

**Shakespeare and Selected Dramatists of his Time (EN2L6/EN3L2)**  
**First Assessment: Close Reading Exercise (2023/24)**

This assignment has two parts. Having selected **ONE** of the extracts offered,

**First**, provide a gloss on the text, giving citations for every word, phrase, allusion, image or concept that needs explicating for a reader in 2023-4. This section counts for 40% of the final mark for this first assessment.

**Second**, provide a close, theatrically informed, interpretive reading of the extract. This section counts for 60% of the final mark for this first assessment.

**Word count:**

- **2500 words in total** for intermediate-year students (EN2L6)
- **3000 words in total** for finalists (EN3L2)

All word counts are subject to the usual +/-10%.

In **the first part of this exercise** you will be assuming the role of a textual editor or a theatre director, both of whom need to know the precise meaning of every word in a speech or scene and need to be able to convey that meaning in a concise gloss. Your gloss can be presented as a list of citations followed by annotations, keyed to line numbers in the extract. Here is an example, taken from *Hamlet* (third Arden edition, edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor), 2.2.484 passim:

484 **God buy** goodbye

485 **peasant slave** class-based self-insult

486 **monstrous** unnatural, shocking

487 **But** merely

493 **Hecuba** Priam's wife, queen of Troy, whose grief came to epitomise tragic sorrow.

498 **General** universal

498 **Horrid** causing horror (a stronger meaning than the modern one; see horrible at 1.5.80)

You may also want to write longer discursive glosses to some words, providing not just a definition of a word but indicating its larger reference or suggestiveness throughout the play.

Online resources you will find helpful in compiling your glosses include: the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), *Early English Books Online* (EEBO), *Literature Online* (LION),

the Shakespeare Concordance. Please don't confuse the *OED online*, available via the University Library catalogue, with its smaller printed brethren! In addition, you can consult dictionaries of Biblical and Classical allusion, and dictionaries of phrase and fable. You'll probably want to start this exercise by looking at the glosses that you find in your own Norton edition of the complete works, an edition that is only lightly annotated, or the Oxford World's Classics edition of Webster's plays. You will need to expand your annotations. Consulting glosses in other single-play editions – such as Arden, Cambridge, or Oxford for Shakespeare or New Mermaids for Webster, for example – will give you additional material. Any gloss that you quote directly from one of these sources should be properly referenced. Your annotated extract should be provided with its own bibliography, providing full references to all the sources you have used to prepare it.

In the **second part of this exercise** you will be writing discursively, producing a short essay which offers a reading of the extract as a theatrical text. Here, you will consider some or all of the following: the relationship between the writing (language, imagery, formal qualities) and the stage spectacle; the range and interplay of styles; the dramatic contours of the sequence as a whole; the use made of the physical resources of the stage; and the function of the extract in the play as a whole. Secondary sources that you use for this part of the exercise should be cited in the normal way, and the essay should be provided with its own bibliography.

**A note on the extracts:** The extracts provided differ in some details from your editions. You may comment on these differences if you think they are significant. All the punctuation in the extracts is modern, and you are welcome to disagree with it. The stage directions which appear in the extracts are taken from the very earliest printed versions of the plays. All stage directions added by modern editors have been removed so that you can form your own opinions about what the words imply.

## **EXTRACT ONE: *Macbeth*, Act 3, Scene 4, lines 33-123**

**LADY MACBETH** My royal lord,  
You do not give the cheer. The feast is sold  
That is not often vouched, while 'tis a-making, 35  
'Tis given with welcome. To feed were best at home;  
From thence the sauce to meat is ceremony:  
Meeting were bare without it.  
*Enter the Ghost of BANQUO and sits in MACBETH's place.*

**MACBETH** Sweet remembrancer.  
—Now, good digestion wait on appetite,  
And health on both.

**LENNOX** May't please your highness, sit. 40

**MACBETH** Here had we now our country's honor roofed,  
Were the graced person of our Banquo present,  
Who may I rather challenge for unkindness  
Than pity for mischance.

**ROSS** His absence, sir,  
Lays blame upon his promise. Please't your highness 45  
To grace us with your royal company?

