

SAMPLE SECTION



ANTONY †
CLEOPATRA

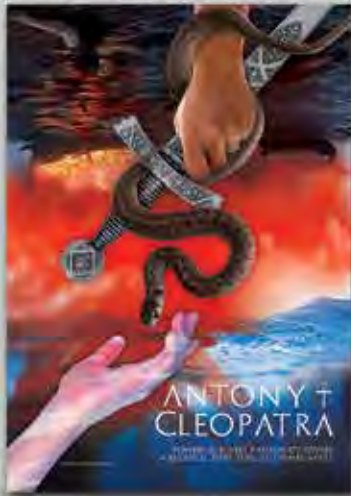
THE COMPLETE GUIDE AND RESOURCE

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the **English** experience

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

The Complete Guide and Resource for Grade 12

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Foreword

About The English Experience

The English Experience is an independent South African publishing house that specialises in developing high-quality English and Life Orientation educational resources for IEB educators and students. The team of passionate, talented experts behind The English Experience works tirelessly to ensure that every resource encourages insight, growth and debate — enriching and challenging both educators and students — without losing sight of the important goal of examination readiness and success.

Focused on bringing the subject to life, every resource The English Experience publishes incorporates a range of features — including content and contextual questions and stimulating enrichment materials — designed to encourage a critical appreciation of the subject and to inspire the higher order thinking for which examiners are always looking.

The world-class English Experience team includes highly experienced educators, some with over 20 years of classroom experience, passionate literary experts in various fields, such as South African fiction, poetry and Shakespeare, fanatical historians and researchers, creative writers, skilled editors, pernickety proofreaders and obsessive fact checkers — together with spirited university lecturers and enthusiastic young minds who help ensure our approach remains unique and fresh.

While examination readiness and success is non-negotiable, our aspiration is to inspire a genuine interest in, and love of, English literature.



Visit www.englishexperience.co.za to learn more about The English Experience and the range of educational resources the company publishes. You can scan this QR code to launch the site on your phone automatically. Please note, you will need to have the free 'Tag reader' app installed, which you can download from your app store or by visiting <https://www.scan.me/download/>

Our approach to Shakespeare

The toughest challenge with Shakespeare can be overcoming the preconceived ideas many students have about how dull and tedious he is to study. Making sense of the language in which the plays are written can be hard going for learners so it's perhaps not surprising that many of them find studying Shakespeare an alienating experience and consider his plays works through which they have to slog to pass an examination.

This resource has been written with this reality in mind and particular attention has been paid to breathing new life into Shakespeare and his world. Not only have we worked hard to make sure the content in this resource is fresh and engaging, we have also divided it into accessible, digestible sections and included numerous quirky, interesting and fun facts.

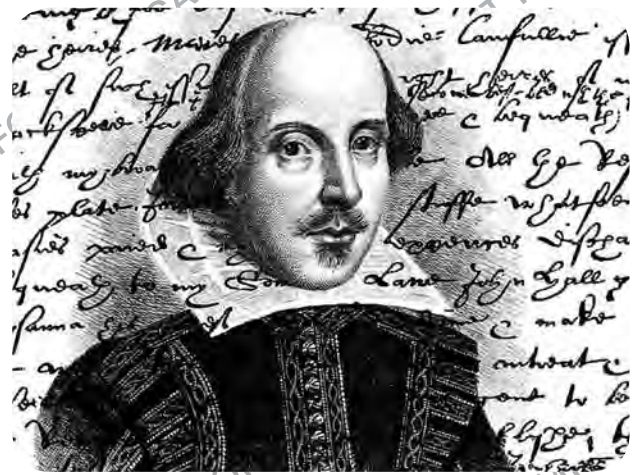
We have endeavoured to make both the man and his play as accessible and entertaining as possible. We start with the man, exploring his extraordinary life and achievements, and then put these into context by bringing the dirty, dangerous and vibrant world of Elizabethan England to life.

Having armed students with an understanding and appreciation of Shakespeare's intentions and world, we tackle the play. Again, we do so with one goal in mind at every step: to make it as accessible and entertaining as possible for modern Matric learners, while remaining academically sound and accurate.

We start by providing students with detailed historical and literary backgrounds, helping them to understand the places, events, literary genre and conventions on which the play is based. The play is also presented as a short story to help students grasp the plot, before we tackle the characters, themes and structure in detail.

We have not only worked very closely with the text of the play, adjusting punctuation and spelling and providing explanatory annotations to help students grasp its meaning, we have also incorporated act-based learning into the structure of the resource as we believe that working through the play act-by-act ensures that a solid foundation of knowledge is laid. Students can then build on this foundation methodically and effectively, only dealing with the whole play once they have worked through it scene-by-scene.

In the end, we have approached Shakespeare the same way we approach every author and text: with two, interrelated goals in mind. The first, non-negotiable, objective is to ensure examination readiness and success, and the second is to inspire a genuine interest in, and appreciation of, the work being studied.



'What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world. The paragon of animals.' (Act 2, Scene 2, Hamlet)

Using this resource

This comprehensive resource includes: the full text of the play; an extensive introduction to Shakespeare and the Elizabethan era; a guide to Shakespearean language; detailed historical and literary backgrounds; accessible summaries; rich literary analyses; diverse content-related short questions and mini essay questions (act-specific and general), together with challenging enrichment tasks. In short, everything needed to study the play intensively and bring the text to life is presented in this resource.

Preparing with the right mindset

We recommend working through the **Introduction to Shakespeare** section first (even before watching a live/recorded performance) so that students become familiar with the man himself,

Elizabethan England and the theatre for which he wrote. Some learners might have preconceived ideas about Shakespeare and even a block against studying him. This resource has been written with such students in mind and particular attention has been paid to breathing new life into Shakespeare and his world.

To complete the introduction to the playwright, it is advisable to work through the **Shakespearean language** and **Background to the play** sections next. These will deepen learners' understanding of the play — the characters, themes and plot — before they tackle the text itself. By working through the comprehensive introductory section first, students will be prepared, engaged and able to approach the play with the right mindset.

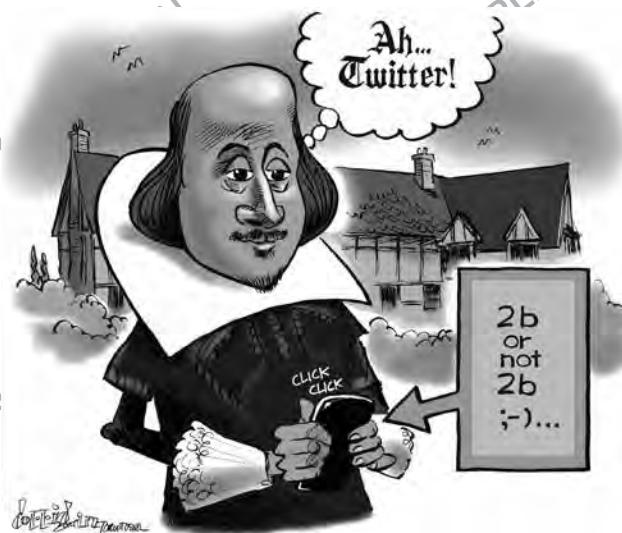
Tackling the text

Once students have been introduced to Shakespeare and his play, prepare them for working with the actual text by arranging for them to **watch it being performed**. Attending a live performance is often the most effective approach, though not always possible. If it is not, then watching one of the numerous film versions of the play is a more than adequate substitute, such as Charlton Heston's 1972 stately epic, Jon Scoffield's 1974 version, based on Trevor Nunn's meticulous adaptation for the RSC, Lawrence Carra's 1984 version or, more recently, the amusing retelling by Barry Avrich in 2015.

With the students properly prepared and primed, it is time to **read through the play**. This can be done either act-by-act or in its entirety. The version of the play included in this resource also features relevant annotations to help students understand the meaning and nuances of the text.

Once students have read through the play, work through the act-based **Summaries and Analyses** section. Working through the play act-by-act ensures that a solid foundation of knowledge is laid and then built on gradually and effectively. Students are not required to deal with the whole play until they have assimilated it scene-by-scene.

Each act is broken down into its constituent scenes, each of which is summarised and analysed separately. Students are required to engage with each scene through scene-specific questions. At the end of each act, there are also act-specific essay questions and a series of enrichment tasks (for which marking rubrics are provided on the accompanying answers disc).



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Ensuring examination readiness and success

To ensure examination readiness and success, the resource also features extensive information regarding the **Mini Essay**. This section provides guidelines on writing mini essays, two annotated examples from which to learn, and a wide selection of rigorous essay topics. It also includes suggestions on how to prepare for the final examination.

We hope you enjoy using this resource as much as we enjoyed putting it together. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

KEY TO USING THE BOXES IN THIS RESOURCE



Definition or Glossary

Provides the meanings of words and/or terms that have been used



Information

Provides additional details or facts about a topic



Alert

Something to which you need to pay attention



Quirky Fact

Fun, interesting, extraneous information



Checklist

A list of items or activities required to complete a task satisfactorily

Introduction to Shakespeare

Meet William Shakespeare



(National Portrait Gallery, London)

The Chandos Portrait of William Shakespeare

Who was William Shakespeare? Sadly, we know very little about the man considered one of the best English dramatists ever to have lived, which is all the more astonishing given the fame and fortune he achieved. In this section, we bring him to life by piecing together what we do know about his life and achievements.

By 1600, the man Voltaire described as ‘a drunken savage, with some imagination’ was enjoying the height of his fame and success. He had hit the big time a few years earlier — as part of the hip group of actors, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men — and made enough money to buy the second biggest house in his home town, but now he was also co-owner of the rowdy, successful Globe Theatre, which was attracting huge audiences of over 1,500 paying customers to each performance.

Shakespeare was working hard for his success, though; in addition to acting and directing performances, running the business side of the theatre, commuting between his work in London and his family in the country, he was churning out a brand-new play every few months.

Not bad for a high school dropout from a small, obscure town who married a scandalously older woman whom he had made pregnant as a penniless, lusty 18-year-old.

Shakespeare seems to have been hungry for success. Around the time of his 21st birthday, he left his wife and three children with his parents and headed to London to seek his fortune.

The movies of their time, plays were rapidly growing in popularity and the theatre was a booming industry — the Hollywood of its day. Whether it was his intention when he left home or not, it’s perhaps not surprising that a young man like Shakespeare should be attracted to such an exciting, vibrant new industry — where fame could be won and vast amounts of money could be made.

It’s likely he spent his first few years in the industry learning his craft by acting and writing for several companies of actors, including Lord Strange’s Men and the Queen’s Men. It didn’t take him long to make his mark, though, and he penned the first of his plays — *Henry VI, Part One* — a couple of years later around 1589, when he was in his mid-twenties.



© Jadeling (Deviantart.com)

Shakespeare knew how to entertain bawdy Elizabethan audiences. His humour wasn’t limited to witty puns and his plays are riddled with dirty jokes and sexual innuendo.

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The play was met with huge acclaim and was the start of a prolific writing career that produced an incredible 37 plays and 154 sonnets before his death in 1616.

While the mystery of Shakespeare's genius is something we will probably never solve, it seems likely that he must have been writing poems and stories from a young age, it's improbable to think he could suddenly write something as accomplished and insightful as the three *Henry VI* plays in his early twenties without years of practice beforehand.



WHY DO WE CALL HIM 'THE BARD'?

Bard is a mediaeval Gaelic/British term for a professional entertainer, someone who could tell stories, recite poems or compose music. Shakespeare is often called 'The Bard' in recognition of his stature and (unofficial) standing as the greatest poet of England.

*'Our speech is like honey when we tell a tale ...'
An artist's impression of two musician bards
or minstrels with their lutes.*



© The Bards of Greyhawk



SAY WHAT?

You may not realise it, but you probably use words and phrases invented by Shakespeare every day as he made up more than 1,500 English words and countless phrases. Feel you 'wear your heart on your sleeve'? Want to 'break the ice' with someone you've just met? Feeling a little 'faint-hearted' or 'heartsick'? Talking about 'your own flesh and blood'? Think it's a 'foregone conclusion'? Well, you have Shakespeare to thank for that.

**THINGS WE SAY TODAY
WHICH WE OWE TO
SHAKESPEARE**

"KNOCK KNOCK! WHO'S THERE?" "HEART OF GOLD"
"SET YOUR TEETH ON EDGE" "SO-SO" "GOOD RIDDANCE"
"FAINT HEARTED" "SEEN BETTER DAYS"
"FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE" "TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING"
"SEND HIM PACKING"
"WEAR YOUR HEART ON YOUR SLEEVE" "STOCK"
"NOT SLEEP ONE WINK" "COME WHAT MAY"
"THE GAME IS UP" "FOR GODNESS' SAKE"
"BATED BREATH" "WHAT'S DONE IS DONE" "FULL CIRCLE!" "LAUGHING STOCK"
"GREEN EYED MONSTER"
"VANISH INTO THIN AIR" "BE ALL/END ALL"
"OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH" "DEAD AS A DOORNAIL"
"IN A PICKLE" "FAIR/FOUL" "BRAVE MAKES YOUR HAIR"
"NAKED TRUTH" "PLAY/PLAY" "NEW WORLD" "STAND ON END"
"BREAK THE ICE" "BREATHE" "THE WORLD IS" "WILD GOOSE CHASE"
"LIE HIS LAST" "OYSTER"
"OFF WITH HIS HEAD" "LOW" "LOVE IS BLIND"
"HEART OF HEARTS" "A SORRY SIGHT" "A PIECE OF WORK"

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The early years

Despite being one of the most popular and widely read English language authors ever to have lived, Shakespeare remains a man shrouded in mystery. He achieved tremendous fame and fortune, frequently performed for both Queen Elizabeth I and King James I, and yet we know very little about him and his life.

We don't know his date of birth, only that he was baptised at the Holy Trinity Church in the town of Stratford on 26 April 1564. As baptisms usually took place a couple of days after a birth, many people like to celebrate his birthday on 23 April, which is also the day on which he died in 1616.

His parents were financially comfortable and lived in a wealthy part of town. His father, John, was a glove-maker and prominent local businessman who performed several public offices, including becoming the town's bailiff (mayor). His mother, Mary, came from an affluent family of landowners.

It's likely that young William Shakespeare attended the local grammar school, but he might not have been the most devoted student. His good friend and fellow playwright, Ben Jonson, clearly wasn't overly impressed with his schooling as he said that he had 'small Latin and less Greek'.

When he was 14, Shakespeare had to drop out of school and help his father support the family as John had somehow fallen out of favour and into financial difficulties.

We don't know when Shakespeare decided he wanted to be an actor, but it could have been at a young age as the local school put on a classical play at the end of each term and travelling troupes of actors would have visited Stratford regularly.



A troupe of travelling actors performing a play in the yard of an Elizabethan inn.



FROM STAGE TO SCREEN

Think Shakespeare's plays are only found on dusty shelves in old libraries? His work has been the basis for many aspects of popular culture. If you've watched the musical *West Side Story* or films like *The Lion King*, *10 Things I Hate About You*, *She's the Man*, *Romeo Must Die* and *O*, you've seen stories originally created by The Bard himself. Some critics even suggest that *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* is a loose adaptation of *Othello*.



