**Stage 2 English Literary Studies**

**External Assessment Cover Sheet**

Assessment Type 3: Text Study

Part A: Comparative Text Study

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**SACE Registration Number:**

**Compare the ways in which Guillermo del Toro in Pan’s Labyrinth and Tennessee Williams in the Glass Menagerie explore the effect of using illusions to mitigate harsh realities.**

**Word Count:** 1500

This **comparative study** is assessed using the following specific features:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Knowledge and understanding** | **Analysis** | **Application** |
| KU1 | An1 |  |
| KU2 | An2 | Ap2 |
| KU3 | An3 | Ap3 |
|  |  |  |

***Compare the ways in which Guillermo del Toro in Pan’s Labyrinth and Tennessee Williams in the Glass Menagerie explore the effect of using illusions to mitigate harsh realities.***

In his film *Pan’s Labyrinth* and in his play *The Glass Menagerie*, Guillermo del Toro and Tennessee Williams, respectively, explore the effect of using creative illusions to mitigate the effects of a destructive reality. Both del Toro and Williams present the real world as one of difficulty. In his film, *Pan’s Labyrinth,* del Toro stylistically blends a period drama with fantasy to tell the story of the central protagonist Ofelia who is forced to stay with her cruel and violent stepfather Captain Vidal. In his play that he neologistically labelled as stylistically reflective of “plastic theatre” – a malleable approach to drama that relies on a range of different symbols to create meaning rather than replicating reality – Williams tells the story of the Wingfield family: the mother, Amanda, the son, Tom, and the daughter, Laura as they navigate the emotional and financial challenges of the departure of their husband and father and make choices that lead to tragic outcomes. As a way of managing reality, the central characters in both texts create illusions: Ofelia constructs a kingdom in which she is a long-lost princess, assuming a god-like control of the narrative of her fantastical world; Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie* manufactures the illusory concept of the gentleman caller. However, these mechanisms are not sustainable for both authors reveal the inexorable nature of reality.

AP3: careful choice of adjective that enhances the depth of the point.

KU1: The student has a clear grasp of the ideas in both texts: this summary provides a conceptual context, not just an overview of the stories.

KU1, AN1: The introduction provides a clear outline of the argument which is conceptually developed.

Both Williams and del Toro depict the difficult lives of their central characters. The loss of a central male, in both texts, precipitates tragedy. The Wingfield’s are affected by their husband’s and father’s choice – a telephone man who ‘fell in love with long distances’ – to abandon the family, leaving a single postcard of only two words, ‘hello’ and ‘goodbye’ and in *Pan’s Labyrinth,* Ofelia and her mother suffer grief from the death of their father and husband. The characters are vulnerable as a consequence to their circumstances. Laura’s fragile nature is made apparent through the titular metaphor of the glass menagerie, with its breakable nature enhanced through features such as lighting, which Williams suggests brings out a ‘subtle earthly prettiness’ in Laura, or the glass menagerie music itself which is described as ‘faint’ ‘far off’ ‘circus music’ with ‘delicate’ qualities. While Laura’s vulnerability is a result of her internal fragility**,** Ofelia’s vulnerability emerges from an external influence: her new stepfather Captain Vidal who is a violent and sinister individual, depicted in the casual way that del Toro incorporates violence in the film: the use of camera close-ups often shows Vidal maintaining a poised manner as he murders both his enemies and even innocent hunters. Del Toro uses low-angle shots to emphasise Vidal’s authority, and contrasts this with high-angle shots of Ofelia to indicate her powerlessness as a vulnerable child in this oppressive environment. The outcome for the characters of both texts is oppression, depicted through the features in the physical environment. The emotional consequences of Mr Wingfield’s departure on Amanda is depicted in the set through the ‘larger-than-life sized photo’ of the father which is permanently positioned on the set above the mantle which suggests that even though he is absent, a reminder is always present so that, as Tom declares in his opening monologue, the father is the ‘fifth’ and yet unseen ‘character’ in the play who’s departure has a ubiquitous effect on the household. Del Toro emphasises the oppressive nature of Ofelia’s world similarly through the set in the absence of colour and vivacity with a bleak colour palette of greens and browns and greys. Both the interior and exterior of Ofelia’s new home suggest a prison-like quality, for the decaying concrete structure of the exterior is dilapidated with grey and brown stonework and dislodged roof tiles, and the interior showcases the mouldy walls in rooms that resemble prison cells.

AP3: slight errors in punctuation do affect the work on occasion.