**MACBETH** The table's full.

**LENNOX** Here is a place reserved, sir.

**MACBETH** Where?

**LENNOX** Here, my good lord. What is't that moves your highness?

**MACBETH** Which of you have done this?

**LORDS** What, my good lord? 50

**MACBETH** Thou canst not say I did it.  
Never shake  
Thy gory locks at me!

**ROSS** Gentlemen, rise. His highness is not well.

**LADY MACBETH** Sit, worthy friends. My lord is often thus  
And hath been from his youth. Pray you, keep seat. 55  
The fit is momentary; upon a thought  
He will again be well. If much you note him,  
You shall offend him and extend his passion.  
Feed, and regard him not.  
Are you a man?

**MACBETH** Ay, and a bold one that dare look on that 60  
Which might appall the devil!

**LADY MACBETH** Oh, proper stuff!  
This is the very painting of your fear;  
This is the air-drawn dagger which you said  
Led you to Duncan. Oh, these flaws and starts,  
Impostors to true fear, would well become 65  
A woman's story at a winter's fire,  
Authorized by her grandam. Shame itself!

Why do you make such faces? When all's done,  
You look but on a stool.

**MACBETH** Prithee, see there!  
Behold, look, lo! How say you? 70  
Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.  
If charnel houses and our graves must send  
Those that we bury back, our monuments  
Shall be the maws of kites.

**LADY MACBETH** What, quite unmanned in folly? 75

**MACBETH** If I stand here, I saw him.

**LADY MACBETH** Fie, for shame!

**MACBETH** Blood hath been shed ere now, i'th' olden time,  
Ere humane statute purged the gentle weal;  
Ay, and since, too, murders have been performed,  
Too terrible for the ear. The times has been 80  
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,  
And there an end. But now they rise again,  
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,  
And push us from our stools. This is more strange  
Than such a murder is.

**LADY MACBETH** My worthy lord, 85  
Your noble friends do lack you.

**MACBETH** I do forget.  
— Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends.  
I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing  
To those that know me. Come, love and health to all;  
Then I'll sit down. Give me some wine; fill full. 90  
*Enter Ghost.*  
I drink to th' general joy o'th' whole table  
And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss.  
Would he were here! To all and him we thirst,  
And all to all.

**LORDS** Our duties and the pledge.

**MACBETH** Avaunt, and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee! 95  
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;  
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes  
Which thou dost glare with.

**LADY MACBETH** Think of this, good peers,  
But as a thing of custom; 'tis no other,  
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time. 100

**MACBETH** What man dare, I dare.  
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,  
The armed rhinoceros, or th' Hyrcan tiger!  
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves  
Shall never tremble. Or be alive again, 105  
And dare me to the desert with thy sword.

If trembling I inhabit then, protest me  
The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow,  
Unreal mock'ry, hence!

Why, so. Being gone,  
I am a man again. —Pray you, sit still. 110

**LADY MACBETH** You have displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting  
With most admired disorder.

**MACBETH** Can such things be,  
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,  
Without our special wonder? You make me strange  
Even to the disposition that I owe, 115  
When now I think you can behold such sights  
And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks  
When mine is blanched with fear.

**ROSS** What sights, my lord?

**LADY MACBETH** I pray you, speak not; he grows worse and worse.  
Question enrages him. At once, good night. 120  
Stand not upon the order of your going,  
But go at once.

**LENNOX** Good night, and better health  
Attend his majesty.

**LADY MACBETH** A kind good night to all.

*Exeunt LORDS.*

**EXTRACT TWO: *The White Devil*, Act 3, Scene 2, lines 51-151**

**MONTICELSCO:** I shall be plainer with you, and paint out  
Your follies in more natural red and white  
Than that upon your cheek.

**VITTORIA:** O you mistake.  
You raise a blood as noble in this cheek  
As ever was your mother's. 55

**MONTICELSCO:** I must spare you till proof cry whore to that.  
Observe this creature here, my honoured lords,  
A woman of a most prodigious spirit  
In her effected.

**VITTORIA:** Honourable my lord,  
It doth not suit a reverend Cardinal 60  
To play the lawyer thus.

**MONTICELSCO:** O your trade instructs your language!  
You see, my lords, what goodly fruit she seems;  
Yet like those apples travellers report  
To grow where Sodom and Gomorrah stood, 65  
I will but touch her and you straight shall see  
She'll fall to soot and ashes.

