

IGCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE REVISION

These are basic suggestions about how you should use the notes you have taken to prepare for possible questions. In the end your notes (along of course with those in the text in the case of *Much Ado*) and your knowledge of the texts will be most important, enabling you to make connections and draw together ideas and examples to support your points. You must always do this: the tendency in the Mock and in some of the other work done has sometimes been to do well on ideas but not so well on detail or support.

Remember you have **two** papers, one based on the three texts and the other an unseen passage for analysis. In the texts paper you have a choice, with the Shakespeare and the Novel, of a passage based or essay question. The equivalent in the poetry is a given poem. **You have to do one passage question** in this paper.

POETRY. You should read through all the notes given you and prepare for further discussion of the poems next term.

MUCH ADO

The ideas and themes listed under essay questions below are of course relevant to whatever kind of answer you choose: passage and character based essays included.

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

You should choose a number of significant scenes or parts of scenes in the play and apply to them analysis of character, language, situation etc so as to be prepared for any direction a question may take, which may be character or situation or idea based (see below under essay questions for some of these). Even if you do not succeed in spotting an exam passage, the practice will be invaluable. Remember in the Shakespeare that you **MUST** make a study of language, always related to what you are being asked: tone, choice of vocabulary, imagery, verse or prose and why, rhythm and so on. Also see how the passage might fit into the way in which the character or idea uppermost in it fits into the play as a whole. The question may actually invite this, but you should not ignore it – though equally you should not allow it to take precedence over close analysis.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

These could be character or idea based or a mixture of the two- well, any question is going to involve both anyway as characters embody ideas.

CHARACTER BASED:

Here you need to look at the notes in the edition of the play and also at your own notes. Make a list of relevant and important quotations for each character: this will enable you to fix what they are like, what they stand for, how they affect the play. See how they fit into the ideas of the play and its themes, some of which are listed below under essay questions. See what characteristics they have, of course, but also look at how their speech may be characteristic of them. Do this for all the major characters but don't forget the others: remember the 'Clown' figures and the irony that it is they who lead to the discovery of the plot. What does that tell us?

THEME OR IDEA BASED

There are any number of possible ideas which could be the basis for a question or form part of a character based question. Some of these are obvious:

1. **Love and relationships:** this would involve the obvious contrast between the two central love relationships in the play: Cl. and Hero fall in love at first sight but are torn apart by deception and the gulf which often exists in this play between seeming and reality. Their language is conventionally that of romantic youth, Hero the yielding and quiet (though remember where she shows she has spirit too, even quite early on in the masque sequence) and Claudio the passionate young lover. Remember that frailties in this are exposed quite early on when Don Pedro is wooing Hero for his friend. Contrast this with Beatrice and Ben. who, whether they had a relationship in the past or not, begin the play sharpening their wit on one another, to a point where Beatrice, especially, since she tends to win their exchanges can be quite cruel (find examples). However, from the beginning they share an intellectual level and language so that perhaps we are less surprised that we might be when they are persuaded by others that they are in love. That achieved, they face the tragedy which the play nearly becomes by making serious choices ('Kill Claudio'). There is a firm basis in the end which is ironic since their initial discovery of their love was formed through a (jovial) deception. There are other kinds of love in the play too: think about these:- father and daughter (though see what happens during IV-i) and between friends of the same gender. See what these may have to tell you.

2. **The place of women and men:** Are the values different? Compare parallel scenes. Compare the attitudes of men and women to love, to honour (remember Kill Claudio again- is that motivated by love or honour?) Overall and in detail, note how important and defining language and especially wit are in this play. How do the women fare in this? Give examples. Hero is the quieter and more yielding, but she shows spirit in various scenes: find them. Look at the 'lesser' women too. But of course Beatrice, with her wit, her boldness (see scene with Don Pedro) and her refusal to fit into conventional love patterns or admit the superiority of men, lies at the heart of any question based on this idea. Look for relevant quotations. Look too at the men: Don Pedro and his wit game with Beatrice, for instance. What about Ben. and Claud.?

3. **Seeming and Reality:** of course Don John's plotting is at the heart of the main nearly tragic plot, and his plotting is made convincing enough for us to be able to accept, to a point, how Don Pedro and Claudio are convinced. But this is not the only example in the play, either in the masque scene early on or in the wooing of the supposed Hero later. See how the other love relationship is ironically brought about by deception and overhearing (and note, with regard to the play's patterns and structures, how often overhearing and spying are used throughout both plots. In this play does anyone know what they really are, or can be?

4. **Pride, Honour, Jealousy, Passion** are all linked: look at how important pride is to Don John throughout (and jealousy or at least envy too), but also to Don Pedro and Claudio in IV-i (and to Leonato too). Given that, how honourable is their behaviour, even given what they believe?

When we come to Ben. and Beatrice they also defend their pride against one another, one more successfully than the other, but they do seem to shed it quite readily when they overhear things about one another and themselves. What does a comparison of the two love relationships say about love at first sight and passion as opposed to something else?

These are just a few examples. Think of some more ideas and themes for yourselves.

Look in all these cases for quotations, particular scenes, and how these ideas, themes and qualities drive the plot. By the end, what does the play seem to be saying about any of them?

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE.

The ideas and themes listed under essay questions below are of course relevant to whatever kind of answer you choose: passage and character based essays included.

