

English A: Literature – Standard and Higher Level – Predicted Paper 1 Model Answers

Higher Level: 2 hours 15 minutes

Standard Level: 1 hour 15 minutes

Instructions to candidates:

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Use the guiding question provided or propose an alternative technical or formal aspect of the text to focus your analysis.
- **Higher Level:**
 - Write a guided analysis of text 1 *and* text 2
 - The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[40 marks]**.
- **Standard Level:**
 - Write a guided analysis of *one* of the following texts.
 - The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[20 marks]**.

Write a guided analysis of the following text.

1. The following is an extract from *The Glass Menagerie*, a play by Tennessee Williams.

(**Scene:** The Wingfield apartment in St. Louis. It is early evening. A dim, nostalgic light covers the room. LAURA sits alone, polishing a tiny glass unicorn. From the kitchen, AMANDA's voice drifts in, tinged with anxiety.)

AMANDA (off-stage): Did you remember to brush your hair, Laura?

LAURA (softly): Yes, mother.

(**AMANDA** enters, wearing a faded but flamboyant dress. She carries a tray with two cups of chamomile tea.)

AMANDA: Your hair looks nice. But that dress again? Honestly, Laura. You have a whole closet.

LAURA: I like this one. It feels like me.

(A pause. **AMANDA** sits across from her daughter, observing her intently.)

AMANDA: You know, you should try to shine a little more. People like brightness. And you, well—

LAURA (quietly): I don't want to be bright. I just want to be... safe.

(**AMANDA** sips her tea, masking disappointment.)

AMANDA: Safety is not what I dreamed for you. I see you with gentlemen callers, with music playing, the room full of laughter—

LAURA (cutting in): That's your dream, Mother.

(A long silence. The unicorn catches the light and scatters tiny rainbows onto the worn wallpaper.)

Legend:

- Symbolism
- Stage Directions / Setting Imagery / Visual Contrast
- Amanda's Controlling Dialogue / Projected
- Laura's Vulnerability / Emotional Honesty / Resistance
- Emotional Tone / Subtext / Non-Verbal Tension

– How does Williams use setting and dialogue to explore the emotional distance between the characters?

Essay Outline

Introduction

- **Introduce context:** Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* is renowned for its poetic stage directions and emotionally fraught family dynamics.
 - **Focus on the question:** In this extract, Williams explores the emotional distance between Amanda and Laura.
 - **Thesis:** Williams uses symbolic setting, conflicted dialogue, and stylistic contrast between Amanda's romanticism and Laura's realism to expose the emotional rift between them—where imposed dreams, rather than uniting, isolate.
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Body Paragraph 1: Setting as Symbolic Framework

P – Point:

Williams uses symbolic stage directions to highlight the emotional disconnection between Amanda and Laura.

E – Evidence:

The “dim, nostalgic light” evokes a mood of fading memory and emotional ambiguity. Laura “polishing a tiny glass unicorn” symbolises her fragility and preference for fantasy over reality. Amanda’s voice, “tinged with anxiety,” introduces tension even before she appears.

E – Explanation:

The lighting reflects Amanda’s fixation on the past, while the glass unicorn metaphorically represents Laura’s delicate, isolated world. Amanda’s off-stage presence suggests her emotional dominance and Laura’s desire to retreat.

L – Link:

Through layered visual and aural detail, Williams sets up a world in which two emotional realities coexist but never truly connect.

Body Paragraph 2: Amanda's Dialogue – Control and Projection**P – Point:**

Williams uses Amanda's dialogue to show her attempts to control Laura and project her own ideals onto her daughter.

E – Evidence:

Amanda says, "Your hair looks nice. But that dress again?"—a juxtaposition of praise and critique. She urges Laura to "shine a little more," using a metaphor for visibility and success.

E – Explanation:

The interrogative tone and imperatives signal Amanda's dissatisfaction and desire to shape Laura into a socially desirable image of femininity. The metaphor of "shine" reveals her belief in outward performance over inner truth.

L – Link:

Williams thus characterises Amanda as emotionally blind, seeing not her daughter's true self, but a vessel for her nostalgic dreams.

Body Paragraph 3: Laura's Dialogue – Vulnerability and Emotional Resistance**P – Point:**

In contrast, Laura's dialogue reveals her vulnerability and subtle defiance, emphasising her emotional distance from Amanda.

E – Evidence:

Laura replies, "I like this one. It feels like me," and later confesses, "I just want to be... safe." Her interjection, "That's your dream, Mother," marks a rare moment of self-assertion.

E – Explanation:

The simple language and ellipses reflect Laura’s gentle identity and difficulty expressing emotion. Her interruption signals a tonal shift—using the possessive “your” to separate Amanda’s dreams from her own.