**VITTORIA:** Your envenomed  
Pothecary should do't.

**MONTICELSCO:** I am resolved  
Were there a second paradise to lose,  
This devil would betray it.

**VITTORIA:** O poor charity, 70  
Thou art seldom found in scarlet.

**MONTICELSCO:** Who knows not how, when several night by night  
Her gates were choked with coaches, and her rooms  
Outbraved the stars with several kind of lights,  
When she did counterfeit a prince's court? 75  
In music, banquets and most riotous surfeits  
This whore, forsooth, was holy.

**VITTORIA:** Ha? Whore? What's that?

**MONTICELSCO:** Shall I expound whore to you? Sure I shall,  
I'll give their perfect character. They are first,  
Sweet-meats which rot the eater; in man's nostril 80  
Poisoned perfumes. They are cozening alchemy,  
Shipwrecks in calmest weather! What are whores?  
Cold Russian winters, that appear so barren,  
As if that nature had forgot the spring.  
They are the true material fire of hell, 85  
Worse than those tributes i'th' Low Countries paid,  
Exactions upon meat, drink, garments, sleep;  
Ay, even on man's perdition, his sin.  
They are those brittle evidences of law  
Which forfeit all a wretched man's estate 90  
For leaving out one syllable. What are whores?  
They are those flattering bells have all one tune,

At weddings, and at funerals; your rich whores  
Are only treasuries by extortion filled,  
And emptied by cursed riot. They are worse, 95  
Worse than dead bodies, which are begged at gallows  
And wrought upon by surgeons to teach man  
Wherein he is imperfect. What's a whore?  
She's like the guilty counterfeited coin  
Which, whosoe'er first stamps it, brings in trouble 100  
All that receive it.

**VITTORIA:** This character scapes me.

**MONTICELSCO:** You, gentlewoman?  
Take from all beasts, and from all minerals,  
Their deadly poison.

**VITTORIA:** Well, what then?

**MONTICELSCO:** I 'll tell thee;  
I'll find in thee a pothecary's shop 105  
To sample them all.

**FRENCH AMBASSADOR:** She hath lived ill.

**ENGLISH AMBASSADOR:** True, but the Cardinal's too bitter.

**MONTICELSCO:** You know what whore is: next the devil, Adult'ry,  
Enters the devil, Murder.

**FRANCISCO:** Your unhappy  
Husband is dead.

**VITTORIA:** O he's a happy husband 110  
Now he owes nature nothing.

**FRANCISCO:** And by a vaulting engine.

**MONTICELSCO:** An active plot:  
He jumped into his grave.

**FRANCISCO:** What a prodigy was't  
That from some two yards' height a slender man  
Should break his neck!

**MONTICELSCO:** I'th'rushes.

**FRANCISCO:** And what's more, 115  
Upon the instant lose all use of speech,  
All vital motion, like a man had lain  
Wound up three days. Now mark each circumstance.

**MONTICELSCO:** And look upon this creature was his wife.  
She comes not like a widow; she comes arm'd 120  
With scorn and impudence: is this a mourning habit?

**VITTORIA:** Had I foreknown his death as you suggest,  
I would have bespoke my mourning.

**MONTICELSCO:** O you are cunning.

**VITTORIA:** You shame your wit and judgment 125  
To call it so, What, is my just defence  
By him that is my judge called impudence?  
Let me appeal then from this Christian court  
To the uncivil Tartar.

**MONTICELSCO:** See, my lords,  
She scandals our proceedings.

**VITTORIA:** Humbly thus, 130

Thus low, to the most worthy and respected  
Lieger ambassadors, my modesty  
And womanhood I tender; but withal  
So entangled in a cursèd accusation  
That my defence of force, like Perseus, 135  
Must personate masculine virtue. To the point!  
Find me but guilty, sever head from body ---  
We'll part good friends. I scorn to hold my life  
At yours or any man's entreaty, sir.

**ENGLISH AMBASSADOR:** She hath a brave spirit. 140

**MONTICELSCO:** Well, well, such counterfeit jewels  
Make true ones oft suspected.

**VITTORIA:** You are deceived;  
For know that all your strict-combinèd heads,  
Which strike against this mine of diamonds,  
Shall prove but glassen hammers: they shall break. 145  
These are but feignèd shadows of my evils.  
Terrify babes, my lord, with painted devils;  
I am past such needless palsy. For your names  
Of whore and murd'ress, they proceed from you,  
As if a man should spit against the wind, 150  
The filth returns in's face.