Fewer characters may die in the Disney version, but the tale of Simba avenging the death of his father at the hands of his evil uncle is strikingly similar to Hamlet.

© Walt Disney Pictures

Shakespeare in love

On 27 November 1582, Shakespeare hastily married Anne Hathaway, a local woman eight years his senior. She was 26 at the time and would have been considered an 'old maid', past her prime. Anne was three months pregnant on her wedding day and it would have been difficult times for the newlyweds because William was a penniless teenager and his family had fallen on hard times. Some scholars suggest that Shakespeare may have had affairs, but there is no reliable evidence of this and he remained married to Anne until the day he died, 34 years later.



Portrait of Anne Hathaway, taken from Shakespeare: A Documentary Life.



IS SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE A TRUE STORY?

No. It is a work of plausible fiction. There is no historical record of such a love affair ever having taken place. If it happened while he was writing *Romeo and Juliet* in 1595, it's not likely he was short of cash, as depicted in the film, either, having already written nine smash-hit plays and being just about to buy one of the largest properties in Stratford.



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Trials and tribulations

Incidentally, we know that Shakespeare was an established, successful playwright by 1592 because a rival, Robert Greene, jealously attacked him in one of his pamphlets, calling him an 'upstart crow'. It wasn't all plain sailing for the talented Shakespeare, however: an outbreak of the bubonic plague in 1592 led to the closing of the theatres for two years and this meant that

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the actors had to take on far less profitable and more gruelling tours around the country to earn money.

Shakespeare would have been terrified of the bubonic plague; most Elizabethans lived in fear of the illness, which was also known as 'the Black Death'. It was a horrible way to die (see p.18) and Shakespeare had lost brothers and sisters, as well as close friends and fellow actors, to the disease. It broke out again in 1603, killing over 33,000 people in London alone, and, yet once more, in 1608.

His only son, Hamnet, died at the age of 11 in 1596 and the Globe Theatre burnt down in 1613. A cannon was fired to mark the entrance of the king on stage during a performance of his latest play, *Henry VIII*, and a stray spark set the thatch roof alight (see p.27). This would have been even more of a serious financial setback than it would be today as insurance didn't exist back then.

Shakespeare would also have had to put up with regular copyright theft as there were no laws recognising or protecting an artist's rights. Rival theatre companies would send their members to watch popular plays and secretly take notes, producing unauthorised copies and performances of them as quickly as possible.

The life of the playwright

The public's insatiable appetite for plays meant there was constant demand for new material. As if finding creative inspiration wasn't hard enough, the physical act of writing was slow and laborious as well. Playwrights had only quill and ink, and weak candlelight at night. Working alone, they would be hard pushed to produce more than two plays a year. As a result, most playwrights worked in teams of up to five writers. Solo artists, like Shakespeare, were the exception.



(National Portrait Gallery, London)

Portrait of Benjamin Jonson, a rival and friend of Shakespeare's. Although he mocked and scoffed at his friend's work, Jonson praised Shakespeare when he died, observing that he was 'not of an age, but for all time'



CONSPIRACY THEORY

For sheer longevity, no conspiracy theory can match the belief that Shakespeare did not write the plays that have been attributed to him. The usual arguments are that his education and social standing weren't good enough to have produced such extraordinary literary works. Almost every prominent Elizabethan has been suggested, at one time or another, as the real author of his plays.



SIX TIMES A DAY

Macbeth is thought to be one of the most produced plays of all time, with a performance beginning somewhere in the world every four hours.

'Blood will have blood': an artist's impression of Macbeth's descent into madness.



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The new theatre industry needed a new breed of playwright and the majority of them wouldn't fit our modern image of poets and intellectuals. Like Shakespeare, most were self-made men from modest backgrounds. (There were no professional female dramatists because few women were educated or allowed to enter such professions in those days (see p.21).)

One of William's best friends and a successful and famous dramatist in his own right, Ben Jonson was a rowdy ex-soldier who killed a fellow actor in a duel and was notoriously thrown out of the royal court in 1603 for 'unruly behaviour'.

Another of Shakespeare's highly successful contemporaries, Christopher Marlowe, was a flamboyant celebrity who had been a spy before he started writing and was killed in an apparent tavern brawl — although some suggest he was assassinated by government agents for his publicly professed atheism and for publishing a pamphlet pointing out inconsistencies in the Bible.



THE SPURS CONNECTION

Formed in 1882, London football club Tottenham was originally named after 'Harry Hotspur', a character Shakespeare popularised in *Henry IV, Part 1*. Shakespeare based his character on the English nobleman Sir Henry Percy, who earned the nickname 'Hotspur' for the apparent eagerness and recklessness with which he would ride into battle.

Statue of Harry Hotspur in Alnwick, England.



© David Henderson (Flickr.com)

All's well that ends well

In 1605, Shakespeare made another astute property investment in his home town, which doubled in value and earned him a significant annual income. A few years later, his career started drawing to a close. His final solo play, *The Tempest*, was produced in 1611 and, sometime shortly afterwards, he ceased to be a writer for his company. He retired from the theatre and returned to Stratford, where he enjoyed the last few years of his life as a well-off country gentleman and one of the town's leading figures.

Shakespeare died around the time of his fifty-second birthday, on 23 April 1616. We don't know the exact cause of his death, but we know that in the days leading up to it, he suffered from a fever. It is comforting to



THE CURSE

In his epitaph, Shakespeare put a curse on anyone daring to move his body from its final resting place. Even though it was customary to dig up the bones from previous graves to make room for others, Shakespeare's remains are still undisturbed.



Statue of William Shakespeare at the centre of Leicester Square Gardens, London. The playwright is depicted pointing to a parchment offering the following sage advice: 'There is no darkness but ignorance' a quote from his play Twelfth Night.

know that he spent the last week or so of his life socialising and celebrating with his good friends Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton (some argue perhaps a little too hard).

In an elegant and neat dénouement of which the great writer himself may have approved, his journey ended where it began, at the Holy Trinity Church in the small town of Stratford, where he lies buried within the chancel rail.



WAS SHAKESPEARE ON DRUGS?



Having never seen a pipe before, a servant worries that his master, Sir Walter Raleigh, is about to catch fire and throws water on him.

South African scientists have analysed fragments of seventeenth century pipes found on the floor of Shakespeare's home and found traces of cannabis, cocaine and hallucinogenic nutmeg extracts high in myristic acid. If he did use any drugs, he wasn't the only literary genius to do so.

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Timeline

Please note that this timeline is offered only as a rough guide as the dates of many of the events are only approximate and speculative.

- **1564** born in Stratford, England (birthday assumed to be 23 April)
- **1582** marries Anne Hathaway on 27 November (aged 18)
- **1583** first child, Susanna, is born
- **1585** twins, Judith and Hamnet, are born
- **1587-88** heads to London (aged 22) and starts his theatrical career
- **1589-92** establishes his career and begins to make a name for himself; writes *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Richard III*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Titus Andronicus*
- **1593** writes *Venus and Adonis*, and begins writing the *Sonnets*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*
- **1594** founding member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men (an acting company)
- **1596-97** Hamnet dies; purchases New Place, a large house in Stratford, and writes *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard II* and *Romeo and Juliet*
- **1598-99** writes *As You Like It*, *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Much Ado About Nothing*
- **1599** Globe Theatre is built (Shakespeare is a shareholder); writes *Troilus & Cressida* and *Twelfth Night*
- **1601** Shakespeare's father dies; writes *Hamlet*
- **1602** writes *All's Well That Ends Well*
- **1603** The Lord Chamberlain's Men become The King's Men and perform regularly at court
- **1604** writes *Measure for Measure* and *Othello*
- **1606** writes *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra*
- **1608** Shakespeare's mother dies; The King's Men begin performing at the Blackfriars Theatre; writes *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens*
- **1609** the *Sonnets* are published
- **1609-1611** writes *Cymbeline*, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*
- **1612** retires from the theatre (aged 48) and returns to live in Stratford
- **1612-1616** works on new plays with his friend, John Fletcher. They write *Cardenio*, *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*
- **1616** dies on 23 April

Themes, motifs and symbols

Themes and motifs

The central subject or topic in a work of literature (or art) is referred to as its theme. A sophisticated work will usually explore several, interrelated themes. A motif is a recurring idea or contrast examined in a work of literature and these will usually relate to the themes being explored. There are several major themes and motifs in *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*.

Love

Many critics suggest that *Antony and Cleopatra* is, at heart, an epic, tragic love story. The play opens with two soldiers discussing how deeply Antony has fallen in love with Cleopatra, followed by a playful, flirty exchange between the lovers in which she asks him to quantify his love for her and he maintains it cannot be measured, insisting that '[t]here's beggary in the love that can be reckoned' (Act 1, Scene 1, line 16).

From that moment on, their love is questioned and tested and dominates the events of the play. While they are apart, he sends her gifts and declarations of true love and she spends her time in lovesick longing, writing him love letters. She flies into a jealous rage when she learns he has married Octavia and beats the messenger and, later, Antony is furious when he discovers her flirting with Caesar's emissary and insists the man be whipped.

During their war with Caesar, Antony's love for Cleopatra makes him behave most uncharacteristically: he makes poor military decisions and even shamefully leaves the battle to follow her. Ultimately, it is the news of her apparent death that breaks his heart and lends him the resolve he needs to kill himself and she feels a similar grief-stricken compulsion after he has died in her arms.

His delights were dolphin-like

Antony's men, Demetrius and Philo, open the play with a criticism of their great leader and general, who had fought like Mars, the god of war, on the battlefield, but is now 'the bellows and the fan/To cool a gypsy's lust' (Act 1, Scene 1, lines 9-10). They grieve the sight of the 'triple pillar of the world transformed/Into a strumpet's fool' (Act 1, Scene 1, lines 13-14). In the very next scene, Antony himself ruefully acknowledges how deeply in love he has fallen and how much it is affecting his behaviour, 'These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,/Or lose myself in dotage' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 126-127).





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Antony's love for Cleopatra clearly affects his decision-making throughout the play. Perhaps the most remarkable and uncharacteristic example is when he follows Cleopatra and leaves the battle at Actium. She herself cannot believe it, but he declares, 'Egypt, thou knew'st too well/My heart was to thy rudder tied by th' strings,/And thou shouldst tow me after' (Act 3, Scene 11, lines 60-62). His love seems genuine as he is quick to forgive her and make up with a kiss, despite the seriousness of the defeat and his shameful actions as a soldier.

It is perhaps telling that Antony's close friend and comrade-in-arms, Enobarbus, is shocked by his actions and maintains that the 'itch of his affection should not then/Have nicked his captainship' (Act 3, Scene 13, lines 8-9). Antony's subsequent mood swings and bravado convince Enobarbus that there has been a 'diminution in our captain's brain' (Act 3, Scene 13, line 232).

Antony's love for Cleopatra distracts him from his official duties throughout the play as well. It is perhaps something to which we can all relate quite easily: having to choose between 'work' and 'play', between love and pleasure and discipline and responsibility, between short-term gratification and long-term gain.

In the opening scene of the play, he argues that money and power mean nothing and that the highest objective in life to which people can aspire is to give themselves completely to love: 'Here is my space./Kingdoms are clay. Our dungy earth alike/Feeds beast as man. The nobleness of life/Is to do thus; when such a mutual pair/And such a twain can do 't' (Act 1, Scene 1, lines 37-41).

He suggests it is a mistake to waste time that could be enjoyed and spent indulging in pleasurable activities with disagreements and negative discussions: 'Now for the love of Love and her soft hours,/Let's not confound the time with conference harsh./There's not a minute of our lives should stretch/Without some pleasure now' (Act 1, Scene 1, lines 49-52).



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Even when all seems lost and defeat almost certain, Antony insists they should have one last festive celebration together: 'Come,/Let's have one other gaudy night. Call to me/All my sad captains. Fill our bowls once more./Let's mock the midnight bell' (Act 3, Scene 13, lines 215-218).

After he has been defeated by Caesar, however, Antony seems unsure of quite how he let his heart lead him to such complete and utter ruin: '[h]ere I am Antony,/Yet cannot hold this visible shape' (Act 4, Scene 14, lines 16-17). At the same time, though, his love for Cleopatra appears unwavering and genuine. The moment he learns of her apparent death, he forgives her for betraying him and resolves to kill himself since living without her is torture: 'I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and/Weep for my pardon. So it must be, for now/All length is torture. Since the torch is out,/Lie down

and stray no farther' (Act 4, Scene 14, lines 53-56). Likewise, his dying request is for Cleopatra to kiss him one last time: 'I am dying, Egypt, dying. Only/I here importune death awhile until/Of many thousand kisses the poor last/I lay upon thy lips' (Act 4, Scene 15, lines 22-25).

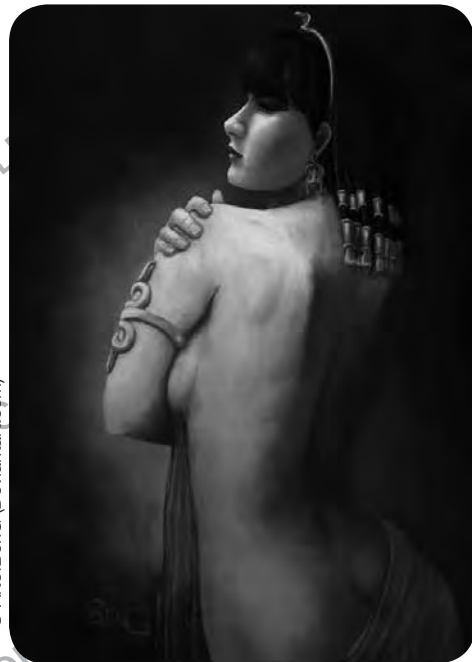
ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

The serpent of old Nile

Cleopatra's first words in the play are to petition Antony to describe his love for her: 'If it be love indeed, tell me how much' (Act 1, Scene 1, line 15) and, from that point, she continually seeks reassurance and commitment from him. She appears insecure in her position as his mistress and taunts Antony regarding his 'false' love for Fulvia and the influence his wife should have over him: 'What, says the married woman you may go?/Would she had never given you leave to come./Let her not say 'tis I that keep you here./I have no power upon you. Hers you are' (Act 1, Scene 3, lines 25-28).



Throughout the play, she teases, baits and artfully manipulates Antony to keep his interest and test his feelings for her; for example, instructing Alexas, '[i]f you find him sad,/Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report/That I am sudden sick' (Act 1, Scene 3, lines 4-6). When Antony insists that he must leave for Rome, she seems to take it personally and as a sign that he has lost interest in her. She appears to feel rejected and dismisses



his entreaties, suggesting he could not leave if he still found her irresistible and truly loved her: 'When you sued staying,/Then was the time for words. No going then!/Eternity was in our lips and eyes,/Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor/But was a race of heaven. They are so still,/Or thou, the greatest soldier of the world,/Art turned the greatest liar' (Act 1, Scene 3, lines 41-47). When her anxious attempts to convince him to stay fail, she appears to struggle to find the words to say goodbye genuinely and suggests that he will forget her as easily as she forgets her words: 'O, my oblivion is a very Antony,/And I am all forgotten' (Act 1, Scene 3, lines 107-108).

