewart. The Morrisons' money worries and family-related concerns are not of an epic nature; instead Stewart focuses on day-to-day concerns and conveys these in an authentic way. As a result, the audience is able to more easily identify with the characters and their situations. The characters for example, do not dream of fame or fortune or of social revolution – they simply aspire to a life which is a little better than their current situation.

Stewart's 1982 re-write offers a considerably more optimistic future for the characters than the 1947 original, yet tensions associated with poverty remain (e.g. domestic violence as shown through Mr and Mrs Bone; moments of intense despair as voiced by John and Jenny; conflict between John and Maggie). Nonetheless, the 1982 play ends with hints of future happiness and reconciliation. The audience are left with the image of Maggie smiling as she contemplates how her new home will not only ensure Bertie's return but it will also have "flowers come the spring!"

Characters

Maggie Morrison

In Act One scene one, the protagonist Maggie is presented as a hardworking and good-natured mother. Despite her impoverished life, she valiantly tries to maintain a positive spirit. She is physically and emotionally exhausted from the daily exertions of raising her family and looking after her ailing mother-in-law, yet she engages with Granny and her children in a caring way. When she reprimands her adolescent children, she does so with "slaps" and "clouts", but their lack of reaction indicates that they know they are loved. Maggie tries to protect her children from the bleak reality of their poverty by conceding to their demands of bread and "jeely", and encourages them to believe that their circumstances will improve: "Some day we'll hae a wireless, sonny."



This optimistic façade disappears when she talks with her sister: “Lily, money disnae stretch.”

The sisters are very close; they are honest – even blunt – with each other. Maggie’s gratitude to Lily for her support and assistance is clear but she refuses to allow Lily to denigrate her husband or how John approaches his family responsibilities. Maggie is intensely loyal to her husband and she defends him in his absence, even resorting to insulting her sister in an effort to silence her.

Maggie is a strong-minded woman, unafraid to argue with her husband. She is assertive and unwavering in her declaration that Alec and Isa will stay with them after their tenement has been destroyed, in spite of John’s protestations.

Maggie is dedicated to her family. She is regularly seen to be selfless if it means her husband or children will benefit. While she administers corporal punishment to Ernest and is frustrated with Edie and Jenny at times, there is no doubt that she loves her children unconditionally and feels enormous guilt for not being able to provide them with more material benefits. Maggie initially intercedes for her eldest daughter Jenny with John, even though Jenny’s behaviour is disappointing her, “Ye’re no tae be rough wi her, John” - but is notably silent when Jenny and John’s argument becomes more heated, allowing John to assert his paternal authority without interference. She has a special affection – verging on favouritism – for her eldest son Alec. Despite suggestions that Alec has a criminal or violent past, Maggie panders to her first-born child. If she acknowledges any of Alec’s current faults at all, she places the blame for them squarely on the shoulders of her daughter-in-law Isa, whom she seems to despise.

Maggie is visibly upset in Act Two scene one at Bertie’s diagnosis of tuberculosis and is almost catatonic by the time she returns home from the hospital. In spite of her devotion to her children, she is self-critical and admonishes herself for not taking better care of Bertie: “Tae think I ever grudged gettin up tae him in the night!” Bertie’s illness and Jenny’s departure from the family home reveal that Maggie is prone to optimistic delusion when situations become difficult. For example, she convinces herself that Bertie will be allowed home soon and that Jenny will visit them regularly.

Bertie’s stay in hospital adds to Maggie’s workload. By Act Two scene two she is trying to maintain her home, fulfil her responsibilities to the close, clean other people’s houses for much-needed income and attend to Bertie at the hospital. It is taking its toll and she is “dead beat”. This physical exhaustion goes some way in explaining her uncharacteristic outburst at John: “I’ve din a hale copper-fu o washin an scrubbed three floors an the hale lot o yous had naethin tae dae but lie in yer beds! Ye couldna even wash up a dish for me”, and similarly at Ernest: “Look at yer new boots! (*She seizes him, shakes him and hits him*) Ye’ve kicked the tae oot o them again! I’ll learn ye tae play fitba’ in yer best boots (*Crying hysterically...*).