PASSAGE QUESTIONS:

You should choose a number of significant or important passages in the novel and apply to them the kind of analyses we have done in class. A passage question, as you have seen, is likely to direct you in a particular way, so you need to be prepared for that. Of course you need to know and evaluate the importance of the given passage in terms of plot, idea and character but it is essential (as it is in essay questions) that you should also consider reaction, speech, dialogue, and so on and also the way in which these are presented. How does the author manipulate our reactions? Is the way characters speak very significant (it is bound to be) – or the way they move? Consider how speech and thought might reflect on one another. Is there any description of place, and if so is it relevant to any ideas the question might give rise to? Remember that in these questions you should pay particular attention to language, not just that of the characters but also of the author.

Also see how the passage might fit into the way in which the character or idea which is uppermost in it fits into the novel as a whole. The question may actually invite this, but you should not ignore it – though equally you should not allow it to take precedence over close analysis.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

You can approach these in various ways to prepare for possible essay questions (you have past questions already). Though the possibilities are divided up into Character, theme and so on below, remember that they are not at all mutually exclusive: character and theme are of course always mutually intertwined and many of both characters and themes are reflective of one another..

CHARACTER BASED

You already have an essay set on the role and function of Wickham in the novel, which should enable you to tackle any kind of question about him.

Consider other characters in the same light: in each case see

1. How the character is used to affect the plot line and whether this has any meaning or message for us:

2. How he, she or they reflect and embody any of the values of the novel either negatively or positively.. See below for some of these.

3. How the character is used to influence the reader; how are they made sympathetic or otherwise? Look at their attitudes, their language, how they are compared with one another. Does any of this change at any point in the novel?

It would be a good idea to choose a number of the more prominent characters and apply these questions to them (remember to consider as well as the obvious Elizabeth, Darcy, Jane and Bingley such characters as the Bingley sisters, Charlotte, the Rosings family, Mr and Mrs Bennet, Mr Collins, the Gardiners and Mrs Phillips and perhaps even others).

IDEA OR THEME BASED

There are many possibilities here: I will include just one or two: you can think of others yourself. Questions are likely to run along lines asking how Jane Austen discusses the importance of.....

For example:

1, Marriage

2. Pride and Prejudice, Emotion and Reason.

2. Social divisions

3. The place of women

4. Families (The Bennets, the Lucases, the Bingleys, the Darcys)

5. Money.

You should be able to think of others yourself.

Below are some considerations which might arise when thinking about the first two of these:

1. **Marriage:** consider how this is presented as the only real option for the women of the novel. Compare those marriages based on love and mutual respect (Jane and Bingley, Elizabeth and Darcy) with Charlotte's, based on need, with Lydia's, based on social necessity, with Mr and Mrs Bennet's, originally based on her attractiveness and liveliness but not on any mutual compatibility or interests, and so on. What part has love in all this and what is Jane Austen saying about it? How ruthlessly realistic is she about the place of money? Consider the various points in the book where this is raised, for instance the situation of the Bennet girls, or the consideration given to Wickham's motives when he turns towards Miss King, or Col Fitzwilliam's opinion that a younger son has no option but to marry for money. Think also about why Charlotte sets out (against all delicacy etc) to capture Mr Collins despite all his unfortunate qualities, and Elizabeth's appreciation of Pemberley. What part do reason and moderation and taste have to play in the various marriages in the book and how far does Jane Austen think these are a necessity for complete happiness (though if she does, she is also realistic enough to note how either because of character or circumstance, they is not always possible).

2. **Pride and Prejudice, Feeling and Reason- not always linked, but easy to deal with together**
here: this is likely to lead you into a character discussion of course, but it need not be limited to Darcy and Elizabeth (nor, in their case, as we have discussed, is the pride all Darcy's nor the prejudice all Elizabeth's). Where do we find the kind of pride which Jane Austen would appear to endorse? Look at Elizabeth's pride in Darcy's behaviour in a recently discussed episode. How far can pride lead to positive behaviour- how far, for instance can Wickham or Lydia be said to be lacking in proper pride and self regard? On the other hand, Darcy's pride in family leads him to disregard the positive qualities of Elizabeth earlier on, though this soon begins to change. And how proper or otherwise is his action in separating Bingley from Jane? Is that based on pride? And so on.....Similarly, prejudices of various kinds abound in the novel: Elizabeth leaping to believe Wickham is one obvious instance, and might make us think that Jane Austen is warning us against relying too much on immediate impressions and on feelings and instincts, especially as this happens in a novel where Mrs Bennet operates entirely on prejudices without any thought or consideration at all- witness the changeability of her opinions about Bingley and Darcy, and even about Lydia. At the other extreme, on the one hand you have Mr Bennet, who is so ironically aware of people's shortcomings that he has largely withdrawn from feeling and indeed from much of life except insofar as it affords him amusement, until he learns better. Charlotte in a different way makes a thoughtful sacrifice of her feelings for financial and social security. What is Jane Austen saying here? Consider other instances where characters illustrate other aspects of this: what of Mary who finds it possible to make moral pronouncements about Lydia's situation without any apparent family feeling at all. Consider Jane and Bingley who are so lacking in any kind of prejudice and, especially in Jane's case, so determined to think well of people that she sometimes seems to fight her reason to maintain this state of mind.

In any of these always remember you should consider the means the author uses: as well as anything mentioned above, look at the vocabulary used, especially Jane Austen's use of irony.

If you need more, there are some websites, some more helpful than others. One which seems simple but sound is to be found on the BBC site.