*'Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor
But was a race of heaven.'*

(Act 1, Scene 3, lines 43-45)

Is Cleopatra's love for Antony genuine and constant? She regularly exhibits the anxiety and insecurity often associated with a vulnerable, sensitive lover, but what motivates these expressions? Is she worried about her heart being broken or losing the protection and prosperity her relationship with Antony provides? Is she 'in love' or 'in love with the idea of being in love'? Her fondness for theatrics and melodramatics makes the task of determining her reasons even harder.

After each military defeat, she appears to start considering her options and her future rather quickly, entertaining Caesar's emissaries and even praising Caesar. Yet she whiles away the time Antony is absent reminiscing about the time they spent together, writing him love letters and imagining what he is doing; for example, when she sighs and asks Charmian, 'Where think'st thou he is now? Stands he, or sits he?/Or does he walk? Or is he on his horse?/O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!' (Act 1, Scene 5, lines 23-25).

Perhaps a telling incident is when she flies into a jealous rage in reaction to the news of Antony's marriage and starts beating the messenger. While some critics argue that her exaggerated behaviour casts doubt on the authenticity of her emotions, her jealous fury and subsequent need to find out everything she can about her rival seem appropriate responses for an emotional, jilted lover.

Even if you consider her affections for Antony to be self-serving at times, her expression of sorrow and grief at his death appears sincere: 'Shall I abide/In this dull world, which in thy absence is/No better than a sty? O see, my women,/The crown o' th' earth doth melt. My lord!/O, withered is the garland of the war;/The soldier's pole is fall'n; young boys and girls/Are level now with men. The odds is gone,/And there is nothing left remarkable/Beneath the visiting moon' (Act 4, Scene 15, lines 70-78). Consider also that, having made up her mind to end her life, she hastily grabs a snake to prevent Iras from meeting Antony in the afterlife first and stealing kisses that should be hers. Whether you believe she commits suicide because she cannot live without Antony or because she cannot stand the thought of being humiliated by Caesar and paraded as his trophy, her final moments are spent thinking about Antony, imagining his face and calling out to him, 'Husband, I come!' (Act 5, Scene 2, line 333).



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'Husband, I come!'

(Act 5, Scene 2, line 333)

For the love of Love and her soft hours

Do you consider the play to be a romance, first and foremost? By focusing on the two lovers, the title of the play seems to suggest that it is and, if that is indeed the case, what does Shakespeare appear to be saying about love? Depending on how you interpret the events of the play, he could be suggesting that it is futile to resist what your heart wants or he could be simply saying that love and power/politics don't mix well.

Antony and Cleopatra have a complex and tempestuous relationship, which swings from flirty playfulness to passionate rage, but are they good for each other? Are they both satisfied and nourished by the relationship? Does one love the other more? Are there some people from whom you cannot stay away, no matter how crazy they make you feel? What impact does their need for emotional highs and thrills have on the feasibility of the relationship? If you were friends with them, would you consider the relationship to have potential?

Rome and Egypt: West versus East

Historically, Rome and Egypt had contact and negotiated treaties since around 300 BCE. Alexandria was the cultural centre of the eastern Mediterranean for centuries. It was a place of elegance and splendour. Rome was the centre of an expanding empire based on military might. Shakespeare chooses to foreground the clash of these two cultures as one of the central themes in the play.

In the last century BCE, Roman culture was focused on discipline, honour, duty and restraint. This emphasis made sense as the success and strength of Rome lay in its powerful army and

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skilled soldiers. Military prowess was highly prized and serving in the army was an excellent way of achieving honour and status. In contrast to Rome, Egypt was an old, established and largely stable civilization by the time the Romans encountered it. The nation had been unified under its first king some 3,000 years earlier and enjoyed peace and prosperity for much of the time afterwards. Alexandria was a prosperous centre of trade and commerce. Resources were abundant, life was relatively easy and relaxed for the inhabitants of the city and the arts were flourishing. It is perhaps easy to see why the Romans came to associate

Egyptian opulence and sensuousness with a love of pleasure, luxury and moral laxity — a passive decadence that they, unsurprisingly, disliked.

Shakespeare puts these two cultures, personified by the characters Caesar and Cleopatra, on a collision course right from the start of the play, with Antony loath to tear himself away from the fascinating Cleopatra and their life of pleasure and revelry together to hear the serious, official news from Rome brought by the messengers: 'Let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide arch/Of the ranged empire fall. Here is my space' (Act 1, Scene 1, lines 36-37).

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An artist's impression of the Royal Library of Alexandria. Constructed around 300 BCE, the library was one of the largest and most significant centres of knowledge in the ancient world. Estimates suggest that it may have contained over 400,000 scrolls (ancient books) at its height and it was a major centre of scholarship, until it was destroyed sometime around the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BCE.

Carousing Cleopatra

Antony has clearly been having a great time in Egypt with Cleopatra. As Caesar tells Lepidus: 'he fishes, drinks, and wastes/The lamps of night in revel' (Act 1, Scene 4, lines 4-5). Enobarbus confirms the festive lifestyle he and Antony lived in Egypt, telling Maecenas, 'we did sleep day out of countenance/ and made the night light with drinking' (Act 2, Scene 2, lines 213-214), and when Menas asks whether he could tolerate another drink after the party on Pompey's galley, Enobarbus readily agrees and suggests he is well practised in drinking because 'we have used our throats in Egypt' (Act 2, Scene 6, lines 161-162). Cleopatra also reminisces with her handmaiden, Charmian, about one of the all-night parties she and Antony had: 'I laughed him out of patience; and that night/I laughed him into patience; and next morn,/Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed' (Act 2, Scene 5, lines 22-24).

Cleopatra and Egypt certainly bring out the reveller in Antony. When Cleopatra insists that he should hear the news from Rome, he argues that it is a mistake to waste time that could be enjoyed and spent indulging in pleasurable activities with serious discussions: 'There's not a minute of our lives should stretch/ Without some pleasure now. What sport tonight?' (Act 1, Scene 1, lines 51-52).

Even when the odds are stacked against them on the eve of their final battle with Caesar, he insists they should throw a big party and all 'sup together/And drink carouses to the next day's fate./ Which promises royal peril. — Trumpeters,/With brazen din blast you the city's ear./Make mingle with our rattling taborins,/That heaven and Earth may strike their sounds together,/Applauding our approach' (Act 4, Scene 8, lines 39-45).

It is conspicuous that the early revelry and fun comes to a swift halt for Antony once a 'Roman thought hath struck him' (Act 1, Scene 2, line 87), Cleopatra using this clever play on words to suggest how Antony's thought was both about events in Rome and Roman in mood as the Romans were considered a serious, sober people.

Serious Caesar

Caesar embodies Roman culture and priorities and it is clear from the outset that these are in direct contrast with Egyptian attitudes and values. His first words in the play are to complain to Lepidus about Antony's endless partying and 'lascivious wassails' (Act 1, Scene 4, line 61) in Egypt because these are distracting Antony from his important responsibilities as a triumvir. He is loyal to Rome and takes his official duties seriously. He berates Antony for fooling around in bed with Cleopatra, getting drunk with the common people and staggering around the streets inebriated at midday, pointing out that he and Lepidus must shoulder an even greater burden of responsibility while Antony indulges himself.



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*'we all would sup together
And drink carouses to the next day's fate'*

(Act 4, Scene 8, lines 39-40)

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Promoting the Roman values of dignity, duty and sobriety, he argues that such hedonism is childish and unbecoming of any adult, let alone a person of Antony's stature. He suggests Antony should 'be chid/As we rate boys who, being mature in knowledge,/Pawn their experience to their present pleasure/And so rebel to judgment' (Act 1, Scene 4, lines 31-34).

While Cleopatra appears to spend much of her time moistening her lips with the 'juice of Egypt's grape' (Act 5, Scene 2, line 328), Caesar prefers to remain clear-headed and almost exclusively focused on serious matters of state. The only time he participates in a festive celebration is after successfully negotiating peace with Pompey and, even then, he stays sober during the party and leaves because of 'graver business' that '[f]rowns at this levity' (Act 2, Scene 7, lines 136-137).

Caesar's self-control is exemplary and the epitome of Roman virtues of *dignitas* and *gravitas*. He also personifies the virtue of *pietas* in his devotion to both Rome and his sister, Octavia. When Antony marries Octavia, Caesar cautions Antony to take good care of her several times, 'You take from me a great part of myself./ Use me well in 't' (Act 3, Scene 2, lines 27-28) and ominously warns him that any mistreatment of Octavia would prove a 'ram to batter/The fortress' (Act 3, Scene 2, lines 33-34) of their alliance.



'From Alexandria

*This is the news: he fishes, drinks, and wastes
The lamps of night in revel'*

(Act 1, Scene 4, lines 3-5)

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ROMAN VIRTUES

Ancient Roman culture blended the moral ideals of Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle with the practical, realistic requirements of Roman society and the state. The goal was to provide the people with a set of standards that would guide them to live satisfying and successful lives as productive, contented citizens. Among the prime virtues Roman citizens were encouraged to cultivate were *dignitas*, *pietas*, *gravitas* and *virtus*.



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Dignitas or 'dignity' focused on nurturing respect and esteem for one's self and living a respectable, well-intentioned life of good moral standing and reputation. *Pietas* or 'dutifulness' encompassed the ideas of loyalty, devotion and duty to one's family and to the state. *Gravitas* or 'solemnity' — a virtue still very highly respected in Shakespeare's Elizabethan England many centuries later — emphasised treating people and events with sincerity, honesty and responsible concern. *Virtus* or 'manliness' encouraged having strength of character and behaving with bravery, self-discipline and integrity.

The Caped Crusader: Is self-restrained, duty-bound Batman a modern personification of Ancient Roman virtues?

Emotion versus reason

Shakespeare also appears to use the clash between the Egyptian and Roman cultures to explore the contrast between emotion and reason, passion and logic. Shakespeare presents Egypt as a vibrant, colourful and expressive place – the Egyptian court is full of laughter, the social hierarchy is loose and the characters all speak their minds freely and spontaneously. In contrast, the scenes Shakespeare sets in ‘censuring Rome’ (Act 5, Scene 2, line 67) appear more ceremonious and genteel, with each character speaking politely and according to their stature.

As the personification of Egypt, Cleopatra embodies the visceral, passionate immediacy of emotions and she typically reacts to her circumstances impulsively and demonstratively. As the epitome of Rome, Caesar is almost the exact opposite of Cleopatra and responds to situations with calm dignity and decorum. Perhaps this is most clearly illustrated when they meet for the first time at the end of the play. While it is arguable that neither of them is particularly sincere, Cleopatra is effusive and gushing. She theatrically prostrates herself before Caesar and insists on calling him her master and lord. She also flies into an indignant rage when her treasurer, Seleucus, embarrasses her. Caesar, on the other hand, is courteous and calm. He coolly warns her that she will jeopardise her children’s futures if she commits suicide, but reassures her that he is a friend who understands and cares and who will let her keep her possessions and wealth.

Resolution without reconciliation?

Does Shakespeare reconcile this clash of opposites? Antony is torn between the two cultures throughout the play. He appears to choose love over duty when he sides with Egypt against Rome, but, ultimately, insists he dies ‘a Roman by a Roman/Valiantly vanquished’ (Act 4, Scene 15, lines 66-67). The play closes with a defiant Cleopatra committing suicide and Caesar restoring order and calm, insisting on a solemn public funeral for Antony and Cleopatra before he returns to Rome.

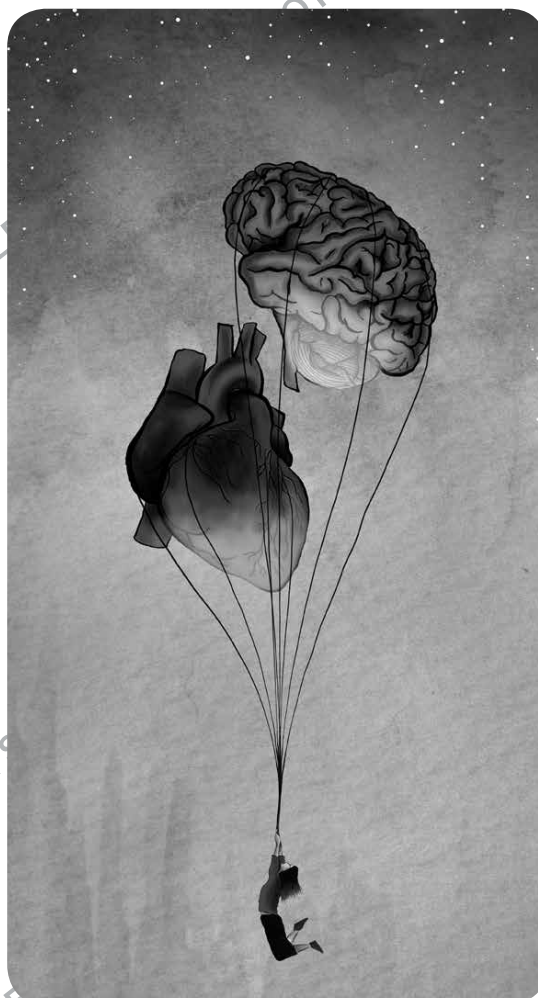
Is Shakespeare suggesting that Caesar and the calm, cold logic he personifies has overcome Cleopatra and her fiery, vibrant passion? Or is he implying that Cleopatra has refused to be subdued and denied Caesar victory through her final passionate act?



© Miranda Yeo

*‘all the world. ’Tis yours, and we,
Your scutcheons and your signs of conquest, shall
Hang in what place you please’*

(Act 5, Scene 2, lines 161-163)



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Who is the more fortunate? Caesar gains an empire, but Cleopatra enjoyed a colourful life full of fun, love and laughter, which she lived to the fullest and without compromise, ending it on her own terms. Is Shakespeare saying that, ultimately, reason will subdue emotion or that love does indeed conquer all because it is what makes life worth living?

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LIVE LONG AND PROSPER

One of the most famous uses of the archetypes of emotion and logic in contemporary pop culture are the two protagonists from the *Star Trek* media franchise: the captain of the spaceship, James T. Kirk, and his right-hand man and science officer, Spock. Kirk personifies human emotion and is hot-headed, passionate, impulsive and brave. Captain Kirk's 'illogical' behaviour and decisions regularly mystify Spock, who is from an impassive alien race called the Vulcans (with pointed ears) that live by logic and reason. The complex relationship between the two men and their contrasting approaches is central to the drama of the series and it is usually only when they work together that the obstacles they face are overcome. Their many exchanges include Kirk explaining to Spock, 'we humans are full of unpredictable emotions that logic alone cannot solve' and 'sometimes a *feeling* is all we humans have to go on'. The perplexed Spock once confesses to another crew member who is refusing his help, 'may I say that I have not thoroughly enjoyed serving with humans? I find their illogical and foolish emotions a constant irritant', but is also matter-of-factly prepared to sacrifice his life for the crew because the 'needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few'.