The vulnerability and despair shown by Maggie at the end of Act Two is replaced with joy and enthusiasm for life at the start of Act Three. The transformation in their living conditions (by virtue of John’s employment) is reflected in Maggie’s upbeat demeanour: she is playful with Ernest and Granny, joking and singing; she is almost child-like in her glee at receiving her Christmas present from John; she is the generous hostess with her neighbours. Her happiness is marred, however, by the absence of Bertie and Jenny from her home.



Maggie's joy is short-lived as she is forced back to reality after a series of shocks. She frets that Alec may have attacked Isa when she discovers that Isa has left the tenement, and is cornered by Jenny into admitting that Bertie will not be discharged from hospital back to their current home. Meekly she listens to Jenny, John and Isa argue before finding her voice and settling their housing situation with an extraordinary show of strength. Her final speech of the play confirms her status as a formidable matriarch who will overcome any obstacle that stands between her and her children's happiness.

Lily

Maggie's sister, Lily, is an influential force and a familiar face within the Morrison household. The unmarried barmaid not only provides food and medicine for her sister's family but she also (and perhaps more importantly) provides a sympathetic ear for Maggie. The love and support she offers Maggie is beyond doubt but she is also quick to point out flaws in Maggie's home, Maggie's attitude to life and her child-rearing. Lily's criticisms, however, always indicate that Maggie's well-being is her central concern – e.g. “The way you rin efter they weans is the bloomin limit. Nae wunner y're hauf deid.”

Lily is pragmatic, even cynical at times. While Maggie tries to maintain a dogged sense of optimism, Lily has a more realistic view of circumstances. She can read situations well and knows when to be a calming influence. For example, she hides the knife Alec has used so that Maggie will not become more upset about what may have happened to her son, and gives Maggie reassurance and emotional support: “Naw, naw it'll be a right...Wee cup o tea, hen?” (*She holds out her arms and Maggie topples into them: they rock together soundlessly, Lily patting Maggie's back. After a moment, Lily sets Maggie gently back in her chair and smooths her hair and kisses her. Maggie is now composed.*)

Lily's relationship with John is strained. Again, because Maggie is Lily's priority, she judges John unfavourably because he is unable to provide adequately for his family, thus putting more pressure on Maggie. Lily openly questions John's work ethic and whether he has truly remained tee-total. Her cutting assessments of John create a little friction between the sisters, but Lily is always quick to recognise when her remarks upset Maggie and she backs off before any real damage to their relationship can be done.

Lily has an indomitable spirit. She is forceful – and a woman to be reckoned with. For example, she immediately reprimands Jenny and Isa for their “impudence” while they discuss Maggie; and she physically prevents Lizzie from pilfering the Morrison's larder. She can also organise and command others with ease, taking charge in difficult situations (e.g. when Maggie returns home from the hospital without Bertie).

When Maggie expresses her affection and gratitude for her sister's help, Lily is very modest about the role she has played in helping the Morrises for the previous two decades. Lily seems uncomfortable with the praise that Maggie gives her, believing that helping her extended family is her duty: “I'm yer sister, for Goad's sake!”; yet her ongoing feud with John reveals a different side to her character: “I've had tae fight hauf your battles for ye, John Morrison or the hale lot o ye would hae been oot on the street mair than once!”



John

In Act One scene one John is presented as a loving husband. We see his affection towards Maggie; they confide in each other; they support each other; they share little jokes and memories.

John is friendly and charismatic with the neighbourhood women. But this charm does not extend to his sister-in-law Lily, with whom he has an antagonistic relationship (perhaps because Lily will not let John forget his previous reliance on alcohol).

John's reaction to the news of the tenement collapse affecting Alec's home is unconcerned. His churlish concession to go and look for Alec and Isa, and his initial refusal to offer them refuge, indicate that John has a negative opinion of his first-born son. John makes it clear that he resents having Alec under his roof again. He orders, reprimands and insults his son in front of Maggie and Isa. There are hints that Alec has a criminal past, but John's attitude towards him reveals that John can be unforgiving.

John's sensitive side is foregrounded when he talks about Jenny. For example: "then she looks up at me wi that wee smile o hers and I can feel...I can actually feel ma heart turnin intae butter."