L – Link:

Laura’s quiet resistance underscores the incompatibility between her desire for protection and Amanda’s push for social visibility.

Body Paragraph 4: Closing Stage Direction – Visual Metaphor for Disconnection**P – Point:**

The final stage direction symbolically encapsulates the unresolved emotional distance between mother and daughter.

E – Evidence:

“The unicorn catches the light and scatters tiny rainbows onto the worn wallpaper.”

E – Explanation:

The “tiny rainbows” evoke fleeting beauty, while the “worn wallpaper” suggests deterioration and disappointment. The preceding “long silence” enhances the sense of impasse and isolation.

L – Link:

Williams uses this visual metaphor to suggest that emotional connection remains out of reach—projected, refracted, but never solidified.

Conclusion

- **Restate thesis:** Through symbolic setting, emotionally charged dialogue, and contrast in tone and diction, Williams reveals how unmet expectations and projected dreams fuel emotional isolation.

- **Conclude on broader theme:** In *The Glass Menagerie*, dreams do not offer escape but entrapment, creating barriers between people who yearn to connect but fail to truly see each other.

Model Answer

Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* is renowned for its lyrical stagecraft and emotionally charged relationships. In this extract, Williams masterfully uses both **setting** and **dialogue** to foreground the **emotional distance** between Amanda and her daughter, Laura. Through **symbolic stage directions**, **contrasting diction**, and **tonal shifts**, Williams captures the **strained dynamic** of a mother who dreams vicariously through her daughter and a daughter who quietly rejects those dreams.

To begin with, Williams establishes emotional disconnection through a carefully constructed setting imbued with symbolism. The opening stage directions depict “a dim, nostalgic light” bathing the room, immediately evoking a sense of **fading memory** and **emotional ambiguity**. The term “**nostalgic**” signals Amanda’s **fixation on an idealised past**, while the **dimness** suggests the **obscured emotional clarity** between mother and daughter. Further symbolism is introduced through Laura’s action: “**polishing a tiny glass unicorn.**” The **unicorn—delicate, rare, and otherworldly**—functions as a **visual metaphor** for **Laura’s fragility and isolation**. By placing her in this moment of **quiet, meticulous care**, Williams characterises her as **withdrawn** and **invested in fantasy**, emotionally distant from Amanda’s **urgent realism**. In contrast, Amanda’s off-stage voice—“**tinged with anxiety**”—immediately injects **tension** into the atmosphere, revealing her **controlling presence** before she even enters the stage. This layering of **visual and aural elements** creates a setting where **two emotional worlds coexist but never truly meet**.

Williams further uses dialogue to illustrate Amanda’s persistent attempts to mould Laura into a version of femininity that aligns with her own past ideals. Amanda’s comment—“**Your hair looks nice. But that dress again?**”—contains a **juxtaposition** of faint praise and criticism, signalling her **dissatisfaction** with Laura’s choices. The **interrogative tone** implies Amanda’s **disapproval**, and her emphasis on **material appearance** (“**You have a whole closet**”) reflects her belief in **outward presentation as a gateway to social success**. Her dialogue is peppered with

imperatives and suggestions—“**you should try to shine a little more**”—which reinforce her need to **control and improve** Laura. The **metaphor** of “**shine**” symbolises **brightness, confidence, and visibility**—qualities Amanda deems essential but which Laura does not embody. Williams thus uses Amanda’s **diction** to reveal her **emotional blindness**: she sees Laura not as she is, but as a **vessel for her own aspirations**.

In contrast, Laura’s speech is defined by softness, hesitation, and emotional honesty, deepening the sense of disconnection between the two. Her reply, “**I like this one. It feels like me,**” employs **simple and personal language** that asserts a **gentle self-identity**. The **declarative statement** is quiet but firm, indicating Laura’s **resistance to Amanda’s expectations**. When she later says, “**I don’t want to be bright. I just want to be... safe,**” the **ellipses** reflect her **vulnerability** and **difficulty in articulating** her feelings. The contrast between Amanda’s push for “**brightness**” and Laura’s longing for “**safety**” underscores a **fundamental emotional divide**. While Amanda equates **visibility and charm with success**, Laura yearns for **invisibility and protection**, signalling their **incompatible emotional needs**.