An artist's impression of the iconic cosmonauts from the Star Trek media franchise facing off. The half-Vulcan Spock (left) and ultra-human Captain James T. Kirk (right). Spock is coolly logical and personifies reason and logic, while Kirk embodies the human spirit by being impulsive, effusive and often rash, but also caring and brave.



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Honour

The concept of honour is explored repeatedly throughout the play. It was a powerful notion for Romans and some academics have argued it was akin to an invisible glue that held Roman society together. Unlike modern societies, which strive for equality, Roman society was maintained through prestige, and honour was how an individual gained status, influence and power. It remains a nebulous, hard to define concept that does not have a direct modern equivalent. It encompassed

an individual's reputation, moral standing, accomplishments and wealth. On the one hand, honour was used by the ruling minority to justify their status and authority. On the other, it encouraged those in power to conduct themselves with integrity and in a manner that would benefit society as a whole.

Personal honour was so important that it was common for noble Romans to choose death rather than disgrace; for example, Brutus retained his honour after he was defeated by Antony at the Battle of Philippi by falling on his sword and his resolute wife did the same by swallowing hot coals.



DYING WITH HONOUR

The ancient Romans are not the only society to have placed a huge emphasis on the concept of honour. It was also popular in feudal Japan and was the central principle of 'bushido', the samurai warrior code. In fact, being honourable was so important among the Japanese ruling class (Daimyos) and their samurai soldiers that an individual who had brought shame upon himself and his family — by being dishonest or cowardly in battle, for example — would commit 'Seppuku' or ritual suicide in order to regain his honour.

Also known as 'harakiri', the practice involved killing yourself by slicing your stomach open. The individual would eat a last meal, wash and dress himself carefully and seat himself on his 'death cloth'. Seated, he would write a final death poem and then open the top of his kimono, pick up his blade and stab himself in the abdomen.



© Reynorio Tamayo

The sanctity of honour

As a prominent, successful Roman ruler, honour is extremely important to Antony. As he bluntly reminds Octavia, 'If I lose mine honour, I lose myself' (Act 3, Scene 4, lines 24-25), suggesting that his honour shapes and defines his entire character. Aware of this, Lepidus is horrified when Caesar accuses Antony of being dishonourable by breaking his word, and Antony acknowledges the seriousness of the accusation, telling Lepidus to let Caesar speak as the 'honour is sacred which he talks on now' (Act 2, Scene 2, line 105). After listening to Caesar's grievances intently, Antony apologises for the wars his wife and brother waged against Caesar while Antony was in Egypt, saying he does, '[s]o far ask pardon as befits mine honour/To stoop in such a case' (Act 2, Scene 2, lines 118-119).

Discussions regarding honour and reputation, obligation and responsibility dominate the exchanges between the Romans — the triumvirs, their top generals and Pompey — upon Antony's return from Egypt. Antony even agrees to marry Octavia because it is the responsible choice for a 'good purpose' (Act 2, Scene 2, line 174) and reassures her that he will be a dutiful, honourable husband, entreating, '[r]ead not my blemishes in the world's report./I have not kept my square, but that to come/Shall all be done by th' rule' (Act 2, Scene 3, lines 7-9).



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'No, Lepidus, let him speak.

*The honour is sacred which he talks on now,
Supposing that I lacked it.'*

(Act 2, Scene 2, lines 104-106)

Does the Antony who returns to Rome and solemnly discusses honour and responsibility resemble the Antony the audience met in Egypt at the start of the play? His conversations and behaviour while back in Rome suggest that honour and reputation remain extremely important to him. Is this because he is still fundamentally very much a Roman, despite his growing infatuation with Cleopatra and Egypt, or is it merely because he is on official business and in the company of the triumvirs?

A decisive loss of honour

When tensions start to escalate between him and Caesar, Antony explains to Octavia it is because he feels publicly discredited and dishonoured by the other man: 'he hath waged/New wars 'gainst Pompey; made his will and read it/To public ear;/Spoke scantily of me; when perforce he could not/But pay me terms of honour, cold and sickly/He vented them, most narrow measure lent me;/When the best hint was given him, he not took 't,/Or did it from his teeth' (Act 3, Scene 4, lines 3-10).

Antony explains to Octavia that he must respond to Caesar's provocation or face ignominy and disgrace. He argues that it would be 'better I were not yours/Than yours so branchless' (Act 3, Scene 4, lines 25-26) since losing his reputation and honour would jeopardise his rank and status and, thus, weaken his influence, power and wealth.

It is perhaps ironic that Caesar accuses Antony of being dishonourable in the build-up to the war as well. He uses Antony's public affair with Cleopatra and his generous gifts of territories to her to discredit him as 'dishonourable' in the eyes of the Roman public and deprive him of support.

It could also be perceived as ironic that the war Antony fights to preserve his honour should prove to be the very endeavour that strips him of it. Everything changes for Antony the moment he races after Cleopatra and leaves the battlefield at Actium. Not only does his flight swing the advantage back to Caesar and lead to his defeat on the day, but Antony also loses one of his biggest assets: the respect and loyalty of his soldiers. As the soldier Scarus laments: 'I never saw an action of such shame./Experience, manhood, honour ne'er before/Did violate so itself' (Act 3, Scene 10, lines 26-28). Antony's dishonourable flight is decisive; it loses him the respect of his soldiers and they start deserting his army in droves, ultimately, handing Caesar an unassailable numerical and psychological advantage.

'Gentle Octavia

...

If I lose mine honour,

*I lose myself; better I were not yours
Than yours so branchless.'*

(Act 3, Scene 4, lines 22-26)



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Honour and identity

Antony's ominous warning to Octavia that 'If I lose mine honour, I lose myself' (Act 3, Scene 4, lines 24-25) appears to come to fruition after his final defeat at the Battle of Alexandria. Defeated and dishonoured, Antony uses the way clouds shift in shape as they drift by to illustrate to his squire, Eros, how peculiar and unstable his sense of self and identity have become. He seems unable to reconcile the 'shape' of who he is now with the 'shape' of who he was before:

'Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish,
A vapor sometime like a bear or lion,
A towered citadel, a pendent rock,
A forked mountain, or blue promontory
With trees upon 't that nod unto the world
And mock our eyes with air. Thou hast seen these signs.
They are black vesper's pageants.
...
That which is now a horse, even with a thought
The rack dislimns and makes it indistinct
As water is in water.
...
My good knave Eros, now thy captain is
Even such a body. Here I am Antony,
Yet cannot hold this visible shape.'
(Act 4, Scene 14, lines 3-17)



© dorodraws

In losing his honour, Antony has clearly lost his sense of self. He cannot recognise himself as 'Antony', the noble conqueror who 'with my sword/Quartered the world and o'er green Neptune's back/With ships made cities' (Act 4, Scene 14, lines 67-69). He feels ashamed and disgraced for allowing Cleopatra to manipulate and mislead him. He laments that she has not just made him dishonour himself, but also the 'million more' (Act 4, Scene 14, line 21) lives that have been lost in the war as well. When Mardian informs him of Cleopatra's apparent suicide, he is left feeling still more disgraced and moans that he is living 'in such dishonour that the gods/Detest my baseness' (Act 4, Scene 14, lines 66-67).

Antony resolves to regain his honour in what Cleopatra later calls the 'high Roman fashion' (Act 4, Scene 15, line 100) by falling on his sword. By ending his life on his own terms, he believes that he has regained his honour and nobility. He argues that it is his own heroism that has triumphed and not Caesar who has defeated him: 'Not Caesar's valour hath o'erthrown Antony,/But Antony's hath triumphed on itself' (Act 4, Scene 15, lines 18-19).

Betrayal

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Antony is not the only Roman character in the play who is preoccupied with honour. Pompey rejects Menas's plan to murder the triumvirs when they are feasting aboard his galley because it would be a dishonourable act and, as he explains to Menas, '[t]hou must know/'Tis not my profit that does lead mine honour;/Mine honour, it' (Act 2, Scene 7, lines 85-87). Antony's comrade-in-arms, Enobarbus also struggles with his dishonourable betrayal of his good friend when he defects to join Caesar during the war.

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Enobarbus wrestles with abandoning Antony before he leaves and his misgivings are magnified when Antony forgives his betrayal and restores his treasure to him: 'I am alone the villain of the earth' (Act 4, Scene 6, line 34). This act of kindness shames Enobarbus even more. He feels so grief-stricken and lacking in honour that he considers himself to be unworthy of anything more than a wretched, anonymous death in a ditch: 'I will go seek/Some ditch wherein to die; the foul'st best fits/My latter part of life' (Act 4, Scene 6, lines 41-43).



© Guy Denning

*'I am alone the villain of the earth,
And feel I am so most.'*

(Act 4, Scene 6, lines 34-35)

Is Antony an honourable man?

What does Shakespeare seem to be saying about honour in the play? The concept appears to motivate many of the pivotal decisions and actions made by the characters, in particular, Antony. Shakespeare appears to use Antony to explore how duty and responsibility create and sustain honour. Do you consider Antony to be an honourable man? Does he choose honour and moral worthiness over self-interest? What do you think about his decision to marry Octavia and then to leave her and continue his affair with Cleopatra? Was it honourable of him to agree to the marriage, given the circumstances? The play opens with Antony seeming to care little for his reputation and moral standing in Rome, but it then dominates his conversations with the triumvirs and, ultimately, provokes him into the war with Caesar.

Antony blames Cleopatra for the dishonour of his defeat because of her 'betrayals' on the battlefield, but how complicit is he in his own downfall? By falling on his sword, Antony believes he dies with honour and as 'a Roman by a Roman/Valiantly vanquished' (Act 4, Scene 15, lines 66-67) in the end. He appears to have reconciled himself to his fate by reclaiming his prior identity as an honourable triumvir and Roman. Do you agree with his interpretation of events?

Caesar seems to offer an interesting counterpoint to Antony in that he consistently fulfils his duties and responsibilities to Rome and his family, but often makes questionable moral decisions. How could Dolabella describe him as 'honourable' (Act 5, Scene 2, line 131) to Cleopatra? Do you think Caesar would consider himself an honourable Roman? On the whole, would you consider honour to be a positive or negative force in the play?

Power

The theme of personal and political power is another significant topic in the play. Some commentators have even argued that the real story of *Antony and Cleopatra* is one of politics and power, not love. The play depicts a society in the midst of change with the major characters all jostling for power as the 500-year old Roman Republic crumbles. Against this turbulent backdrop, alliances and allegiances constantly shift and change. The play opens with the triumvirs united against Pompey and the Parthians. This alliance soon falls apart, though, and Caesar breaks the treaty with Pompey and dispenses with Lepidus. Shortly after that, Caesar and Antony are wrestling for

supremacy. In the meantime, Cleopatra's growing influence over Antony helps her to expand the Egyptian Empire, which attracts the wrath of Caesar and leads to war. A series of military defeats diminishes Antony's power, until, ultimately, he commits suicide, leaving Caesar in control of the entire Roman world.

Caesar: ambitious and determined

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare depicts the struggle for power that preceded the establishment of the Roman Empire, with Caesar ruling as its *Princeps* or 'First Citizen'. The play opens in the years immediately following the assassination of Caesar's great uncle, Julius, and Caesar appears to need his fellow triumvirs to help him impose order on the chaos and disorder that is tearing the country apart. Antony is their best military leader, but he has been distracted from his duties by his affair with Cleopatra. Caesar bemoans this fact to Lepidus: 'we do bear/So great weight in his lightness' (Act 1, Scene 4, lines 25-26).

As the play progresses, nonetheless, Caesar amasses more and more political and personal power. He appears to have inherited his great uncle's vision of a powerful, stable country ruling a prosperous empire and clearly sees himself as the strong, firm leader needed to establish this order and unity. He uses Antony and Lepidus to avert the threat of Pompey, but disposes of both Pompey and Lepidus as soon as possible. He manipulates public opinion in Rome and turns the people



With the help of his brilliant general, Agrippa, Caesar becomes the *Princeps* or First Citizen and sole leader of Rome.

STATE CAPTURE

Many modern western democratic systems of government, such as South Africa, are largely based on the structures and processes devised by the Romans during the Roman Republic era. Nowadays, it is understood that the function of democratic political leaders is to act for the greater good of the country, not to serve themselves. This understanding has its roots in the Roman virtue of *pietas* or 'dutifulness', which encompassed the ideas of loyalty, devotion and duty to one's family and to the state (patriotism).

This notion held sway for a long time, but it came to have less and less meaning in the last decades of the Roman Republic as one autocratic leader after another, backed by military might, was guilty of what we in South Africa might understand as 'state capture' — a form of political corruption through which the interests of private individuals start to exert increasing and undue influence over the decision-making processes of the state to their advantage. In the play, it could be argued that all three of the triumvirs are guilty of state capture, but Caesar appears the most blatant and effective.

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against Antony for giving Cleopatra additional territories. As Agrippa notes, the Roman people are 'queasy with his insolence already' and this news will 'their good thoughts call from him' (Act 3, Scene 6, lines 22-23).

Caesar belittles Antony in public and provokes him into war with ease. During the war, his power progressively grows at Antony's expense, not just as his victories expand his territory, but also as Antony's soldiers steadily defect to his side. His cool decisiveness during the war helps deliver him victory in the final battles and the play ends with him restoring peace, law and order.

Cleopatra: focused on personal power?

In the play, does Cleopatra seem more preoccupied with personal or political power? While her historical counterpart is depicted by Plutarch as extremely ambitious and politically astute, Shakespeare's Cleopatra seems largely focused on her relationship with Antony and his commitment to her. The play opens with her seemingly insecure regarding Antony's feelings towards her and agitated by her powerless position as his mistress because he belongs to his wife: 'I have no power upon you. Hers you are' (Act 1, Scene 3, line 28). This situation changes as the play progresses, nonetheless, with Antony frequently complaining about the power she has over him: 'These strong Egyptian fetters I must break, / Or lose myself in dotage' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 126-127).

Antony's concerns prove justified. As Cleopatra's personal power over him develops, his own power seems to grow weaker. He lets his heart rule his head and makes decisions that cost him his authority and respect, along with the control that these grant him. This inclination culminates in him fleeing from the battle at Actium and losing the respect of his soldiers, his sword 'made weak by my affection' (Act 3, Scene 11, line 73).

There are occasions when Cleopatra does seem interested in political power; most notably, when she is negotiating her surrender with Caesar. On the first occasion, she entertains his emissary Thidias and readily agrees with his suggestion that she was under Antony's power and control: 'Mine honour was not yielded, / But conquered merely' (Act 3, Scene 13, lines 73-74). On the second occasion, she attempts to negotiate the best terms she can with Caesar himself, trying to secure Egypt for her son, Caesarion, and as much of her wealth as possible. In the end, she decides that Caesar is being insincere: 'He words me, girls, he words me' (Act 5, Scene 2, line 223). She resolves to reclaim her power by ending her life on her own terms — refusing to be Caesar's prisoner-of-war and 'Egyptian puppet' (Act 5, Scene 2, line 247).