In a similar way to Maggie's favouring of Alec, John admits Jenny is his favourite, his "pet". He is devastated when he learns of her plan to leave home. His desire to protect Jenny and ensure that her reputation remains untarnished reveals how traditional a father he is. He is ineffective however, in making his eldest daughter obey him, which may imply that his attempts at discipline remain at a superficial level. The argument that he has with Jenny in Act One scene two shows the fiery side to his personality. But Jenny is victorious in the argument, primarily because she illustrates how John has failed her as a father. John cannot deny that his lack of steady employment has had a negative impact on his family, and this knowledge has contributed to his feelings of emasculation. He struggles with the reality that he is unable to fulfil the traditional role of provider for his wife and children: "I ken it's no tha hame for you yer Mammy an me would like" yet he strongly believes that his status as a man makes him superior: "I'm no turnin masel intae a bloomin skivvy! I'm a man!"

With the younger children John shows concern and a degree of tenderness. He tries to shield them from the fears he has for their financial future.

In Act Two scene one, John is reluctant to face the reality of Jenny's departure. His protestation that Jenny is "deid tae [him]" is his unsuccessful attempt to voice a strong patriarchal view but this is short-lived as he admits his love for Jenny, his heartache at her decision to leave the family home and his humiliation at failing his family with regard to being an effective breadwinner: "Every time I've had tae say 'no' tae you an the weans it's doubled me up like a kick in the stomach."

Despite his honest assessment of his own failings, he levels a hefty proportion of the blame at the government and their policies which have hampered his efforts to be a good provider: "A we've din wrong is tae be born intae poverty! Whit dae they think this kind o life dis tae a man?" John's political views are well-known in the family circle and while Maggie may agree with him, Lily is less willing to absolve John from his inability to provide: "Ach, I'm no wantin tae hear whit John says aboot they bliddy capitalists. I've heard it a."

John repeatedly expresses strong political views that reveal his anger at the



government's role in his impoverished lifestyle, but the fact that neither Jenny nor Lily accept his views perhaps hints that John is in denial and that he could triumph over the economic hardships with a little more effort.

John and Maggie may face their difficulties as a united partnership but this is because Maggie generally acquiesces to John's views. One matter about which they cannot agree is Isa. While Maggie holds Isa in contempt, John seems to enjoy the flirtatious attention that Isa bestows on him. John seems flattered – even blinded – by Isa's favourable attention, to the point where he scolds Maggie for slapping Isa. His defence of Isa could be interpreted as admirable because Isa is upset about the physical attack; or it could be interpreted as a sign of John's weakness because he has let his male ego supercede his loyalty to his wife. John's dialogue may tell Isa that he is committed to his marriage but the stage directions undermine his rebuttal of her advances: "*He smiles at her.*"

By Act Three John's devotion to Maggie has been reaffirmed. His level of self-confidence and male pride has vastly increased now that he has secured a permanent job. His Christmas gift to Maggie indicates the romantic facet to his personality, as Maggie later revealed that she wore a red hat when she and John were courting.

John's restored machismo is fleeting in Act Three. His assertions that they will not accept Jenny's money are quickly rejected by Maggie and Jenny. John's anger at the fact that the women are questioning his decision is clear – he retaliates with insults towards Lily and Jenny before aggressively defending his work ethic and devotion to his roles as a husband and a father. It is only when Maggie reveals that she knows that John has engaged in flirting with his daughter-in-law that John is defeated. The stage direction: "*John has sunk into a chair. He covers his face with his hands*" indicates John's shame and that Maggie has correctly identified his dishonourable actions.

In the final moments of the play, John is presented as a broken man. His silence and body language effectively articulate his disgrace and the audience are left with the hope that he will be reformed and that the Morrison marriage will continue.

The Themes

A number of themes will be noted in *Men Should Weep*. In the above summary some themes are touched on, and these and others may be further investigated.

For example, the theme of poverty touches the lives of all the characters and helps to shape and define their attitudes and responses to events.

Family relationships (marriages, parent/child, sibling) and the associated themes of love, respect, responsibilities etc. is also a major focus of the play. In studying this theme it may be useful to consider how the different gender roles impact on how the characters view family relationships.

Other themes which may be useful to consider are:

honesty vs deception

dreams and ambitions vs stark reality

acceptance vs denial or rejection (of fate, of what life has to offer)



A02: Dramatic methods

In this examination, the candidate should analyse the playwright's use of such dramatic methods as characterisation, structure, language and staging.

The student should analyse relevantly the ways in which meanings are shaped in drama. This means identifying dramatic methods and showing how these methods relate to the key terms of the question.

