S6 English Literature Practice Paper: Unseen Poetry, Shakespearean Tragedy, Narrative Voice, Drama in Performance, Comparative Analysis and Essay Craft (100 marks)

Secondary 6 | English Literature | Time: 90 minutes | Total: 100 marks | 24 questions

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Part 1: Unseen Poetry Analysis (16 marks)

Read the eight-line poem below (lines separated by slashes), then answer questions 1 to 4: The lamplight leans across the empty desk / A clock divides the dark with even hands / Outside, the rain rehearses on the glass / The argument it never quite began / I keep your letter under cooler light / Its paper older than the words it keeps / The night is long, the house is very still / And somewhere in the garden something sleeps.

1. Which figure of speech is used in line 3, "the rain rehearses on the glass"? Explain its effect. [4]

2. How do the tone and the space shift between line 4 and line 5? [4]

3. How do the empty desk, the cooler light and the very still house work together to build the poem's theme? [4]

4. Why is the final line, "somewhere in the garden something sleeps", more effective than a direct statement of grief? [4]

Part 2: Shakespearean Tragedy — Macbeth (18 marks)

Read the extracts and plot points below, then answer questions 5 to 8.

5. Act 1 Scene 1 opens with the witches and "fair is foul, and foul is fair". What does this contribute to the structure of the play? [4]

6. In the "If it were done" soliloquy, what is Macbeth chiefly afraid of? [5]

7. In the scene where Duncan arrives at Inverness, how does dramatic irony operate? [5]

8. Sleep imagery recurs throughout Macbeth. Explain three functions it performs. [4]

Part 3: Narrative Voice in the Novel (16 marks)

Referring to one novel you have studied, answer questions 9 to 12.

9. How does first-person retrospective narration affect reliability? [4]

10. How can setting do thematic work rather than merely providing background? [4]

11. Take one object in the novel and show how it moves from thing to symbol. [4]

12. If a character's language changes across the novel, how does this reveal growth or deterioration? [4]

Part 4: Drama in Performance (16 marks)

The following questions ask you to make directorial choices and justify their effects.

13. For a confessional soliloquy, what lighting would you choose, and why? [4]

14. Design a subtext for a short exchange on stage. [4]

15. How can casting or blocking steer the audience's sympathy? [4]

16. How do pace and pause build tension? Give one example. [4]

Part 5: Comparative Analysis (18 marks)

Choose two poems or two texts and answer questions 17 to 20.

17. Compare how two texts treat death: stance, tone and imagery. [5]

18. How does narrative distance differ between the two texts, and with what effect? [4]

19. Compare the use of natural imagery in the two texts. [4]

20. Which text is more convincing? Support your judgement with textual evidence. [5]

Part 6: Essay Craft and Argument (16 marks)

These questions test essay structure and expression rather than knowledge of texts.

21. This sentence is too vague: "This poem is good and uses a lot of imagery." Rewrite it as a debatable thesis. [4]

22. When quoting, how do you avoid a quotation that floats free of analysis? [4]

23. What is the standard structure of a comparison paragraph? Give three steps with one demonstrative sentence each. [4]

24. Upgrade the descriptive sentence "Macbeth regrets killing the king" into an evaluative one. [4]