Antony: fixated on love, not power?

Antony, the powerful 'triple pillar of the world' (Act 1, Scene 1, line 13), stands between Caesar and Cleopatra. As much as Antony refuses to be dominated by 'the young Roman boy' (Act 4, Scene 12, line 52) Caesar, he seems happy to cede his power to Cleopatra — at great personal and political cost. His choices to reignite his affair with Cleopatra before officially separating from Octavia and then gift Cleopatra eight Roman provinces gave Caesar the political support and pretext to declare war against Egypt, a situation of which Antony seems keenly aware when



'He words me, girls, he words me, that I should not/Be noble to myself.'

(Act 5, Scene 2, lines 223-224)



he angrily asks Cleopatra: ‘Have I my pillow left unpressed in Rome,/Forborne the getting of a lawful race,/And by a gem of women, to be abused/By one that looks on feeders?’ (Act 3, Scene 13, lines 130–133). As previously noted, his decision to follow his heart and Cleopatra away from the battle at Actium — ‘My heart was to thy rudder tied by th’ strings’ (Act 3, Scene 11, line 61) — costs him his personal authority and respect in the eyes of his soldiers, who start defecting to join Caesar.

Do you believe that Antony is as concerned with power as Caesar? Is this his undoing? Is it fair to suggest that Antony starts the play as perhaps the most powerful character — ‘the greatest prince o’ th’ world’ (Act 4, Scene 15, line 63) — but then steadily loses power and weakens to the point where the only way he can reclaim some power is to choose to end his life? To what extent do you think his personal power flows to Cleopatra and his political power to Caesar during the play? Does Antony appear to pursue power as actively as Caesar or is his relationship with personal and political power different? What do you believe Shakespeare is saying about the nature of power in the play? Is he suggesting that the pursuit of love will always satisfy more than the pursuit of power or simply that love and power don’t mix?



TWO MEN BATTLING FOR SUPREMACY

Two powerful men grow increasingly distrustful of each other. One is a heroic ‘man of steel’ (Act 4, Scene 4, line 43). They are outraged by each other’s actions and what they believe the other man represents. Tensions escalate and conflict is inevitable. Soon the two men are locked in a deadly battle for supremacy. Sound familiar? It’s a description of the rising action in *Antony and Cleopatra*, but it could equally be *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*.



Gender roles

In Ancient Rome (as well as Elizabethan England) there were very strict social and legal rules that governed acceptable male and female behaviour. In Ancient Rome, the law often reflected the double standards of the time. A *paterfamilias* (male head of a family) was legally allowed to murder his daughter if she was guilty of committing adultery, for example, but would incur no punishment if he himself was unfaithful. In Elizabethan England, there were many professions that women were prohibited from entering. It was unheard of for a woman to be an actress, for example, and all theatrical roles, male and female, were played by men.

These strict codes of conduct and societal expectations regarding the demeanour and behaviour of women are epitomised by Octavia. Maecenas describes her as possessing ‘beauty, wisdom, modesty’ (Act 2, Scene 2, line 281) and she is willing to be used as a pawn in her brother’s

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political machinations and be married off to Antony. She is portrayed as mild, obedient and demure, qualities that both Ancient Romans and Elizabethan audiences would have considered the 'ideals' of womanhood. While she has no more than 30 lines in the play, her words lack colour and vitality, being primarily about her praying to the gods and being on her knees, qualities of piety the Romans would have applauded. Her main role in the play is to be an appeasing peacemaker and to try to patch up the breach that develops between Caesar and Antony.

Yet, through the character Cleopatra, Shakespeare appears to subvert these feminine ideals. She is the opposite of Octavia — expressive, passionate, strong and vocal. Her moods shift constantly and she expresses herself freely. She is powerful and manipulative. She is a wily seductress who can transfix men like Pompey the Great, '[who] would stand and make his eyes grow in my brow;/There would he anchor his aspect, and die/With looking on his life' (Act 1, Scene 5, lines 36-38).

In a blurring of gender roles, Cleopatra is more aggravator than peacemaker. She bravely insists on being part of the battle with Caesar, telling Enobarbus in no uncertain terms that she, 'as the president of my kingdom will/Appear there for a man. Speak not against it./I will not stay behind' (Act 3, Scene 7, lines 21-23). She also sways Antony's decisions during the war, which is a typically masculine endeavour — for instance, insisting they fight Caesar at sea despite having the military advantage on land — to the extent that Antony's loyal soldiers become worried and insist 'our leader's led,/And we are women's men' (Act 3, Scene 7, lines 84-85). It is significant that her decision to be present at the battle and then flee leads to Antony's disgraceful and 'unmanly' act of leaving the battle.

Perhaps the most symbolic instance of the blurring of traditional gender roles in the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra is when they drunkenly wore each other's clothes for amusement.

As Cleopatra recalls, '[I] put my tires and mantles on him, whilst/I wore his sword Philippan' (Act 2, Scene 5, lines 25-26). Caesar also wryly observes that the unusual relationship seems to make Antony 'not more manlike/Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy/More womanly than he' (Act 1, Scene 4, lines 5-7).

Why do you think Shakespeare blurs masculine and female qualities and roles in this manner? Is he suggesting that a passionate relationship, driven by a deep love that cannot be reckoned, transcends simplistic and rigid gender roles? Is he perhaps questioning the concept of gender itself and the idea that it is something predetermined or fixed, suggesting that it might be fluid and socially constructed instead?



'Is 't not denounced against us? Why should not we/Be there in person?' (Act 3, Scene 2, lines 6-7). Cleopatra is determined to fight alongside Antony on the battlefield against Caesar.

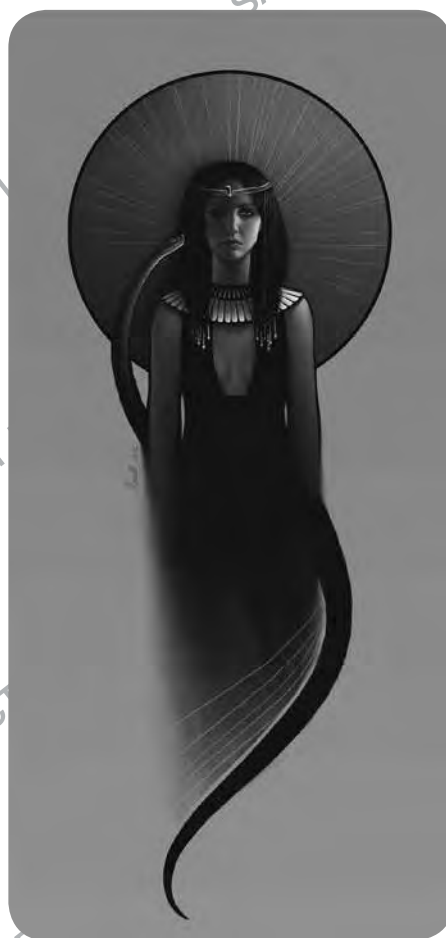
Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, shapes or colours used to represent something else, usually an abstract idea or quality. Symbols usually represent something else by association, resemblance or convention. Shakespeare employs symbolism throughout his plays, using physical things to represent intangible or invisible ideas or qualities in particular.

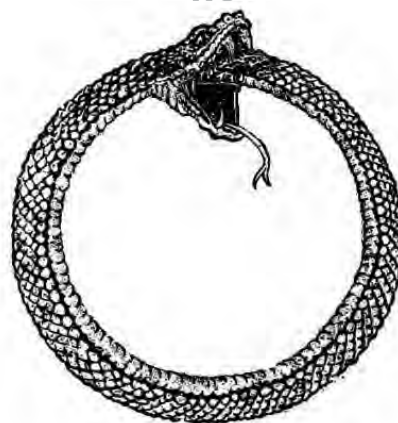
Snakes

Shakespeare uses the symbolism of snakes repeatedly throughout the play. There is the amusing, yet foreboding conversation Antony has with a drunk Lepidus regarding the 'strange serpents' of Egypt that are created out of the mud from the banks of the River Nile in Act Two, Scene Seven. It is perhaps telling that Cleopatra, in particular, seems to favour using snake-related imagery. She tells us that Antony's nickname for her is his 'serpent of old Nile' (Act 1, Scene 5, line 29). She instructs a messenger that he should deliver bad news 'like a Fury crowned with snakes' (Act 2, Scene 5, line 47). After learning of Antony's marriage, she uses snake imagery to curse evocatively, exclaiming, 'Melt Egypt into Nile, and kindly creatures/Turn all to serpents!' (Act 2, Scene 5, line 96-97) and wishing that 'half my Egypt were submerged and made/A cistern for scaled snakes' (Act 2, Scene 5, line 117-118). She also portentously tells Antony that she will not be taken by Caesar if 'serpents have/Edge, sting, or operation' (Act 4, Scene 15, lines 30-31). She dresses up like the goddess Isis as well, who is closely associated with the Egyptian Cobra and had an image of the snake at the base of her crown. All of these references culminate in the powerful image of Cleopatra committing suicide by placing venomous snakes to her skin. As the deadly snakes bite her, she transforms into their maternal wet nurse. She asks Charmian to be quiet and says, 'Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,/That sucks the nurse asleep?' (Act 5, Scene 2, lines 359-360).

It makes sense for Shakespeare to use snakes as the symbols of Cleopatra, Egypt and the Nile. The creatures are associated with the natural world, rebirth, fertility and sexual desire (processes of renewal) because of their peculiar ability to renew themselves by shedding their skin. The snake devouring its tail or 'ouroboros' is perhaps the most famous symbol of this eternal cycle of rebirth and renewal of life. Being venomous, snakes are commonly associated with poison and this connection not only alludes to Cleopatra's suicide, but her 'poisonous' effect on Antony as well. It also makes sense for Cleopatra to be represented by snakes because she is the embodiment of sexuality in the play. In the end, it is perhaps highly fitting that she should die from the intimate bites of the reptiles.



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Swords

Swords also feature regularly in the play. An exasperated Antony swears an oath 'by my sword' (Act 1, Scene 3, line 97) and Cleopatra wishes him success against Pompey by saying, '[u]pon your sword/Sit laurel victory' (Act 1, Scene 3, line 118-119). Caesar asks Pompey if the peace concessions offered by the triumvirs will 'tie up thy discontented sword' (Act 2, Scene 6, line 7). Antony comforts himself after Caesar's victory at Actium by reminding himself that the other man was a coward at the Battle of Philippi and 'kept/His sword e'en like a dancer, while I struck/The lean and wrinkled Cassius' (Act 3, Scene 11, lines 36-38). He also challenges Caesar to fight like a man, 'sword against sword,/Ourselves alone' (Act 3, Scene 13, lines 32-33). After Antony disgraces himself by following Cleopatra from the battle at Actium, he explains that his sword was 'made weak by [his] affection' (Act 3, Scene 11, line 73). When Cleopatra's ships abandon him again at the Battle of Alexandria, a distraught Antony exclaims: 'She has robbed me of my sword' (Act 4, Scene 14, line 27). In the end, it is Antony's own sword that claims his life when he stabs himself with it and which is used by Dercetus to confirm his death to Caesar.



© Julia Pinto

The sword makes an excellent phallic symbol of male power and virility.

Swords are perhaps the quintessential weapon and have been used in combat — typically by men — for centuries. Swords are also highly intimate weapons, usually worn by the owner and used in close-quarter, personal combat; accordingly, swords make excellent phallic symbols of manhood, virility and power.

The sword seems an appropriate symbol in the play for male power and for Antony — the great warrior and physically powerful and imposing man — and it is effective when Antony chooses to reference his sword when revealing how Cleopatra has dominated him. It is also telling that Cleopatra, who expresses the typically masculine traits of being openly antagonistic and sexual, is described as able to make 'great Caesar lay his sword to bed' (Act 2, Scene 2, line 266). It is also noteworthy that she chose to wear Antony's famous weapon — 'his sword Philippan' (Act 2, Scene 5, line 26)— when they swapped clothes since this becomes an evocative image of how she has appropriated Antony's strength and power through their relationship. Ultimately, it seems fitting that Antony falls on his sword at the end of the play in one final, haunting representation of how his personal power and might have been stripped away and used against him and, at the same time, his attempt to reclaim his lost manhood and honour by dying on his own terms.

Clouds

In the penultimate scene of Act Four, Antony's knave, Eros, finds his defeated master in a wistful, contemplative mood. As Eros enters the room, Antony asks him whether he can still see him: 'thou yet behold'st me?' (Act 4, Scene 14, line 1). It seems a strange question, but Antony is lost in thoughtful reverie and appears to be passing the time by 'cloud spotting' or seeing shapes in the drifting clouds: 'Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish,/A vapor sometime like a bear or lion,/A towered citadel, a pendent rock,/A forkèd mountain, or blue promontory/With trees upon 't that nod unto the world/And mock our eyes with air. Thou hast seen these signs./They are black

vesper's pageants' (Act 4, Scene 14, lines 3-9). Antony remarks on how quickly the wind dissolves the shapes in the clouds: 'That which is now a horse, even with a thought/The rack dislimns and makes it indistinct/As water is in water (Act 4, Scene 14, lines 11-13). Antony then likens himself to a transient shape made by a drifting cloud: 'My good knave Eros, now thy captain is/Even such a body. Here I am Antony,/Yet cannot hold this visible shape' (Act 4, Scene 14, lines 15-17).

*'Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish,
A vapor sometime like a bear or lion,
A towered citadel, a pendent rock,
A forkèd mountain, or blue promontory
With trees upon 't that nod unto the world
And mock our eyes with air. Thou hast seen these signs.
They are black vesper's pageants'
(Act 4, Scene 14, lines 3-9)*



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Antony's poignant, unsettling vision transforms the image of drifting clouds into a vivid and striking representation of the impermanence of existence. He begins innocently perceiving various shapes in the clouds drifting overhead (a common human tendency called *pareidolia* that is a fun way to while away the time on a pleasant day). His mood turns sombre, though, when he observes how solid and real the shapes appear even though they are only made of air — a deception of the senses that he likens to a sinister, duplicitous parade of entertainment presented in the shadows on a dark evening. Antony then compares himself to a drifting cloud, which has assumed a particular distinct or 'visible' shape for the briefest of moments before it dissolves into a misty blur and is gone.

Shakespeare's resplendent symbolism of the shape-shifting clouds is wonderfully evocative and layered. In general terms, the clouds are symbolic of how appearances can be deceptive. In more personal terms, a defeated and dishonoured Antony clearly feels adrift and uses the way clouds shift in shape as they drift by to illustrate how peculiar and unstable his sense of self and identity have become. He seems unable to reconcile the 'shape' of who he is now with the 'shape' of who he was before. He appears unable to maintain his appearance or identity as 'Antony', the 'greatest prince' (Act 4, Scene 15, line 63) who '[q]uartered the world' (Act 4, Scene 14, line 68), and is now dissolving into the 'vanquished' who 'can no more' (Act 4, Scene 15, lines 67 and 68).