Discussing dramatic methods - advice to teachers and students:
As this section is closed book, examiners will be realistic about the amount of detail which can be provided. It is anticipated that the larger-scale features of characterization, structure, language and staging will be most useful in constructing a relevant response in the time available.

Staging

Stewart's numerous details about the set, costumes and props effectively create a claustrophobic, hectic and impoverished environment for the action to take place. For example, in the early scenes the Morrison home is described with purposeful detailing: *Nappies hang on a string across the fireplace and the table, dresser, etc. are in a clutter and A space has been cleared, centre, for a mattress on the floor with pillows, blankets, old coats. Maggie is making up this "bed" as well as she can.*

The costumes reinforce the level of poverty the children endure: *Edie...wears a miscellaneous collection of cast-off clothing... and the scuffed toe-caps of [Ernest's] boots...*

The use of asides or sotto voce comments offers insight into the character's thoughts, for example, when John speaks of Lily under his breath: "the interferin bitch. Nae wunner she couldna get a man."

Though employed sparingly, the use of song and music sometimes reinforces the mood of an episode. For example, in Act One scene one, Maggie instructs Granny to stop singing because she is weary, but by Act Three Ernest is listening to jazz music before Maggie sings along with Christmas hymns.

The use of a *deus ex machina* device is used to propel the action towards a happier, more hopeful outcome for the Morrison family. The money that Jenny offers her parents is a life-changing opportunity. This money has not been earned, however; rather it is a fortuitous result of Jenny's relationship with an older man.

Structure

The division between scenes and acts allows the audience to witness the intensity of the action and its consequences. For example, in Act One scene one John goes to search for Alec and Isa; the time shift in Act One scene two – *Some hours later* – lets the focus switch to their reception in the Morrison home. The tension between Maggie and Isa, and between John and Alec, and the flirtation between John and Isa in Act Two scene two are made more realistic because of the time-frame that Stewart applies. The quarrels and frustrations are a result of their cramped living arrangements for over a month.



Act Three is set at Christmas time but with no indication of how much time has passed since the end of Act Two. Because Bertie is still in hospital (but improving) we may assume the time shift is a few months. This temporal shift makes the beneficial changes within the Morrison home and lifestyle more plausible.

The ending of the play remains true to the realistic portrayal of working-class life in 1930s Glasgow in that the lives of the struggling characters are not transformed in an exaggerated manner. The authenticity of the denouement appeals to the modern audience who may reject an ending in which all of the woes of the characters are resolved.

Character interactions

This play is based on relationships: how relationships are tested; how relationships deteriorate; how relationships are restored or maintained. Therefore, how characters interact is an essential element to study. Stewart presents dynamic characters with multiple layers of personality. The audience gain insights into each character's development through the way he or she engages with the other characters. For example, Maggie's interactions with John and Lily emphasise different aspects of her character: with John she is generally loving, supportive and shows signs of vulnerability; in her conversations with Lily, she is generally strong and stoic despite the adversities she faces; her interactions with Isa and her neighbours reveal a very different side to Maggie's personality as we see her sneer at and undermine Isa, and demonstrate elements of haughtiness with the neighbourhood women.

However, Stewart also uses contrast tellingly in these interactions to deepen the characterization, for example when Maggie silences John at the end of the play. Other successful examples of this may be noted.

Language

Because of its localised setting, the language of the play is dominated by working-class Glaswegian dialect, colloquialisms and accent. The language which Stewart attributes to the characters contributes to their presentation. For example: Granny is often given language of self-pity; Jenny is often given language of ingratitude and language of ambition to overcome her present state of poverty; Lily's language is characterised by questions and commands which reinforce her strong and independent character traits yet she is also given soothing language when trying to reassure her sister. The ways in which these attitudes are mediated by the language used should be analysed.

The language in the play is realistic and helps to portray a 'real' family situation where mood can change in an instant because of familiarity, informality and a shared history.

Humour

Humour is also employed by Stewart, particularly in conversations involving Granny and Maggie, or when Maggie and Lily tease John about his "system" in Act One scene one. These humorous episodes provide the audience with some light relief but they sometimes precede or follow episodes of extreme tension and serve to heighten the pathos evoked.



A03: Contexts

In this examination, the candidate should demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which a play is written and received by drawing on appropriate information from outside the play.

