

This is an extract question. The passage will be printed on the paper. It is a closed book exam. The question will be:

Explore the significance of this extract in relation to the tragedy of the play as a whole.

Remember to include in your answer relevant analysis of Shakespeare's dramatic methods.

What you have to do:

- Respond to the extract in a tight and detailed way, and relate your observations about aspects of tragedy to the rest of the play
- The *significance* of the extract is asking you to explore potential meanings, not to evaluate how important the passage is.
- The act and scene reference is printed at the end of the extract, so look here first. Then spend time thinking and annotating before you start to write.
- The extract has its own mini narrative, dramatic and tragic trajectory. You should write about this, and use it as a springboard to see how it links to the bigger whole
- Think about how the passage begins and ends, whether it contains a crisis, climax or critical moment, and how it contributes to the overall tragedy.
- You should know the play so well that you can see the structural relationship between the extract and the part of the narrative that has come immediately before and immediately after it.
- Make sure introductions and conclusions are not vague or empty – gain some marks
- The extract must be the central part of the answer. There is no directive as to how much time is spent on other parts of the play. Connections need to be sharp and obvious.
- Dramatic methods and contexts should be seamlessly integrated into your essay
- You must use quotes from the extract. Quotes are also expected from the rest of the play, but close textual reference is also fine. Quote marks should only be used when you are certain the quote is accurate.

To be successful in this question you need to:

- Know "Othello" really well
- Understand how different aspects of tragedy work in "Othello", and write about the specific aspects which link to the question. These will be in the passage and they should connect to the wider play. Do not just write everything you know about tragedy.
- Make good choices about what to write – there is not time to write everything
- Do not use critical ideas unless they develop your argument
- You do not need to refer to your wider knowledge of literature, or to compare texts
- Have the confidence to think for yourself, and respond independently and creatively
- Write in a clear, structured and accurate way

Introduction: put the extract in context of the whole play

- Establish an overview of the extract, taking note of its shape and the dramatic, narrative and tragic development. This will anchor the rest of your answer
- Identify where the passage is from in the play, and how it fits in to the overall structure
- Identify which part of the tragedy it is
- What is the function of this part of the play?
- Is it leading up to something significant/dramatic?
- Is it the repercussion/aftermath of something?
- Is it a crisis point/climax?
- How does the audience feel at beginning of scene – what has just happened? What are we expecting?
- Is it a scene full of tension?

Include methods, with a particular focus on dramatic method:

- Make sure you are seeing “Othello” as a play to be performed on the stage
- Write about how the play has been shaped by Shakespeare. You could include structure, voices and settings. How does Shakespeare position the audience?
- Examiners don’t really like in depth discussion of single words
- Some ideas for methods:
 - Dialogue
 - Soliloquy, asides
 - Entrances and exits
 - Timing
 - Physical actions – e.g. kneels, strikes, falls in a trance
 - Props
 - Setting
 - Positioning on the stage
 - Dramatic irony
 - Exchanges between characters
 - Semantic fields, imagery, motifs, symbolism
 - Mood and tone and how they change
 - Prose/verse
 - Stage directions
 - Crisis points
 - Climax
 - Beginning and ending
 - Progression/development/perpetuation of/intensifying of/ increase in
 - Length of speeches – balance of lines
 - Sentence types/structures
 - Contrast/juxtaposition
 - Foreshadowing

Include context:

- Write about contexts that emerge from the passage and which are set up in the questions. Don’t add random, unrelated historical or biographical details. Don’t force in material that doesn’t link to the question.
- Avoid generalisations and sweeping comments such as, “An Elizabethan audience would have been shocked ...”

Some possible contexts:

- The tragedy- where is it in the tragedy, how does it contribute to the tragedy?
- Key features of tragedy: villain, hero, victim
- Setting – in place/time
- Production
- Reception
- Women
- Race
- Society/social standings of characters/hierarchy/patriarchy
- relationships

Conclusion

- Why is this extract so important?
- What will happen as a consequence of this scene?
- What is Shakespeare’s purpose – what does he want to highlight? How does it advance the progress of Othello’s downfall