### **Extract 3: *Hamlet*, Act 4, Scene 2, lines 1-98**

*Enter HORATIO, and a GENTLEMAN.*

**QUEEN** I will not speak with her.

**GENTLEMAN** She is importunate—indeed distract:  
Her mood will needs be pitied.

**QUEEN** What would she have?

**GENTLEMAN** She speaks much of her father, says she hears

5 There's tricks i'th' world, and hems and beats her heart,  
Spurns enviously at straws, speaks things in doubt  
That carry but half sense. Her speech is nothing,  
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move  
The hearers to collection: they yawn at it

10 And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts  
Which, as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,  
Indeed would make one think there might be thought,  
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

**HORATIO** 'Twere good she were spoken with, for she may strew

15 Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

**QUEEN** Let her come in.

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,  
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss.  
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,

20 It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

*Enter OPHELIA.*

**OPHELIA** Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

**QUEEN** How now, Ophelia?

**OPHELIA** (*sings*) How should I your true love know

From another one?

25 By his cockle hat and staff  
And his sandal shoon.

**QUEEN** Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

**OPHELIA** Say you? Nay, pray you mark:

(*Sings.*) He is dead and gone, lady,

30 He is dead and gone;  
At his head a grass-green turf,  
At his heels a stone.  
Oh, oh!

**QUEEN** Nay, but Ophelia—

35 **OPHELIA** Pray you, mark:

(*Sings.*) White his shroud as the mountain snow—

*Enter KING.*

**QUEEN** Alas, look here, my lord.

**OPHELIA** Larded all with sweet flowers,

Which bewept to the ground did not go

40 With true love showers.

**KING** How do you, pretty lady?

**OPHELIA** Well, good dild you. They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table.

45 **KING** Conceit upon her father.

**OPHELIA** Pray let's have no words of this, but when they ask you what it means, say you this:

*(Sings.)* Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,

Tomorrow Is St. Valentine's Day

All in the morning betime,

50 And I a maid at your window

To be your valentine.

Then up he rose and donned his clothes

And duppered the chamber door,

Let in the maid that out a maid

55 Never departed more.

**KING** Pretty Ophelia—

**OPHELIA** Indeed, without an oath I'll make an end on't:

By Gis and by Saint Charity,

Alack and fie for shame,

60 Young men will do't if they come to't,

By Cock they are to blame.

Quoth she, "Before you tumbled me

You promised me to wed."

He answers:

65 "So would I ha' done by yonder sun

An thou hadst not come to my bed."

**KING** How long hath she been thus?

**OPHELIA** I hope all will be well. We must be patient. But I cannot choose but weep to think they would lay him i'th' cold

70 ground. My brother shall know of it. And so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies, good

night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

**KING** Follow her close. Give her good watch, I

pray you.

Oh, this is the poison of deep grief. It springs

75 All from her father's death—and now behold!

O Gertrude, Gertrude,

When sorrows come, they come not single spies

But in battalions: first her father slain;

Next your son gone, and he most violent author

80 Of his own just remove; the people muddied,

Thick and unwholesome in thoughts and whispers

For good Polonius' death—and we have done but greenly

In hugger-mugger to inter him; poor Ophelia,

Divided from herself and her fair judgment,

85 Without the which we are pictures or mere beasts;  
Last, and as much containing as all these,  
Her brother is in secret come from France,  
Feeds on this wonder, keeps himself in clouds,  
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear  
90 With pestilent speeches of his father's death,  
Wherein necessity, of matter beggared,  
Will nothing stick our person to arraign  
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,  
Like to a murdering piece, in many places  
95 Gives me superfluous death.

*A noise within.*

95.1 **QUEEN** Alack, what noise is this?

**KING** Attend!

Where is my Switzers? Let them guard the door.

*Enter a MESSENGER.*

What is the matter?

**Extract Four, *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act 5, Scene 2, lines 225-316**

225                    Now, Charmian!  
Show me, my women, like a queen. Go, fetch  
My best attires. I am again for Cydnus  
To meet Mark Antony. Sirrah Iras, go!  
Now, noble Charmian, we'll dispatch indeed,  
230 And when thou hast done this chore, I'll give thee leave  
To play till doomsday. Bring our crown and all.

*A noise within.*

Wherefore's this noise?