KU2: The student uses appropriate nomenclature that indicates an understanding of the stylistic features used in the texts.

AN2: However, the analysis of the stylistic feature is less clear: how does the circus sound of the music emphasise the breakable nature of the glass menagerie?

AN3: Such carefully constructed transitional sentences make the essay clearly comparative.

AN2: Some circularity in the logic here: del Toro incorporates violence in the film to indicate that Vidal is violent.

KU2 and AN2: Again, there is knowledge of the feature (low-angled shot) but the analysis is not clearly connected to the idea (this point was set up to be about violence).

KU3: The student has a clear understanding of the features of the two text types and appropriately refers to theatre and to film when moving between the two texts.

AN2: and so, what is the emotional consequence?

AP3: again, slight errors in expression: the definite article is not appropriate and the interior does not ‘showcase’ (so the subject and verb are not correct).

Williams and del Toro both explore the way in which the characters use illusions as a disguise behind which to conceal and mitigate these harsh realities. Amanda obsesses over the idea of the gentleman caller – the illusory concept that a suitor will arrive, woo Laura, her maiden daughter and therefore provide financial and psychological stability for the otherwise fragile and vulnerable girl – which is evident in the fact that she dresses up the set when an actual gentleman caller, Jim, is about to arrive by concealing ‘the broken light fixture’ with the rose coloured ‘lantern’, decorating with new ‘cushions’, a ‘floor rug’ and ‘chintz covers’, to create a ‘dramatic transformation’. Similarly, Amanda dresses Laura in order to create a ‘pretty trap’ by dressing her in an alluring dress and adorns her in ‘gay deceivers’ to create a false impression of her bust for, in reality, ‘[her] chest is flat’. Ofelia’s method of mitigating reality is indicated in the title of the film itself for she imagines an entire kingdom in which she must navigate a ‘labyrinth’ as the long-lost princess of the Underworld. In her own imagination, Ofelia establishes a variety of tasks that she must complete which provide her with agency and on this journey, she is accompanied by a gentle and wise companion: ‘Pan’, a faun-like creature in Greek mythology. Ofelia’s fantasy world is depicted as vibrant as shown through the colour palette of bright reds, warm oranges and yellows to contrast the cold blue-grey colour scheme present in Ofelia’s real world. During these sequences, the soundtrack becomes melodic, with major keys creating a lighter and more intriguing atmosphere in Ofelia’s fantasy world as compared to the soundtrack in Ofelia’s reality, which is monotone with minor keys. Del Toro uses low-angle and eye-level shots to provide Ofelia with a greater sense of authority in her fantastical world, unlike the high-angle shots of the real world presenting Ofelia as inferior and vulnerable. The illusions that these characters construct provide them with a change in position. When Amanda speaks of the gentleman caller the stage directions indicate that she assumes an ‘elegiac energy’ and vitality as she is able to ‘relive the legend of her own adolescence’ and provides her with such delight that it is transformative, as her voice becomes lilting, and she dances youthfully. Similarly, while Laura initially resists an interaction with the gentleman caller, she gradually warms to Jim and eventually asks him questions, accepts his offer of a dance, and the two share an intimate kiss. While Ofelia is subject to external influences in the real world, in her fantasy she is able to make choices about when she enters and exits the world by drawing chalk doorways that provide a magic portal, navigating the maze-like environment, and even builds the courage to confront creatures that pose a significant threat towards her, transforming Ofelia into a heroic figure.

AP3: A well-handled complex-compound sentence!

KU1, AN1: The points raised here do tend more towards a recount of the ‘happenings’ in the film…and while these are described with reference to the stylistic features, the point itself is not particularly conceptual.

AP2: Throughout the text, the student fluently integrates a range quotations and provides useful details about moments in the film, to provide clear justification of the points raised.

AN3: What is similar? In a comparative essay, the use of this word can create confusion rather than clarity.

AP3: Some of the expression in this section in not precise.

KU1: This point is not clear.

AN1: Plot-based evidence.

