

ENGLISH TRIPOS ELT2

Monday 23 May 2022: 11am

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Tuesday 24 May 2022: 11am

Part II Paper 2

TRAGEDY

Answer **either** one **or** three questions:

You **must**, in the paper as a whole, show substantial knowledge of **both** Greek **and** Shakespearean Tragedy. This will normally be taken to mean that at least one sixth of your writing must be devoted to Greek Tragedy, and a further sixth must be devoted to Shakespearean Tragedy.

Do **not** present the same material twice, **either** in this paper **or** in the examination as a whole.

Irrelevant answers, or answers only tenuously related to the question, will be penalized.

In the case of handwritten scripts, illegible handwriting may place candidates at a disadvantage.

Include your **number**, not your name, on submitted scripts.

There will be a word-count range of 800-1200 per essay, which is intended to approximate to the amount that can be written by hand under normal examination conditions. For papers which include a 'Section A' made up of multiple parts, the word-count for a candidate's responses to Section A as a whole must be within the range of 800–1200 words. In the case of the Tragedy paper, candidates choosing to offer a single-answer script will have a word-count range of 2400-3600 for the script as a whole.

Examination responses should conform to the following presentation requirements: they should be in minimum 12pt type; should use a sans serif typeface (eg Arial or Calibri); should be 1.5 or double-spaced; and should be submitted as a word-processed document (in .docx or .rtf format).

1. 'Knowest thou the land wherein the citrons bloom?
I do. Exile's the name I give that knowledge'.
(GWEN HARWOOD, '1945: A Poem', 1988)
What can tragedy teach us about exile?
2. 'Tragedy demonstrates that the conditions for exercising meaningful ethical choices that have consequences for how a life is lived do not remain entirely within the grasp of the individual'. (ATO QUAYSON, 2021)
Discuss.
3. In William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Mr Compson talks about 'the instant when we come to realize that tragedy is second-hand'.
What difference does it make to think of tragedy as 'second-hand'?
4. 'Too late, too late, ye cannot enter now.'
(ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON, in *Idylls of the King*, 1859)
Must tragedy always involve belatedness?
5. 'Real tragedy is never resolved. It goes on hopelessly forever. Conventional tragedy is too easy. The hero dies and we feel a purging of the emotions. A real tragedy takes place in a corner, in an untidy spot.' (CHINUA ACHEBE, *No Longer at Ease*, 1960)
Discuss.
6. 'No one regrets the necessity for violence more than we do. Unhappily, there are times when violence is the only way in which social justice can be secured ... We have served your interests; we merit your applause; and if there is any guilt whatever in the matter, you must share it with us.' (T.S. ELIOT, *Murder in the Cathedral*, 1932)
Consider the representation of collective responsibility for violence in tragedy.
7. According to the literary critic Elizabeth Anker, modernity 'exhibit[s] a profound ambivalence towards embodiment' (2012).
What can tragedy tell us about the body?
8. 'The Chorus is present in order to articulate an orthodox moral or political view on behalf of the assembled Athenian citizenship'. (SARAH DEWAR-WATSON, 2014)
Do you agree? You need not confine your discussion to Greek choruses.
9. 'The main difference between tragedy and melodrama is the dignity we ascribe to the former and that we deny to the latter.' (AGUSTIN ZARZOSA, 2016)
Discuss.

10. 'The exquisite art of Sophocles is shown in the touches by which he makes us feel that Creon, as well as Antigone, is contending for what he believes to be the right, while both are also conscious that, in following out one principle, they are laying themselves open to just blame for transgressing another... Reformers, martyrs, revolutionists, are never fighting against evil only; they are also placing themselves in opposition to a good – to a valid principle which cannot be infringed without harm.'

(GEORGE ELIOT, 1856)

Is such a contest between equally 'valid principles' essential to tragedy?

11. 'Who finds the heifer dead and bleeding fresh,
And sees fast by a butcher with an axe,
But will suspect 'twas he that made the slaughter?
Who finds the partridge in the puttock's nest
But may imagine how the bird was dead,
Although the kite soar with unblooded beak?
Even so suspicious is this tragedy.'