No particular type of context will be stipulated in the question. However, contextual information which is made relevant to the key terms of the question will be rewarded. Students should be aware that little credit can be given for contextual information that is introduced merely for its own sake. They should remember that the text has primacy over the context. A good response will use contextual information sparingly and judiciously.

This information is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, but is intended as a helpful guide to teachers and students. It reflects some of the contextual areas which may be found useful. Remember the remarks above about balancing text and context in a response.

The play is set in Glasgow during the 1930s.

The city of Glasgow suffered disproportionately from the nation-wide depression of the 1930s.

Immediately following WWI there was an increase in the demand for ships. The Scottish shipbuilding industry, centred on the River Clyde, expanded rapidly to meet this demand, securing employment for thousands of working-class males in the Glasgow area. Competition from other countries, a lack of up-to-date technology, a questionable economic policy by the British government and the consequences of the Wall Street Crash (1929) combined to cause an economic and unemployment crisis in the 1930s. Traditional Scottish industries, such as shipbuilding, coal-mining, export of wool, etc. were devastated as a result.

For further information on unemployment and the economy in the 1930s, visit:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/alevelstudies/1930-depression.htm>

<http://www.theglasgowstory.com/story/?id=TGSED>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqpNcHTG4uM>

The first 3-4 minutes of this documentary which focuses on poverty in Britain in the 1930s, using Pathe newsreels, will help you visualise what life would have been like for the Morrisons and their neighbours.

The Depression also meant a fall in prices. Those who did secure a job with a good salary actually became quite affluent in this decade as food and other essentials were cheap to buy. At the end of the play, John has found employment in a job not linked to the traditional industries and so the future prospects for the Morrison family would be very good.

By 1933, one in three men in Glasgow was unemployed. Benefits for the unemployed were cut and investment in housing in Glasgow stalled as the country struggled during the Depression.



Overcrowding and unsanitary conditions in the slum tenements meant that diseases and infections spread easily. The NHS was not in place until 1948 and so health care was provided by religious and charitable organisations, which had limited resources to cope with the overwhelming number of people needing medicine and treatment.

Between the turn of the century and the 1930s, the role of women in British society had changed (they had more rights, they could vote, there were wider employment opportunities, etc.) but for working-class wives, such advances were of little benefit. When household income was meagre, a working-class housewife had to maintain her home, provide childcare and work. The longstanding stereotype of a subservient wife was, however, waning. Women demanded that their views be listened to and accepted, but men still occupied a superior position in most households thanks to a long history of patriarchy. For video clips and articles, see 'What did World War One really do for women?' at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z9bf9j6>

By the 1930s, women in Britain were becoming more independent. Around 15% of females did not marry¹ and took responsibility for the aspects of life that were traditionally undertaken by husbands (career, finances, etc.). For more information, see: http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/standard/history/scotland_britain_1880_now/employment_women/revision/3/

¹ The significant loss of life during the conflict of WWI undoubtedly contributed to this figure as over 700,000 young British men died during the war.



A05: Argument and interpretation

In this examination, the candidate should offer opinion or judgment in response to the given reading of the text, taking account of the key terms as the basis of the argument. This AO is the driver of Unit AS 1: Section B and is of primary importance.

A05 can be satisfied in full by the candidate developing his/her own reading in response to the given reading. If, however, critics are used, they must be:

- used with understanding;
- incorporated into the argument to reinforce or be seen as an alternative to the student's opinion;
- not used as a substitute for the development of the student's own opinion; and
- properly acknowledged.

Coherence and relevance of argument will be rewarded. Students should be aware of the importance of planning in the sequencing, development, and illustration of the reading they wish to put forward. They should also beware of the danger of replacing the key terms of the question with others of their own choosing which they assume mean much the same thing.

Specimen Question:

John is a typical head of the family of the 1930s.

With reference to the dramatic methods used in the play, and relevant contextual information, **show to what extent** you agree with the above statement.

In order to construct a meaningful and cogent argument (and to move beyond making simple assertions and offering unsupported opinions) students should use A02 and A03 elements to support and enhance their point of view. Convincing arguments will be based on a secure understanding of how Stewart has used dramatic methods (A02) to convey his message. Students will also encounter difficulties in presenting an argument which is focused on the stimulus statement without knowledge of the context(s) in which the play is set (A03).