The illusions the characters create to escape reality are exposed to be only temporary as both texts end with their dissolution. The revelation occurs as a result of an epiphanous moment in *The Glass Menagerie* but is a gradual revelation in *Pan’s Labyrinth*. In the former, Jim declares that he is ‘engaged to be married’, and therefore cannot function as a suitor for Laura. Whereas, in the latter it is the gradually increasing violence of Vidal that makes Ofelia’s access to the fantastical world gradually less effectual. *The Glass Menagerie* ends despondently as a result of Jim’s revelation as Laura’s metaphorical ‘holy candles’ are ‘snuffed out’ and she struggles with the storm for this is the ‘climax of her secret life’, the result of which she suffers an ‘infinite desolation’. Amanda is similarly devasted as, hyperbolically, the ‘sky falls’ and the set that she once decorated becomes a mockery for she declares that they have ‘wasted all their time and energy’ for the gentleman caller is engaged. Toward the end of the film, Ofelia’s fantasies deteriorate as the two worlds become blended; the clothes her mother made her get ruined in the mud and her mother becomes seriously ill due to her pregnancy. As the realistic circumstances become increasingly oppressive, the soundtrack becomes darker, the colour palette becomes one of saturated blue-greys compared to the vivid reds and yellows of the fantasy world, and the camera reverts to high-angled shots to suggest Ofelia has once again become insignificant and vulnerable in the real world. The real and fantasy worlds become intermingled, and disaster is perpetuated in both. Both texts end on a note of despondent ambiguity. At the end of *The Glass Menagerie*, Laura remains inert on the sofa with Amanda conducting a ‘ritual movement’ around her, Tom abandons his family, and the final moment is one in which darkness penetrates their lives as Laura leans over and ‘blows out the candles’. The final scene of Pan’s Labyrinth is symbolically enigmatic for it is unclear whether she has entered the underworld or death itself. However, the re-occurring lullaby leitmotif in the soundtrack symbolises Ofelia’s return to a child-like innocence; originally denied in reality.

KU1: What revelation? Using the definite article without contextual detail leads to a lack of clarity.

AN2: Again, the evidence offered is more about events in the film, rather than concepts.

AN2: This is a succinct and interesting point on which to finish the paragraph.

AN2: Unfortunately, this final statement is ambiguous.

At the beginning of *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom expresses the idea that illusion is attractive as it provides a ‘pleasant disguise’. The pleasantness arises from the fact that illusions are a means to mitigate the difficulties of the real world, for they present an alternate view of reality and therefore, a hope for the future that is unclear in the present. However, they are only a disguise and the façade that conceals the truth is eventually exposed and the latter consequence for the person who has relied on illusions is worse than it was initially.

Simple but appropriate and useful conclusion.

**Knowledge and understanding**

* KU1 [Knowledge and understanding of ways in which ideas, perspectives, and values are represented in texts] The student has an insightful understanding of the thematic concerns of both texts and has developed a logical line of reasoning to explore concepts. To a degree the understanding of *The Glass Menagerie* is more comprehensive than that of *Pan’s Labyrinth*.
* KU2 [Knowledge and understanding of ways in which authors use stylistic features to communicate ideas] The student is careful to integrate references to a broad range of stylistic features (metaphor, lighting, symbols, soundtrack, camera movement/shots, set and locations, props, colour scheme, saturation etc.) showing knowledge of a expansive range of features.
* KU3 [Knowledge and understanding of the stylistic features and conventions of different text types] The use of appropriate metalanguage and range of features that are particular to plays and films, demonstrates a clear awareness of distinct techniques of the differing text types.

**Analysis**

* AN1 [Analysis of ways in which texts represent ideas, perspectives, and values] The student has a clear understanding of the themes in both texts and explores these with reference to specific moments. The ideas are nuanced, and this contributes to a well-constructed argument that is developed within paragraphs and across the whole essay.
* AN2 [Analysis and evaluation of ways in which stylistic features are used to influence the interpretation of texts] This is the stylistic feature in which the student has not performed as well. While the references to *The Glass Menagerie* are mostly analytical (that is, the stylistic feature mentioned is connected clearly to a logical concept) there are times in which there is not so much coherence between the feature and the idea. More obviously, often when the student explores *Pan’s Labyrinth* the metalanguage is good but the idea being explored is more often connected to an event or character action, rather than to a nuanced concept.
* AN3 [Analysis of similarities and differences between texts in comparative tasks] The essay is mindfully structured and consistently comparative. The transitional statements provide a clear structure that is accessible and they also foreground the similarities and differences between the texts.

**Application**

* AP2 [Use of evidence from texts to develop, support and justify responses] The student carefully integrates appropriate references to the texts to justify statements. The metalanguage applied in this process means that the examples are fitting for the text type, in particular the descriptions of moments from the film are vivid and appropriately articulated.
* AP3 [Use of accurate, clear, and fluent expression appropriate for purpose and audience] The style is mostly fluent and precise, with just some occasional lapses.