Antony seems to be preparing himself to die at this point and his inability to 'hold this visible shape' would appear to be a reference to his impending suicide. The dissolving clouds could also be an allusion to his disintegrating world and fortunes, as any further chance of his hopes and ambitions coming to fruition disappears. The shape-shifting clouds are also a luminous symbol of the impermanent and transitory nature of the world — how everything is in a constant state of flux and change and will one day cease to exist.



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The Nile



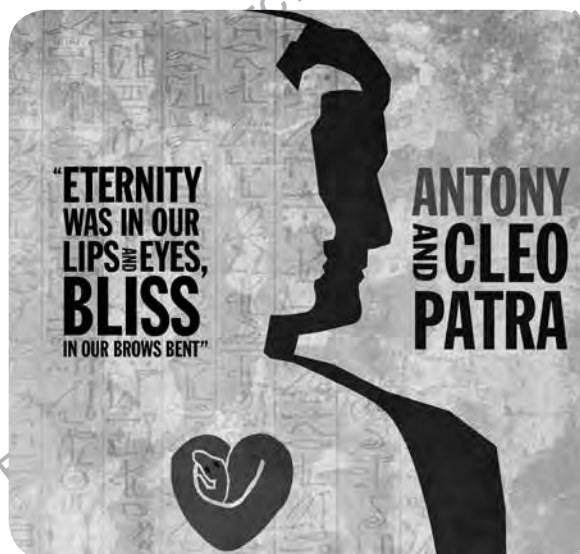
A Ferry On The Nile by Alberto Pasini (1861)

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a play that features numerous scenes in Egypt, Shakespeare refers to the Nile river several times in the play. Antony swears '[b]y the fire/That quickens Nilus' slime' (Act 1, Scene 3, lines 79-80) that he will remain faithful to Cleopatra and his nickname for her is supposedly his 'serpent of old Nile' (Act 1, Scene 5, line 29). Cleopatra, in turn, greets the news of Antony's marriage to Octavia with the exclamation, 'Melt Egypt into Nile' (Act 2, Scene 5, line 96) and, later, swears that, if she has betrayed Antony, let her children and all Egyptians be pelted to death with hail and '[t]he graveless till the flies and gnats of Nile/Have buried them for prey!' (Act 3, Scene 13, lines 198-199). Cleopatra sticks to the same grisly theme when she is captured by Caesar's guards and swears they should '[r]ather on Nilus' mud/Lay me stark naked, and let the waterflies/Blow me into abhorring' (Act 5, Scene 2, lines 68-70) than humiliate her in Rome. Charmian mocks Iras's claim to chastity by suggesting the assertion is as true as the idea that 'the o'erflowing Nilus presageth/famine' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 51-51) and Antony later confirms that the Egyptians use the height of the river to determine how bountiful the harvest will be, as he explains to Lepidus: 'Thus do they, sir: they take the flow o' th' Nile/By certain scales i' th' Pyramid; they know/By th' height, the lowness, or the mean if dearth/Or foison follow. The higher Nilus swells,/The more it promises. As it ebbs, the seedsman/Upon the slime and ooze scatters his grain,/And shortly comes to harvest' (Act 2, Scene 7, lines 17-23). In the final scene of the play, Cleopatra describes the venomous snake she has requested as 'the pretty worm of Nilus' (Act 5, Scene 2, line 289) and one of Caesar's guards is able to confirm the manner of her death to him because he recognises the trails of the snakes from the caves along the banks of the Nile.

Shakespeare uses the Nile river as a symbol of Egypt and the natural world. It seems a fitting symbol because the 6,800 kilometre river is one of the longest in the world and it was of critical importance to the Ancient Egyptians, providing their drinking water and irrigating their crops. As Antony explains to Lepidus, the river dictates how much food they would be able to grow each year. The river is an appropriate symbol for fertility as it sustains the Egyptian people and they grow their crops on the fertile soil along its banks, although Cleopatra subverts this symbolism by using the river's banks as the location for people to die and decay.

Key facts

- **Full Title:** *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*
- **Author:** William Shakespeare
- **Type of work:** Play
- **Genre:** Tragedy
- **Language:** English
- **Composed (time and place):** England, between 1606 and 1607
- **Published:** 1623: The first (and only) *Folio* was published in 1623
- **Tone:** Passionate and decadent, brutal and violent, suspenseful
- **Setting:** Egypt, Rome and Greece, during the rule of the Second Triumvirate (41–30 BCE)
- **Protagonists:** Mark Antony and Cleopatra Philopator
- **Antagonist:** Octavius Caesar
- **Conflict:** Antony is torn between his official duties in Rome and his desire to stay in Egypt with Cleopatra. Caesar provokes Antony into waging war by murdering Pompey, imprisoning Lepidus, undermining Antony and deliberately tarnishing Antony's reputation.
- **Rising action:** Antony leaves Egypt and Cleopatra for Rome. He helps negotiate peace with Pompey, marries Octavia and takes her to his home in Greece. Caesar breaks their treaty with Pompey and murders him. He imprisons Lepidus on false charges. Octavia returns to Rome to negotiate a reconciliation with Caesar, but fails. Antony returns to Egypt. Cleopatra adds 60 ships to his navy and he fights Caesar at sea.
- **Climax:** The naval Battle of Actium. Cleopatra and her ships flee and Antony follows her, losing the battle and his self-respect. Many of Antony's soldiers, including his close friend Enobarbus, defect to Caesar.
- **Falling action:** Antony unexpectedly wins the next battle on land and confidently celebrates the night before the final battle at sea. Cleopatra's ships abandon Antony again and he loses to Caesar. Antony blames Cleopatra for his defeat and vows to kill her. He attempts to kill himself at the false news that Cleopatra is dead. He reconciles with Cleopatra and dies in her arms. Cleopatra kills herself soon after.
- **Foreshadowing:** A soothsayer predicts Charmian will outlive Cleopatra and that Caesar's fortunes will be better than Antony's; the frequent reference to snakes throughout the play are a foreshadowing of Cleopatra's suicide; the eerie music and strange sight of swallows' nests in the Egyptian sails before the final naval battle foreshadow Antony's defeat.
- **Themes and Motifs:** Rome and Egypt (Reason and Emotion), Love, Power, Honour and Betrayal, Gender roles.
- **Symbols:** Clouds, Snakes, Swords and the River Nile.



Summaries and analyses

Using this section

Working through the play act-by-act ensures that solid foundations of knowledge are laid and then gradually and effectively built on. Learners are not required to deal with the whole play until they have worked through it step-by-step. In this section, each act is broken down into its constituent scenes, each of which is summarised and analysed separately. Learners are then required to engage with each scene directly through scene-specific questions that require them to refer to the text closely.

At the end of each act, learners will find essay questions pertaining to that act, accompanied by a selection of enrichment tasks. In the Mini Essay section that follows these summaries, there is also a wide selection of rigorous, intertextual essay topics, ensuring that students also tackle the play in its entirety. (The marking rubrics for the enrichment tasks and essays can be found on the companion CD.)

Act One

Summary of Act One

The play opens in Egypt, with two Romans discussing how deeply Antony has fallen in love with the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra. Antony professes his love for Cleopatra and appears uninterested in anything other than enjoying life with her in Egypt. Once he learns of the seriousness of events taking place in Rome and the death of his wife, Fulvia, however, he resolves to return to Rome to aid the **triumvirate**.

In Rome, Caesar and Lepidus discuss Antony's pursuit of pleasure in Egypt. While Caesar openly expresses his disapproval, Lepidus is more accommodating. The two men learn that Pompey (Sextus Pompeius, son of Pompey the Great) is taking advantage of the growing discontent among the people and becoming a serious threat. They resolve to prepare their armies and confront Pompey.

Act One closes in Egypt, with Cleopatra missing Antony terribly and writing him love letters daily.



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A **triumvirate** was an unofficial, informal alliance or pact between three powerful individuals to use their combined authority and influence to rule the Roman Republic. Mark Antony, Octavius Caesar and Marcus Lepidus negotiated a triumvirate pact in 43 BCE. Known as the 'Second Triumvirate', the agreement lasted for 11 years, until 32 BCE. The 'First Triumvirate' lasted for six years and was negotiated by Julius Caesar, Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus ('Pompey the Great') and Marcus Crassus in 59 BCE. The individual members of a triumvirate are referred to as triumvirs.

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ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Act One: Scene One

Summary: How deep is your love?

Demetrius and Philo, two of Antony's soldiers, discuss how deeply Antony has fallen in love with the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra. Demetrius and Philo discuss how Antony has changed from the fierce warrior they once knew into a man hopelessly in love and seemingly ruled by the woman he loves. Antony and Cleopatra enter and Cleopatra demands that Antony describe how much he loves her. Antony describes his love as limitless and transcendent. A messenger arrives with news from Rome, which Antony does not wish to hear. Cleopatra teases Antony by telling him that it is probably an angry message from his wife, Fulvia. She further speculates that the message

could be from Caesar, containing orders for Antony to follow. Antony insists that he does not care about the contents of the message, he only cares about Cleopatra. She wonders whether Antony is telling her the truth about his love for her, as he is married to Fulvia, but does not love her. Antony tells the messenger to deliver his message to someone else and then leaves with Cleopatra.



*'Let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide arch
Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space.'*

(Act 1, Scene 1, lines 36-37)

Analysis

The opening scene introduces us to the protagonists of the play and their relationship. Two Roman soldiers discuss how Antony's 'dotage' or excessive love for Cleopatra has made the revered general and fierce warrior a 'strumpet's fool' (Act 1, Scene 1, line 14). This opinion appears to be borne out once Antony and Cleopatra enter: Antony acquiesces to Cleopatra's teasing and playful demands and ignores the messenger from Rome — ostensibly ignoring his duties as a ruler and member of the triumvirate.

What are your initial perceptions of the two protagonists and their relationship? What kind of man does Antony seem to you? Do you share his opinion that the depth and passion of love a person attains with another is the most important accomplishment they can achieve? Do you think he genuinely believes this?

Similarly, what is your first impression of Cleopatra? Is she right to doubt married Antony's feelings for her? Does her doubting suggest she is anxious or calculating?

Does their relationship appear equal to you or does one seem to hold sway over the other? Who do you think loves the other the more?

Gifted dramatists and storytellers like Shakespeare will often use the first scene of a play to describe and set in motion all of the variables required for the story to reach its fulfilment. If that is the case in this instance, what do you think these variables might be?



Questions:

1. What are your first impressions of Cleopatra? Substantiate your answer with evidence from the text. (4)
2. What does Cleopatra mean when she calls Caesar 'scarce-bearded'? (2)
3. What does Antony's attitude towards Rome appear to be in this scene? Quote from the text to support your answer. (3)

[9]

Act One: Scene Two

Summary: He always wants what he can't have

Charmian, Iras and Alexas, followers of Cleopatra, talk to a **soothsayer**. The soothsayer tells Charmian that she will not have any children, but that she will outlive the lady she serves. He also informs her that her past was better than her future will be. When Charmian urges the soothsayer to reveal Iras's fortune, he tells them that their fortunes will be the same. They tease the soothsayer and dismiss his fortunes as a joke and Cleopatra enters looking for Antony.

Cleopatra says that Antony was in high spirits before he started thinking about Rome, after which he became sullen. She commands Enobarbus, a trusted friend of Antony, to find him and bring him to her. Yet, when Antony approaches with a messenger, she quickly leaves before he sees her.

The messenger informs Antony that his wife, Fulvia, had gone to war against his brother, Lucius, but they soon joined forces to fight Caesar; however, Caesar's force proved superior and they lost. The messenger suggests that this would not have happened if Antony had been in Rome with Fulvia. Antony agrees and admonishes himself.

A second messenger enters to let Antony know that a third messenger has arrived from the ancient Greek city of Sicyon. The third messenger arrives holding a letter and tells Antony that his wife has died in Sicyon and the details of her death are contained in the letter. He hands Antony the letter and leaves. Antony laments that he had often wished his wife dead, but now that it has happened, he wishes that it was not true.



A **soothsayer** is an archaic name for a fortune teller. In Old English, the word 'sooth' means 'truth' or 'reality' and so the name originally meant someone who speaks the truth'. In the play, the soothsayer uses palmistry to predict people's futures, but soothsayers employed a wide variety of methods to divine or forecast future events. In the ancient world, soothsayers were often well-respected advisors and leaders would turn to them for advice before making big decisions.

An artist's impression of a soothsayer using a crystal ball to see into the future.



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Antony resolves to return to Rome. Enobarbus tries to comfort Antony by telling him that his relationship with Cleopatra is far less complicated now that Fulvia is dead, but Antony has taken the news of his wife's death quite hard and does not appreciate his friend's comments. It is revealed that Sextus Pompeius, the son of Pompey the Great, is amassing a large fleet to combat Caesar. Antony resolves to return to Rome to help Caesar and Lepidus.

Analysis:

The light banter in the beginning of this scene is a foreshadowing of what will happen later in the play. While the two handmaidens dismiss the soothsayer's predictions as a joke, the audience knows that they are likely to be true and, while Charmian is happy to know that she will outlive Cleopatra, she does not realise how soon the queen will die.

Antony's carefree attitude from the previous scene appears all but gone since his 'Roman thought'. Quite aptly, the description of his thought as 'Roman' marks a change in his attitude and the recognition of his duties back in Rome. He is no longer acting 'Egyptian' by ignoring his duties and attending frivolous parties with Cleopatra. Enobarbus remarks that Antony is free to pursue his relationship with Cleopatra now that Fulvia is dead. Antony resolves to return to his duties in Rome and deal with the problems raised by Sextus Pompeius, who may prove a danger.



Questions:

1. What is the significance of the soothsayer in this scene? (2)
2. Why do you think Antony's demeanour changes when he hears the news from Rome? (2)
3. Is Antony's reaction to Fulvia's death one that you would expect? Quote from the text to support your answer. (3)
4. Why do you think Antony only feels it is important for him to return to Rome after he has heard the news of Fulvia's death? (2)
5. Translate the following line into modern English: 'Speak to me home; mince not the general tongue.' (Act 1, Scene 2, line 113). (1)
6. To what does Enobarbus compare Fulvia after her death? (2)

[12]

Act One: Scene Three:

Summary: Act like a lady, think like a man

Cleopatra sends Alexas, one of her followers, to find Antony. She instructs Alexas that if he should find Antony sad, he should tell Antony that Cleopatra is dancing and in high spirits. Should Alexas find Antony happy, he is to be told that Cleopatra has been taken ill. Charmian tells Cleopatra that her methods of loving Antony will drive him away and that, if she wishes to keep Antony, she should not disagree with him or displease him. Cleopatra tells Charmian that her methods are the way to lose him.

Antony arrives and Cleopatra is quick to pretend to be sick. Antony informs her that he will soon be leaving for Rome. Cleopatra swoons and makes a show of saying that she cannot trust his love

for her when he has no problem being unfaithful to Fulvia. Antony explains that the growing tensions in Rome necessitate his departure and that her concerns about his faithfulness are unwarranted as Fulvia is dead. Cleopatra is shocked at Antony's apparent lack of emotion over the death of his wife and wonders whether her death would be received in the same manner.

After a short argument about their love, Cleopatra concedes that Antony is needed in Rome and that he should go. Antony remarks that, although they will be apart, they will always be together in spirit.