(SHAKESPEARE, *2 Henry VI*)

Consider the role of suspicion **and/or** supposition in tragedy.

12. 'Revenge, at first though sweet,
Bitter ere long back on itself recoils;
Let it; I reckon not, so it light well aimed.'

(JOHN MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, 1667)

Examine some coils and recoils of revenge.

13. 'Our heroes often move us most closely when they are in fact victims, and are seen as victims.' (RAYMOND WILLIAMS, 1985)

Is the distinction between 'heroes' and 'victims' helpful in thinking about tragedy?

14. 'Are words such as "race", "racism", "xenophobia", "ethnicity" or even "nation" useful for looking at community identities in early modern Europe?' (ANIA LOOMBA, 2002)
How does tragedy explore this question?

15. 'None but the famish'd tyger
Wou'd kill the thing it loved'.

(MARY ROBINSON, *The Sicilian Lover: A Tragedy in Five Acts*, 1796)

What account does tragedy offer of the passions?

16. 'Justice permits restoration; sacrifice promises transformation. It offers grace rather than equity, but only through poison and cruelty.' (JONATHAN KERTZER, 2010)
Discuss.
17. 'No God. No Father Christmas. No fairies. No Narnia'. (SARAH KANE, *Blasted*, 1995)
Does tragedy demand coherence in its religious worldview?
18. '*Faustus*: Now go not backward, Faustus, be resolute.
Why waver'st thou? O, something soundeth in mine ear.'
(CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, *Doctor Faustus*, 1592)
Consider the role played by self-address in **one or more** tragedies.
19. George Steiner reminds us that the achievements of Elizabethan theatre were built upon 'a great inheritance of medieval and popular forms ... Behind the Senecan funerals come the hornpipes of the Morris dancers' (1961).
Can comedy deepen our understanding of tragedy?
20. '[In the person of Hamlet], his character and situation, there is a concentration of all the interests that belong to tragedy.' (ANNA JAMESON, 1832)
Consider the representation of the interplay between the general and the particular in tragedy.
21. 'History is [...] a haunting claim the dead have on the living'.
(SHOSHANA FELMAN, 2002)
Consider the relationship between tragedy and the work of commemoration.
22. 'I must write now as if these are the last things I will write, that any of us will write. If you knew you were at the last days of the human story, what would you write?'
(BEN OKRI, 2021)
How might the climate crisis alter how we understand tragedy?
23. 'And LEUKOS, friend of Odysseus
Little is known of him except his death...'
(ALICE OSWALD, *Memorial*, 2011)
Does tragedy acknowledge the futility of war or does it always demand its glorification?

24. 'Torment, a canonical subject in art, is often represented in painting as a spectacle, something being watched [...] by other people'. (SUSAN SONTAG, 2003)
Is spectacle a necessary ingredient of tragedy?
25. '(These memories do not exist without words).' (KATHLEEN FRASER, 2000)
Is tragedy found only in dramatic form?
26. "'We believe in eternal life", such is the cry of tragedy.'
(FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 1872)
Discuss.
27. 'Greek tragedy manifests a general tendency to exploit the opposition between masculine and feminine in order to dramatize larger issues having to do with the radical discontinuity between nature and culture, household and city, honour and shame, insiders and outsiders'. (MARILYN KATZ, 1994)
Discuss.
28. 'It is finally in Shakespeare's dramatic image [...] that we can discover the more profound practical reaches of fictional method in the Aristotelian tradition'.
(KATHY EDEN, 1986)
Discuss.
29. Robert Miola argues that Seneca is much more than 'a negligible or overrated influence on Elizabethan drama' (1992).
Do you agree?
30. Write an essay on the representation of any **one or two** of the following in tragedy:
(a) marriage;
(b) silence;
(c) messengers;
(d) legal trials;
(e) burials;
(f) disguises.

END OF PAPER