*Enter a GUARDSMAN.*

**GUARDSMAN** Here is a rural fellow  
That will not be denied your highness' presence.  
He brings you figs.

**CLEOPATRA** Let him come in. *Exeunt GUARDSMAN.*

235 What poor an instrument  
May do a noble deed! He brings me liberty.  
My resolution's placed, and I have nothing  
Of woman in me. Now from head to foot  
I am marble constant. Now the fleeting moon  
No planet is of mine.

*Enter GUARDSMAN and CLOWN.*

240 **GUARDSMAN** This is the man.

**CLEOPATRA** Avoid, and leave him. *Exeunt GUARDSMAN.*

Hast thou the pretty worm of Nilus there  
That kills and pains not?

**CLOWN** Truly I have him, but I would not be the party that  
245 should desire you to touch him, for his biting is immortal.  
Those that do die of it do seldom or never recover.

**CLEOPATRA** Remember'st thou any that have died on't?

**CLOWN** Very many; men and women too! I heard of one of  
them no longer than yesterday—a very honest woman, but  
250 something given to lie, as a woman should not do but in the  
way of honesty—how she died of the biting of it, what pain  
she felt. Truly, she makes a very good report o'th' worm. But  
he that will believe all that they say shall never be saved by  
half that they do. But this is most falliable; the worm's an  
255 odd worm.

**CLEOPATRA** Get thee hence, farewell.

**CLOWN** I wish you all joy of the worm.

**CLEOPATRA** Farewell.

**CLOWN** You must think this, look you, that the worm will do  
260 his kind.

**CLEOPATRA** Ay, ay, farewell.

**CLOWN** Look you, the worm is not to be trusted but in the

keeping of wise people. For indeed, there is no goodness in the worm.

**CLEOPATRA** Take thou no care; it shall be heeded.

265 **CLOWN** Very good. Give it nothing, I pray you, for it is not worth the feeding.

**CLEOPATRA** Will it eat me?

**CLOWN** You must not think I am so simple but I know the

270 devil himself will not eat a woman. I know that a woman is a dish for the gods, if the devil dress her not. But truly, these same whoreson devils do the gods great harm in their women. For in every ten that they make, the devils mar five.

**CLEOPATRA** Well, get thee gone. Farewell.

275 **CLOWN** Yes, forsooth. I wish you joy o'th' worm. *Exit.*

**CLEOPATRA** Give me my robe; put on my crown. I have

Immortal longings in me. Now no more  
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.

Yare, yare, good Iras. Quick! Methinks I hear  
280 Antony call. I see him rouse himself  
To praise my noble act. I hear him mock  
The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men  
To excuse their after wrath. Husband, I come.  
Now to that name, my courage prove my title.

285 I am fire and air. My other elements  
I give to baser life. So, have you done?  
Come, then, and take the last warmth of my lips.  
Farewell, kind Charmian, Iras, long farewell.  
Have I the aspic in my lips? Dost fall?

290 If thou and nature can so gently part,  
The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch,  
Which hurts and is desired. Dost thou lie still?  
If thus thou vanishest, thou tell'st the world,  
It is not worth leave-taking.

295 **CHARMIAN** Dissolve, thick cloud, and rain, that I may say  
The gods themselves do weep.

**CLEOPATRA** This proves me base.

If she first meet the curlèd Antony,  
He'll make demand of her and spend that kiss  
Which is my heaven to have. Come, thou mortal wretch;

300 With thy sharp teeth this knot intricate  
Of life at once untie. Poor venomous fool,  
Be angry and dispatch. Oh, couldst thou speak  
That I might hear thee call great Caesar ass  
Unpolicied.

**CHARMIAN** O eastern star!

**CLEOPATRA** Peace, peace.

305 Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,

That sucks the nurse asleep.

**CHARMIAN** Oh, break! Oh, break!

**CLEOPATRA** As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle.

O Antony! Nay, I will take thee too.

What should I stay—

*dies.*

310 **CHARMIAN** In this wild world? So, fare thee well.

Now boast thee, death, in thy possession lies

A lass unparalleled. Downy windows close,

And golden Phoebus never be beheld

Of eyes again so royal. Your crown's awry.

315 I'll mend it, and then play—

*Enter the GUARD rustling in.*

**FIRST GUARD** Where's the Queen?

**CHARMIAN** Speak softly. Wake her not.