*'If you find him sad,
Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
That I am sudden sick.'*

(Act 1, Scene 3, lines 4-6)



© Serpent of the Nile (1953)

Analysis:

A calculating, theatrical and manipulative side to Cleopatra is revealed in this scene. She hatches schemes with the sole purpose of duping Antony and strengthening her hold over him. When Antony reveals that he is leaving for Rome, she responds melodramatically and pretends to faint, but quickly changes tack when he reveals that his wife has died. How do you interpret her ability to change her disposition so astonishingly fast? What do you think it suggests about her character? Some critics argue that it reveals a complexity of character that is the opposite of a typical Roman woman of the time, who would exemplify the Roman virtues of subservience and submissiveness. Do you agree with this statement? Why do you think Shakespeare might portray her in this manner?



Questions

1. Find a word in the scene that means 'to disagree'. (1)
2. What does Antony mean when he tells Cleopatra 'You'll heat my blood'? (1)
3. Why does Antony's reaction to Fulvia's death shock Cleopatra so deeply? (3)

[5]

Act One: Scene Four

Summary: Antony, we need you!

In Rome, Caesar is discussing Antony's exploits in Alexandria with the other member of the triumvirate, Lepidus. Caesar observes that Antony is no longer acting like a Roman leader and that he spends his time fishing, drinking and enjoying parties every night. Caesar suggests that by chasing after Cleopatra, Antony is not acting in the way a man should.

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Lepidus tries to defend Antony, but Caesar scolds Lepidus for being too forgiving and indulgent, arguing that, even if Antony's antics are excused, he has abandoned his responsibilities as a member of the triumvirate and has left the two of them to shoulder the burdens of governing Rome.

'From Alexandria

This is the news: he fishes, drinks, and wastes

The lamps of night in revel, is not more manlike

Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy

More womanly than he;'

(Act 1, Scene 4, lines 3-7)

A messenger enters to inform them that Pompey's forces are growing stronger daily and that disaffected people are thronging to him. A second messenger informs them that the seas are thick with pirates who are commandeering any ships that leave port.

Such serious news prompts Caesar to lament Antony's absence and hedonism. He describes Antony's courage and endurance as a soldier and hopes he will hurry back to Rome from Egypt. Caesar and Lepidus agree to raise their forces and wait for Antony.

Analysis:

The other two members of the triumvirate are introduced in this scene. Lepidus appears to be the weakest of the three. He does not display any real leadership abilities and his role appears to be trying to keep the peace between Caesar and Antony.

Shakespeare is clearly using Caesar as a foil to Antony. Caesar is angry that Antony is neglecting his duties for what he considers frivolous revelry in Egypt. In rejecting Antony's behaviour as trivial and senseless, Caesar is advocating the Roman virtues of decorum, reason and duty. He points out that even juvenile boys who pursue selfish pleasure instead of what they know to be right are chastised. Regardless of his feelings about Antony's choices, however, Caesar still respects Antony for his prowess on the battlefield and is relying on him to help win the looming war against Pompey.

Considering the seriousness of what is at stake, do you find it easy to agree with Caesar or does his judgement of Antony seem harsh? Is Caesar right to feel frustrated with his alliance partner or is it none of his business? Given what you have learnt about the two men so far, do you believe that their differences in temperament are irreconcilable or that Antony is distracted now, but, ultimately, shares the same values as Caesar?



Questions:

1. What are your first impressions of Caesar? Quote from the text to support your answer. (3)
2. To whom do the following lines refer: 'And it appears he is beloved of those/That only have feared Caesar'? Explain the meaning of the lines in modern English. (2)
3. How might Caesar's speech describing Antony's past accomplishments change the audience's perception of Antony's character? (3)

[8]

Act One: Scene Five

Summary: Can't stop thinking about you

In this scene, a lovelorn Cleopatra perks up when she receives news and a gift from Antony. It opens with Cleopatra asking Charmian to bring her **mandragora** so she can sleep until Antony returns.



© Jenny Yoshiko

Charmian chides Cleopatra that she thinks about Antony too much. Cleopatra teases her servant Mardian who is a **eunuch** and wonders what Antony is doing and whether he is thinking about her. She reminisces about her past lovers — Julius Caesar and Gnaeus Pompey — and worries that age has diminished her beauty and desirability.

*'Where think'st thou he is now? Stands he, or sits he?
Or does he walk? Or is he on his horse?
O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!*

(Act 1, Scene 5, lines 23-25)

Alexas returns with news from Antony and a pearl as a gift. He also recounts Antony's passionate message to Cleopatra. Cleopatra asks whether Antony seemed happy or sad and Alexas says neither. Cleopatra is satisfied since she believes ardent expressions of either happiness or sadness would jeopardise his position among his followers. Alexas expresses his surprise at the number of messengers and love letters Cleopatra has sent to Antony. Cleopatra suggests she never loved Julius Caesar as much as she loves Antony, but Charmian teasingly recalls her admiration for Caesar. Cleopatra dismisses this by saying that the affair occurred when she was a silly young woman.



The drug that Cleopatra requests is made from a plant called **mandragora**, also known as mandrake. The narcotic properties of the plant can induce unconsciousness for long periods and it was used as an anaesthetic during medical procedures in ancient times.

Given the narcotic properties of the plant and the fact that its roots often resemble the shape of tiny human figures, mandrake has been associated with many superstitions over the years. In folklore, the mandrake plant is said to have eyes and to scream when plucked from the ground.



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A **eunuch** is a man who has been castrated. In ancient times, castration was believed to eliminate sexual desire and so it was common practice to castrate servants who had intimate access (e.g. bathing and dressing) to the rulers they served, especially women. Eunuchs were considered harmless and trustworthy caregivers and guardians since there would be no carnal feelings, distractions or complications.

A character from the TV Show Game of Thrones, Lord Varys (pictured) is a clever and enigmatic eunuch with a mysterious past.



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Analysis:

This scene offers the audience another glimpse into Cleopatra’s personality. She swings from lovesick pining to renewed delight and ardour. The scene closes with her enthusiastically resolving to write even more love letters to Antony and, if needs be, to ‘unpeople Egypt’ by turning all of its citizens into messengers in the process. What do you think Cleopatra’s behaviour and change of mood in this scene suggests about her character? How would you describe her feelings for Antony and how have these changed in his absence? She appeared calculating and manipulative in Scene Three, but is there any need for her to be anything other than genuine in this scene? Likewise, what does Alexas’s report of Antony’s message suggest to you about the Roman general’s demeanour and feelings? What might Shakespeare be trying to achieve with this scene?



Questions:

1. Find an idiomatic expression in this scene which means ‘a period of youthful inexperience or indiscretion’. (1)
2. What does Cleopatra mean when she says that she will ‘unpeople Egypt’? (2)
3. What nickname does Antony call Cleopatra? What are the connotations of this pet name? (3)

[6]

Essay questions on Act One:

1. In Act One, Scene One, Cleopatra and Antony argue whether their love for each other can be quantified and defined. What does this exchange suggest about the nature of their relationship and their different ideas regarding love? Refer to the play closely to substantiate your response.
2. Discuss what has been revealed about the character of Antony thus far in the play. Pay particular attention to what other characters have said about him in your response.

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3. 'We cannot/call her winds and waters sighs and tears' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 160-162). Discuss the explanation Enobarbus offers Antony for Cleopatra's emotional displays and, based on what you have learnt about her in Act One, state whether you agree with this estimation or not.

[30]

Enrichment task for Act One

This task is an oral and visual presentation. Your presentation should be a speech of 4-5 minutes in length, to be delivered in front of the class. You should make liberal use of visual materials, such as DVD footage (movie clips), Power Point Presentations, posters and diagrams, to make points clearer to your audience. You may work singly or in pairs. Remember to refer to the accompanying rubric on the companion CD to ensure that you are familiar with the marking criteria. Choose from one of the tasks below:

Option 1: 'The triple pillar of the world transformed into a strumpet's fool'

There have been several film adaptations of *Antony and Cleopatra*, including: Charlton Heston's 1972 stately epic, Jon Scoffield's 1974 version, Lawrence Carra's 1984 version and, more recently, the amusing retelling by Barry Avrich in 2015.

Each of these directors chose to introduce the story in a different way. In your speech, compare and contrast the opening scenes in any two of the above productions.

Your focus should be on how the tone of the film is set in each one and how the opening scenes differ from each other. Consider how effective (or not) they are as introductions to the tale and also how closely they relate to the atmosphere created in Scene One of the play (set in Cleopatra's palace in Alexandria).

Consider the following aspects: camera angles and shots, editing, lighting, setting, *mise-en-scène*¹ and any other features you might like to include.

Your presentation needs to be illustrated – so use clips from the films whenever possible to illustrate the points you wish to make.

Option 2: 'Our dungy earth alike feeds beast as man'

In 2012, director Ang Lee turned Yann Martel's amazing novel, *The Life of Pi*, into a movie. The main character, Pi Patel, is a teenage boy who survives a shipwreck only to find himself in a lifeboat with an assortment of animals: a zebra with a broken leg, an orangutan, a spotted hyena and a Bengal tiger. Pi later explains the symbolic significance of these animals; the hyena, for instance, represents the violently aggressive ship's cook.

Your task is to find animal equivalents for the main characters whom we meet in Act One, Scene Two. The visual element of this exercise will entail finding appropriate images of these central characters and then pairing these up with visuals of the animals that you believe represent them best. In your speech, you need to present and justify your selection of images. To do this, you should draw on the words and deeds of the characters.

1 When applied to the cinema, *mise-en-scène* refers to everything that appears before the camera and its arrangement, for example, composition, sets, props, actors, costumes and lighting. The term also refers to the positioning and movement of actors on the set, which is called 'blocking'.

Option 3: The love triangle

The public loves a good scandal involving love, sex and betrayal. If you heard gossip about a man who married for status and then destroyed the family by cheating on his wife, fighting a bitter war against his brother-in-law and committing suicide with his adulterous lover, you would be unlikely to be shocked and would probably find it easily believable.

In your speech, you need to discuss how this storyline of love, sex and betrayal is still relevant today. The visual element of this exercise will entail finding appropriate images of contemporary examples (from soap operas, reality television shows and movies to real life celebrity entanglements). You will need to present and justify your selection of images. To do this, you should compare the words and deeds of the characters in the play with your contemporary examples. Be sure to demonstrate how, and explore why, this storyline is as relevant and entertaining today as it would have been when *Antony and Cleopatra* was first performed.

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The mini essay

Guidelines

The purpose of writing a mini essay is two-fold. The first reason is to demonstrate an understanding of the text in question. The second is to show that you can write about a topic in a focused and sustained way. In other words, a mini essay is not a rambling, disjointed collection of your thoughts regarding a topic, but an integrated and interconnected discussion that develops a clear argument. This section offers some basic guidelines on writing a mini essay, two annotated examples to learn from, and a selection of essay topics.

Some of the things to consider when writing a mini essay include:

- Your essay should be well-planned, concise and your reasoning clear.
- It is highly recommended that you plan your essay outlining the intended structure of your argument and the links between your ideas.
- Your thesis statement should clarify the issue or question that will be discussed in your essay. It should also indicate what points you will make and in what order.
- Each paragraph of the body of your essay should support or refute your thesis statement.
- Any statements you make must be supported by concrete, plausible examples and evidence from the text.
- Your essay should not be more than 450 words in length (essays longer than 500 words will be penalised in the examination) and you are required to provide an accurate word count.
- Your essay should be written in the present tense using the active voice. This ensures a more convincing stance.
- Examiners prefer that you write in the third person.

Planning and structuring your essay

It is important to plan your essay before you start writing your response. Doing so will improve your marks by helping you clarify your ideas and structure your argument logically.

Step 1: Analysing the question

The most important thing to do when writing an essay is to read and analyse the question carefully. You need to make sure you clearly understand what is being asked. The first step is to identify the **task word** or words (i.e. the instruction) in the question. Let's look at the following example:

Does Cleopatra commit suicide because she cannot live without Antony or because she cannot stand the thought of being humiliated by Caesar and paraded as his trophy? Discuss this question in a well-substantiated essay of 400-450 words.

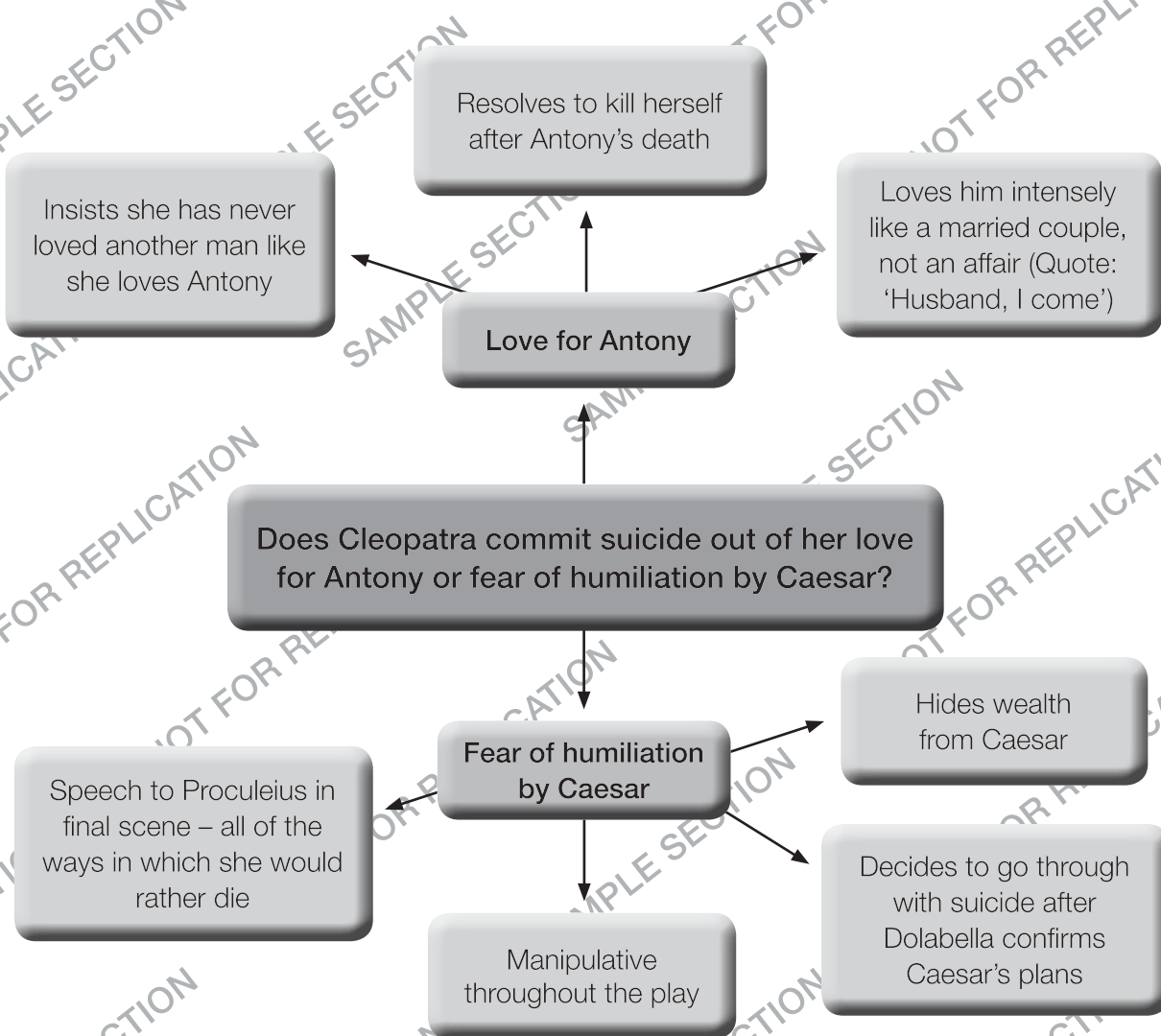
In the preceding example, the task word is 'discuss', which means that you are being asked to recognise and explore the argument being made in the statement, sifting through and debating the relevant key points, before drawing a conclusion based upon the available evidence. Other common task words include 'identify', 'examine', 'compare' and 'contrast'.