This emotional tension culminates in Laura’s rare moment of interruption, which Williams uses to dramatise her inner defiance. Amanda’s nostalgic monologue—“**I see you with gentlemen callers, with music playing, the room full of laughter**”—is an example of **heightened, romanticised imagery**, saturated with the **dreamscape of Amanda’s Southern belle past**. Her use of the **future tense** (“**I see you...**”) reveals her **inability to accept the present**, projecting **fantasy onto Laura**. However, Laura’s sharp interjection—“**That’s *your* dream, Mother.**”—uses **emphatic stress and italics** to **reclaim agency**. This line marks a **tonal shift** from **passivity to confrontation**. The pronoun “**your**” acts as a **boundary marker**, delineating Laura’s **identity from Amanda’s desires**. Williams thereby punctuates the emotional gulf with a moment of **linguistic resistance**, signifying Laura’s **suppressed independence**.

Finally, the closing stage direction serves as a visual metaphor for the **unresolved emotional tension**. “**The unicorn catches the light and scatters tiny rainbows onto the worn wallpaper.**” Here, Williams **juxtaposes beauty and decay**: the “**tiny rainbows**” evoke **fragile wonder**, while the “**worn wallpaper**” hints at

decline and disillusionment. This contrast symbolises **Laura's inner world—subtle, shimmering, and misunderstood—projected onto a deteriorating emotional environment.** The “**long silence**” that precedes this image reinforces the emotional impasse between mother and daughter. The **setting** thus not only frames their emotional distance but also **visually reflects the impossibility of reconciliation.**

In conclusion, Williams's use of **symbolic setting, conflicting dialogue,** and **stylistic contrast** between Amanda's **romanticism** and Laura's **realism** brings the emotional rift between the characters to life. Through **nuanced shifts in tone, metaphor,** and **stagecraft,** the playwright underscores how **dreams, when imposed rather than shared, can isolate rather than unite.** The extract becomes a **microcosm** of the broader play, in which **memory, fantasy, and identity collide—leaving connection just out of reach.**

Write a guided analysis of the following text.

2. The following is an extract from *The Year of Magical Thinking*, a memoir by Joan Didion.

I remember the blue notebook, spiraled, bent at the corners, left on the kitchen table beneath a wine glass still half full. It was the day after John died, and I had yet to touch his shoes, to fold his shirts. I was writing then—

Not because I knew what to say, but because if I didn't, something inside would loosen, fall, dissolve. It was a kind of holding on. Each word like a finger curling around the edge of the world.

I had thought of grief as a clean wound, something the body could process. But it was more like smoke in the lungs, or sand in the bloodstream. It collected in corners, in the muscle memory of a reaching arm or the sudden expectation of a voice in the next room.

On the street, people walked their dogs. A boy biked past me with laughter trailing behind. The world was intact. But I—

I was not.

Even now, I write to contain the echo. To make his absence tangible. To remind myself that once, just once, I was whole.

Legend:

- Metaphor for Grief's Physicality
- Concrete Setting and Object Detail
- Emotional Rupture / Grief / Disintegration of Self
- Symbolism / Emotional Metaphor / Attempt to Cope
- Juxtaposition with the Outside World / Disconnection

– Explore how Didion conveys her experience of grief in this passage.

Essay Outline

Introduction

- *Context:* Joan Didion's memoir recounts her response to the sudden death of her husband, John Gregory Dunne.
 - *Focus:* This extract captures the immediate aftermath of loss.
 - **Thesis:** Didion conveys her experience of grief as a disorienting, physical, and fragmented state through vivid sensory imagery, metaphor, tonal contrast, and fragmented syntax that mirrors the disruption of her inner world.
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Body Paragraph 1: Sensory Detail and Symbolic Objects Ground Grief in the Everyday

P – Point:

Didion begins with precise, visual detail to show how grief is embedded in the ordinary.

E – Evidence:

“blue notebook, spiraled, bent at the corners,” and *“wine glass still half full”* alongside *“I had yet to touch his shoes, to fold his shirts.”*

E – Explanation:

These objects are relics of life before death, evoking a surreal stillness. The visual focus suggests that **Didion clings to material surroundings** to avoid confronting the abstract finality of loss.

L – Link:

By anchoring her grief in mundane items, Didion makes the intangible nature of mourning **feel tactile and immediate**.

Body Paragraph 2: Metaphors and Similes for the Physicality and Uncontainability of Grief**P – Point:**

Didion uses vivid metaphors to convey grief as something **physically invasive and uncontrollable**.

E – Evidence:

“Not because I knew what to say... something inside would loosen, fall, dissolve.” and “Each word like a finger curling around the edge of the world.”

E – Explanation:

The metaphor of **dissolution** shows her fear of emotional collapse, while the simile of writing as *“a finger curling”* reflects the fragility of her grip on reality. Grief is not linear or clean—it’s **scattered, atmospheric**, like *“smoke in the lungs, or sand in the bloodstream.”*

L – Link:

These metaphors reveal grief not as a single event, but as a lingering presence that **permeates her body and mind**.