It is not necessary for a candidate to fully agree or disagree with the stimulus statement. Indeed, it is likely that a sophisticated argument will negotiate a response to the key terms of the question in a more considered and tempered fashion than is suggested by the stimulus statement.

- Since "typicality" is open to interpretation, a working definition should be offered.

Contextual evidence is likely to focus on traditional gender roles and the impact of unemployment on one third of males in Glasgow in the 1930s. The Depression and unemployment trends forced females to take on more financial responsibilities within the household and made it probable that they would assert their rights to a greater degree than in previous generations. (Other contextual areas/information will of course be accepted provided relevance is demonstrated.)



- Through his character interactions with Maggie and Jenny, John tries to assert his authority as head of the family in line with traditional patriarchal views: “I’d an idea I wis the heid o this hoose.”
- John continues to impose his patriarchal authority as the head of the household even upon his adult children. For example, he reprimands Alec: “Mind yer langwidge; ye’re in ma hoose, no in a pub.”
- John is confident in his role as the head of the family in Act One. He assures Maggie that Jenny will abide by his command or suffer the consequences: “She’ll pay attention to me!” and “She’s ma lass, and it’s up tae me – aye and you – tae see that she behaves hersel!”
- Even in Act Three, following their estrangement, Jenny still views John as the head of the household. She tells Maggie: “We canna wait for a hoose frae the Cooncil... Ye’ve tae get ma Daddy tae speak tae them.”
- Maggie uses John as a threat to control her younger children when they disobey her, indicating that John is perceived to be the dominant parental force in the family as was traditional in early twentieth-century British society: “Dae whit ye’re telt or I’ll tell yer Daddy on ye.”
- John is aware that he is failing as the stereotypical head of the family with regard to providing financially for his family. He honestly confesses to Maggie: “A man’s got nae right tae bring weans intae the world if he canna provide for them.”
- John could be seen as atypical because his older children show growing signs of disobedience and disrespect towards him. For example, Jenny undermines his authority by engaging in backchat: “That’s a peety. I dae....Jist you try it!...Mebbe I wull...an mebbe I’ll no.”
- Temporal shifts show John at various levels of success in fulfilling the typical role as head of the family. At first he is unemployed and unable to provide financially but in Act Three he is able to provide gifts and security to his loved ones.
- Use of commanding, forceful language, as expected from a traditional head of a 1930s family: “Shut up harpin on that string...Shut yer mouth or I’ll shut it for ye!”
- Use of angry insults when his role as the respected head of the family is questioned: “Haud yer rotten tongue, ye frozen bitch!”
- Use of simile to convey his disappointment in not being able to fulfil his role as an effective provider for his family could be interpreted as atypical: “Every time I’ve had tae say ‘noo’ tae you an the weans it’s doubled me up like a kick in the stomach.”
- John’s language of self-recrimination which indicates he is fully aware that he has failed in his responsibilities as the head of the family could be interpreted as atypical and sensitive: “An I couldna mak enough tae gie her a decent hame.”
- John’s status as the head of the household, and the respect for his position and opinion, is reflected in the stage direction: (*The others wait for him to speak*).



- John's silent defeated body language in the denouement may present him as weak and atypical.

Activities

- Familiarise yourself with the main industry of early twentieth-century Glasgow by reading about Glasgow's shipbuilding history: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-24820573>
- Read the research on family life in 1960s Britain and compare to earlier decades to identify trends: <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/happy-families-history-and-policy>

Links

- For a brief overview of the play (playwright, characters, themes, plot, etc.) visit BBC bitesize: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/z66tyrd>
- To gain a sense of the setting, costumes, accent, etc. view the National Theatre of Scotland's trailer for their production of Men Should Weep: <https://vimeo.com/42208477>
- Gain insight into characterisation by watching the interview with actors playing the roles in the National Theatre of Scotland's performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXcR3eyl9PM>
or Leittheatre's production: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJwYflIT1cA>
- View clips of a Men Should Weep production by the Griffin Theatre: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HsUGtCkZHfU>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=608MZWK_PKk
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fz1tI2oQkYU>
- Watch the interview with the set designer of the National Theatre of Scotland's performance to learn about the importance of set design and props: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlVo3DzLcD4>
- For help with the Scottish dialect, search the meaning of words at: <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/>