Once you have identified the task word, look closely at the **topic** of the essay. The topic tells you the theme or subject matter to focus on. Common topics include the characters in the text, their psychological motivations and relationships, the themes and motifs that impel and illuminate the text, and the author’s use of language and dramatic techniques.

In the example, the topic is Cleopatra’s motivation for her suicide and whether it was her love for Antony or her reluctance to be humiliated by Caesar that drove her to commit suicide. In order to answer the question, you need to demonstrate that you understand the statement by examining the evidence that supports both options. You also need to decide whether you consider Cleopatra’s suicide to be an expression of her love for Antony, her fear of humiliation by Caesar, for both reasons or neither. Whatever conclusion you reach, make sure that you provide evidence to support your opinion in your essay.

Step 2: Mapping your answer

You are no longer required to submit a plan with your mini essay and no marks are awarded for doing so; however, it is still highly recommended that you plan your response adequately. Plan your essay using any method you prefer. ‘Mapping out’ your response has been shown to be an effective way of generating, clarifying and linking ideas. An effective technique to use is a **concept map**. The following is a model concept map for the example question.



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Step 3: Formulating your thesis statement

Once you have mapped your response and weighed up the evidence, it is time to formulate your **thesis statement**, which is the main point you want to prove. A thesis statement will show the reader/marker that you have a clearly formulated argument and are not just rambling. It can be more than one sentence if necessary and should clearly express the opinion/argument that you are going to present.

Let's say that you have mapped your response to the previous example question about Cleopatra's motivation for her suicide and decided that *Cleopatra is a complex character and the motivations for her actions are not always clear. Her suicide is no exception and the audience is left unsure as to whether her death is a reflection of her love for Antony or an attempt to avoid humiliation at the hands of Caesar.* Then this is your thesis statement.

i

Your **thesis statement** should be included at the end of your introduction and it ought to accomplish the following three things:

1. Refer to the main topic (*reason for Cleopatra's suicide*)
2. State the main point/thesis (*while the evidence of her love for Antony is strong, her extensive schemes and manipulations throughout the play indicate that this may not be the case*)
3. Outline the body of the essay (*compare the evidence that she commits suicide out of love for Antony against evidence that she does it out of fear of humiliation*)

Step 4: Linking your ideas together

The final task is to link your ideas together. Your essay will need an introduction, two to four body paragraphs (depending on the number of ideas you have and your word count) and a conclusion.

The introduction

Remember that an introduction should achieve three things:

1. Establish context/background
2. Outline the problem you are trying to resolve
3. State the main point you are arguing (your thesis statement)

The body paragraphs

Use a paragraph for each of your main ideas. Remember that a body paragraph should begin with a **topic sentence** (stating the point of the paragraph), followed by the evidence for, and explanation of, your point: **Point Evidence Explanation (PEE!)**.

The conclusion

Your concluding paragraph needs to summarise your argument and show that you have successfully proved the point you made in your thesis statement.

Annotated essay examples

Essay topic:

Does Cleopatra commit suicide because she cannot live without Antony or because she cannot stand the thought of being humiliated by Caesar and paraded as his trophy? Discuss this question in a well-substantiated essay of 400-450 words.

(Question 9 of the General Essay Questions on p.174)

INTRODUCTION	<p>Cleopatra is a complex character and the motivations for her actions are not always clear. Her suicide is no exception and the audience is left unsure as to whether her death is a reflection of her love for Antony or an attempt to avoid humiliation at the hands of Caesar.¹ While the evidence of her love for Antony is strong, her extensive schemes and manipulations throughout the play indicate that this may not be the case.²</p>	<p>Point</p>
BODY	<p>It is clear that Cleopatra has a deep love for Antony.³ Throughout the play she insists that she has never loved another man as much as she loves Antony, despite her maidens pointing out that she has a habit of falling in and out of love quite easily. Her love for Antony does not seem to falter, and her insistence that she loves him remains the same from the first scene of the play right up to the last. She only resolves to kill herself after Antony dies, which seemingly confirms her intense love for the Roman general and, indeed, she cries out '[h]usband, I come' (Act 5, Scene 2, line 333) before her own death. Although they were not married to each other, this suggests that she loved him as a wife loves her husband and that their love was not merely the infatuation of a fleeting, passionate affair.</p> <p>Cleopatra's actions in the final scene of the play, however, make the audience doubt that her affections for Antony were true.⁴ She repeatedly tries to find out what Caesar intends to do with her and seems to be considering her options. She attempts to conceal some of her wealth from Caesar, which suggests that she intends to have a future in which to use it. It only seems to be when Dolabella confirms to her that Caesar plans to humiliate her in his victory parade in Rome that she decides to follow through with her plans for suicide. In her speech to Proculeius in Act Five, Scene Two, she maintains that she would rather suffer and die various horrific deaths than be humiliated by Caesar.⁵</p>	<p>Evidence</p> <p>Explanation</p>
CONCLUSION	<p>It is, therefore, difficult to say whether she commits suicide out of love for Antony or fear of humiliation by Caesar. Shakespeare shrouds Cleopatra in an air of exotic mystery so that the audience does not know what to expect from her. Her motivations are unclear and her suicide seems to be a result of both her loss of Antony and her staunch refusal to be humiliated by Caesar.⁶</p>	<p>Summary of main point</p> <p>Restatement of thesis</p> <p>Closing remarks</p>

Word count: 420

- 1 This is the thesis statement for our essay. It sums up the entirety of our argument.
- 2 This is the introduction of our essay. Its purpose is to introduce the ideas that we are going to expand upon in the rest of the essay.
- 3 This is the topic sentence for this paragraph. It summarises what we are going to argue in the paragraph.
- 4 This is the topic sentence for this paragraph. It summarises what we are going to argue in the paragraph.
- 5 Paragraphs two and three make up the body of our essay. These serve to expand on the ideas introduced in the introduction. Textual evidence is also given for claims made in the introduction.
- 6 This is the conclusion of the essay. The purpose of a conclusion is to summarise the argument we have made, highlighting the most important elements of our argument.

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Act 1

Scene 1

(Alexandria. A room in Cleopatra's palace. Enter Demetrius and Philo.)

PHILO Nay, but this *dotage of our general's*¹
O'erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes,
That o'er the *files and musters* of the war
Have glowed like *plated Mars*, now bend, now turn
5 The *office* and devotion of their view
Upon a *tawny front*. His captain's heart,
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
The buckles on his breast, *reneges all temper*
And is become the *bellows and the fan*²
10 To cool a *gypsy's lust*.³

(Flourish. Enter Antony, Cleopatra, her Ladies, the Train, with Eunuchs fanning her.)

Look where they come,
Take but good note, and you shall see in him
The *triple pillar*⁴ of the world transformed
Into a strumpet's fool. Behold and see.
15 **CLEOPATRA** If it be love indeed, tell me how much.
ANTONY There's *beggary in the love that can be reckoned*.
CLEOPATRA I'll set a *bound* how far to be beloved.
ANTONY Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.

(Enter a Messenger.)

MESSENGER News, my good lord, from Rome.
20 **ANTONY** *Grates me!* The sum.
CLEOPATRA Nay, hear them, Antony.
*Fulvia*⁵ perchance is angry. Or who knows
If the *scarce-bearded Caesar*⁶ have not sent
His powerful mandate to you: 'Do this, or this;
25 *Take in* that kingdom, and *enfranchise* that.
Perform 't, or else we⁷ damn thee.'

ANTONY How, my love?
CLEOPATRA Perchance? Nay, and most like.
30 You must not stay here longer; your *dismission*
Is come from Caesar; therefore hear it, Antony.

Is excessive.
ranks of troops
Mars, the god of war,
is in his armour
service
dark face.
refuses to act with
moderation
Bellows increase the heat
of a fire; a fan cools it.

love that can be
counted is valueless.
limit on

This annoys me – give
me the gist of it.

Conquer ... set free

orders to be relieved of
office

¹ Demetrius and Philo are friends of Antony and speak about his infatuation with Cleopatra as if they are discussing an old man ('dotage' suggests senility).
² Antony both arouses Cleopatra's desire for him and satisfies it.
³ Gypsies were thought to come from Egypt. As used here, it is a contemptuous term for an Egyptian and for a cunning, deceitful woman.
⁴ He was one of the three triumvirs who controlled the Roman world after the collapse of the Roman Republic. The word 'pillar' suggests how powerful Antony once was.
⁵ Antony's wife back in Rome.
⁶ Reference to Octavius Caesar, Julius Caesar's adopted heir and great nephew who was 23 at the time.
⁷ Used to suggest Octavius is behaving like a king and using the 'royal we'.

35	ANTONY	Where's Fulvia's process? Caesar's, I would say—both? Call in the messengers. As I am Egypt's queen, Thou blushest, Antony, and that blood of thine Is Caesar's <i>homager</i> ; else so thy cheek pays shame When shrill-tongued Fulvia scolds. The messengers! Let Rome in Tiber melt and <i>the wide arch</i> Of the ranged empire fall ⁸ ! Here is my space. Kingdoms are clay. Our <i>dungy</i> earth alike Feeds beast as man. The nobleness of life Is to do thus when such a <i>mutual pair</i> And such a twain can do 't, in which I bind, On pain of punishment, the world to weet We stand up peerless.	humble dependant ... or else You are blushing because Fulvia is scolding you.
40	CLEOPATRA	Excellent falsehood! Why, did he marry Fulvia and not love her? I'll seem the fool I am not. Antony	Ordered. abounding in dung a pair who love each other equally
45	ANTONY	But stirred by Cleopatra. Now for the love of <i>Love and her soft hours</i> ¹⁰ , Let's not <i>confound</i> the time with <i>conference</i> harsh. There's not a minute of our lives should stretch Without some pleasure now. What sport tonight?	know What a lie!
50	CLEOPATRA	Hear the ambassadors.	excited
55	ANTONY	Fie, <i>wrangling</i> queen, Whom everything becomes—to chide, to laugh, To weep; whose every passion fully strives To make itself, in thee, fair and admired! <i>No messenger but thine</i> ¹¹ , and all alone Tonight we'll wander through the streets and note The <i>qualities</i> of people. Come, my queen, Last night you did desire it. (<i>To the Messenger</i>) Speak not to us.	waste ... talk argumentative
60	DEMETRIUS	Is Caesar with Antonius <i>prized so slight</i> ?	characters
65	PHILO	Sir, sometimes when he is not Antony He comes too short of that great <i>property</i> Which still should go with Antony.	of so little importance distinctive quality
70	DEMETRIUS	I am <i>full</i> sorry That he <i>approves</i> the common liar who Thus speaks of him at Rome; but I will hope Of better deeds tomorrow. Rest you happy!	very proves right
		(<i>They exit.</i>)	

8 The reference here is to an arch with Rome as the keystone.

9 This is ambiguous. Cleopatra probably means that he will behave foolishly or it could mean that he will allow himself to be truly noble.

10 Venus and her handmaids, the Hours.

11 i.e. I will hear no messenger but yours.

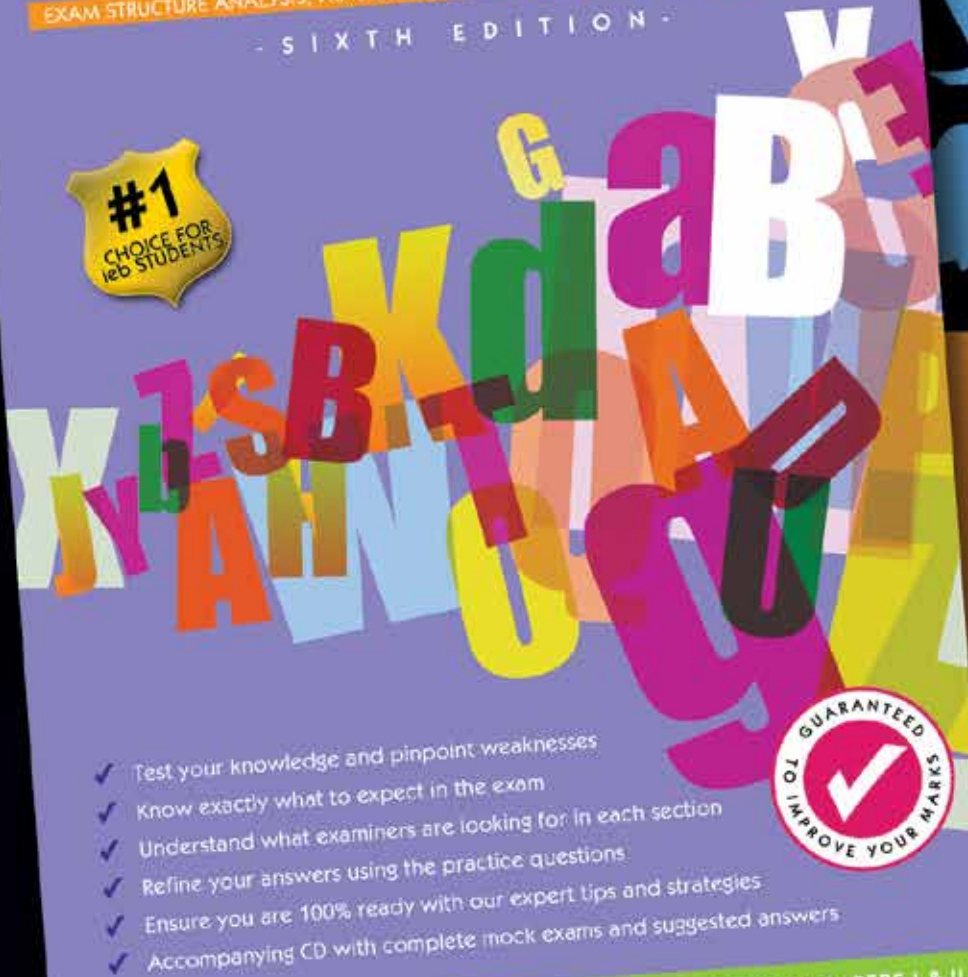
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