Body Paragraph 3: Fragmented Syntax Mirrors Emotional Disintegration**P – Point:**

Didion uses fragmentation in syntax and structure to reflect **emotional rupture** and disorientation.

E – Evidence:

“The world was intact. But I— / I was not.” and “Even now, I write to contain the echo.”

E – Explanation:

The dash and line break after “/—” visually represent her brokenness. The repetition of “/” without resolution mirrors her **fragmented identity** post-loss. Her later phrase “*to contain the echo*” shows writing as a **desperate attempt to hold onto what has disappeared**.

L – Link:

Through these stylistic choices, Didion **embeds the texture of grief** into the form of her writing itself.

Conclusion

- *Restate thesis:* **Didion crafts grief not as an emotion, but as an engulfing force—uncontainable, unpredictable, and physically embodied—through poetic imagery, metaphor, and fragmented structure.**
- *Broader reflection:* Her writing becomes both an expression of suffering and an act of survival—a **way of holding on to meaning after loss has ruptured the world.**

Model Answer

Joan Didion conveys her experience of grief as fragmented, disorienting, and deeply embodied. In this passage from *The Year of Magical Thinking*, she uses **symbolic domestic imagery, fragmented syntax, and extended metaphors** to express the overwhelming emotional and physical effects of losing her husband. Didion's grief is shown to be not a process with a clear beginning and end, but an all-consuming presence that disrupts time, memory, and identity.

Didion first uses vivid sensory imagery to convey how grief freezes time and distorts reality. The objects described—the “**blue notebook, spiraled, bent at the corners**” and the “**wine glass still half full**”—are ordinary, yet loaded with emotional weight. These details function as **symbols of absence**, capturing the suspended reality in which she finds herself. The fact that she had “**yet to touch his shoes, to fold his shirts**” illustrates how grief causes **paralysis**, preventing her from engaging with even the most routine acts. This moment is intimate and personal, heightened

by the use of **first-person narration**, which draws the reader into Didion's **internal world of stunned stillness**.

She further explores her emotional fragmentation through her use of **syntax and figurative language**. Didion writes that she continued writing not out of certainty but because **"if I didn't, something inside would loosen, fall, dissolve."** The **triplet of verbs**—each denoting a gradual collapse—mirrors her internal disintegration. She clings to language as a survival mechanism, captured in the simile: **"Each word like a finger curling around the edge of the world."** This image suggests that **writing becomes a lifeline**, a way of preventing emotional freefall. The **metaphorical edge** here represents the precipice of despair, highlighting how precarious her emotional state truly is.

Through extended metaphor, Didion redefines grief not as something clean or finite but as **invasive and lingering**. She initially imagines it as **"a clean wound,"** but this is swiftly corrected: **"It was more like smoke in the lungs, or sand in the bloodstream."** The metaphorical shift from a visible, treatable wound to **invisible, invasive substances** like smoke and sand suggests that grief cannot be neatly processed or healed. Instead, it **permeates the body**, as shown in the line: **"It collected in corners, in the muscle memory of a reaching arm or the sudden expectation of a voice in the next room."** Here, Didion reveals that grief **lives in reflexes and routines**, haunting her in daily moments where John's absence is most felt.

Didion also conveys the isolating nature of grief through stark juxtapositions between her inner turmoil and the external world. She notes how **"people walked their dogs"** and a boy **"biked past me with laughter trailing behind,"** underscoring the normalcy of life for others. The sentence **"The world was intact. But I—"** ends with a dash, a **typographical break** that symbolises her inability to finish the thought, and by extension, her inability to rejoin the world. The broken sentence conveys the emotional rupture between herself and reality; while the world continues, **she remains suspended in loss**.

Finally, Didion reflects on grief as an echo—something intangible, yet ever-present. She writes, **"Even now, I write to contain the echo. To make his**

absence tangible.” The **metaphor of the echo** conveys a sense of emptiness and repetition—his death reverberates through her life. Her desire **“to make his absence tangible”** paradoxically highlights the intangible nature of grief: she is trying to give form to something invisible. The final line, **“to remind myself that once, just once, I was whole,”** conveys profound emotional rupture. The **repetition of “once”** suggests finality and loss of identity, as if the person she was before her husband’s death is gone.

In conclusion, Didion conveys her experience of grief as a **deeply destabilising, bodily, and isolating force**. Through the interplay of **symbolism, metaphor, and syntax**, she illustrates how grief alters perception, memory, and even selfhood. Rather than presenting grief as a stage to be passed through, she reveals it as a haunting presence—one that lingers in the most mundane corners of life.