**General Comments**

The ideas explored in this essay are comprehensive. The metalanguage is appropriate and means that the exploration of the text types is frequently enhanced by references to stylistic features. The structure is well-considered and consistently comparative. However, the analysis is not always accurate: at times the relationship between the feature and the idea is not clear; and the analysis of the film is, at times, reliant on references to plot and character which somewhat limits the conceptual sophistication of the essay. Nonetheless, the work is still in the A range.

**GRADE: A-**

|  | **Knowledge and Understanding** | **Analysis** | **Application** |
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| **A** | Detailed knowledge and understanding of ways in which ideas, perspectives, and values are represented in texts.  Thorough knowledge and understanding of a range of ways in which authors use stylistic features to communicate ideas.  Detailed knowledge and understanding of a range of stylistic features and conventions of different text types. | Perceptive analysis of the ways in which texts represent ideas, perspectives, and values.  Perceptive analysis and evaluation of the complex ways in which stylistic features are used to influence the interpretation of texts.  Perceptive analysis of similarities and differences between texts in comparative tasks.  Perceptive analysis of ways in which different critical perspectives inform critical interpretation. | Sophisticated use of a wide range of conventions, and/or stylistic features to create coherent texts that address the meaning and intention of the task.  Detailed and appropriate use of evidence from texts develop, support, and justify responses, with textual references incorporated fluently in discussion.  Use of precise and fluent expression, which is appropriate for audience and purpose. |
| **B** | Knowledge and understanding of a range of ways in which ideas, perspectives, and values are represented in most texts.  Knowledge and understanding of a range of ways in which authors use stylistic features to communicate ideas.  Knowledge and understanding of a range of stylistic features and conventions of different text types. | Clear analysis of the ways in which texts represent ideas, perspectives, and values.  Clear analysis and evaluation of the complex ways in which stylistic features are used to influence the reading of texts.  Clear analysis of similarities and differences between texts in comparative tasks.  Clear analysis of ways in which different critical perspectives inform critical interpretation. | Use of a range of conventions, and/or stylistic features to create coherent texts that address the meaning and intention of the task.  Appropriate use of evidence from texts to develop, support, and justify responses, with textual references incorporated in discussion.  Mostly accurate and fluent expression, which is appropriate for audience and purpose. |
| **C** | Knowledge and understanding of some ways in which ideas, perspectives, and values are represented in texts.  Knowledge and understanding of some ways in which authors use stylistic features to communicate ideas.  Knowledge and understanding of some of the stylistic features and conventions of different text types. | Some analysis of ways in which texts represent ideas, perspectives, and values.  Description, with some analysis and evaluation, of ways in which stylistic features are used to influence the reading of texts.  Description, with some analysis, of similarities and differences between texts in comparative tasks.  Some analysis of ways in which different critical perspectives inform critical interpretation. | Competent use of conventions, and/or stylistic features to create texts that address the meaning and intention of the task.  Competent use of evidence from texts to develop, support, and justify responses, with some use of textual references in discussion.  Generally fluent and clear expression, which is mostly appropriate for audience and purpose. |
| **D** | Some knowledge and restricted understanding of a narrow range of ways in which ideas and values are represented in texts.  Some knowledge and restricted understanding of a narrow range of ways in which authors use stylistic features to communicate ideas.  Some knowledge and restricted understanding of a few of the stylistic features and conventions of different text types. | Description of the ideas and values represented in texts.  Description of some ways in which stylistic features are used to influence the reading of texts.  Some description of similarities and differences between texts in comparative tasks.  Recognition of some ways in which different critical perspectives inform critical interpretation. | Use of some language features to create texts that address the meaning and intention of the task in a limited way.  Some use of evidence from texts to develop, support , and attempt to justify responses, with use of a narrow range of textual references.  Occasionally clear expression, which is appropriate for some audiences and purposes. |
| **E** | Simplistic knowledge and very restricted understanding of the way in which an idea or a value is represented in a text.  Limited knowledge and restricted understanding of a restricted range of stylistic features used by authors.  Limited knowledge and restricted understanding of different text types and conventions. | Reference to an idea or value represented in a text.  Limited description of a way in which a stylistic feature is used to influence the reading of a text.  Simplistic description of a connection between texts in a comparative task.  Reference to a critical perspective. | Attempted use of some language features to create texts that attempt to address the meaning and intention of the task in a limited way.  Restricted use of evidence from texts to develop and support a simple response, with minimal textual references.  Emerging development of control of expression. |