

Hedda Gabler (Henrik Ibsen, 1890)

Paper 2 Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the Part 3 works and their contexts (macro factors)

Genre

- drama: tragedy or morality play
- written to be performed for an audience to see and hear in a public/social setting (theater)
- audience experience the play together and at the same time, which encourages immediate discussion (a social experience)
- readers must infer a lot of information from dialogue and stage directions as there is no direct avenue into the characters' heads

Themes

Cultural/Historical Context

Playwright's Purpose

Matters of Publication

Matters of Reception

Paper 2 Criterion C: Understanding of the use and effects of stylistic features (micro factors)

<p>Setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1890s Norway the former Prime Minister's house, which Tesman buys to please Hedda Hedda's drawing room, where General Gabler's picture hangs and many sets of furniture are scattered about (an aristocratic space for hosting and socializing) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hedda is the only character who doesn't leave the room (evidence that she is trapped by social expectations and gender norms) Brack is the only character who enters the room through the back door (evidence of his subversion and predatory nature) 	<p>Stage Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hedda is a woman of 29 with a distinguished and aristocratic face. Her eyes are steel grey. Her hair is auburn color but not especially abundant. Hedda fires her gun at Brack as he approaches the back door. Hedda sits between Loevborg and Mrs Elvsted when they reunite at her house – a way to physically separate them, to cleave their relationship Hedda forcefully pulls Mrs Elvsted closer to her to stop her from leaving even though she's frightened and is desperate to go Hedda throws the manuscript into the fire to destroy Loevborg and Mrs Elvsted relationship, and to ensure that Loevborg has nothing to live for – a visual/physical representation of her ability to harm and destroy Hedda plays a frenzied dance melody on the piano before she commits suicide 						
<p>Characterization</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="92 618 655 1088"> <p>Hedda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> marries Tesman for financial stability but keeps her father's surname criticizes Auntie Juju's new hat and dismisses Tesman's slippers denies her pregnancy shoots pistol at Brack; rejects his extramarital/ sexual advances (the "triangle") believes her only talent is "<u>boring myself to death</u>" coerces Loevborg into drinking alcohol and joining Brack's bachelor party burns the manuscript instead of returning it to Loevborg gives pistol to Loevborg; tells him to commit suicide ("<u>Do it beautifully.</u>") commits suicide </td> <td data-bbox="663 618 1102 1021"> <p>Tesman</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> marries Hedda on the confidence of securing a professorship spends most of his six-months honeymoon doing research for his book uses credit to buy the former Prime Minister's house in order to please Hedda treasures Rena's slippers; adores his aunts oblivious to Hedda's misery as a housewife works with Mrs Elvsted to rewrite Loevborg's manuscript, leaving Hedda in Brack's care fails to understand the seriousness of Hedda's suicide ("<u>Fancy that!</u>") </td> <td data-bbox="1110 618 1517 1021"> <p>Brack</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an aristocrat; 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<p>Allusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "crown of vine leaves" = Dionysus, the Greek god of wine who throws a lot of parties, loosens people's inhibitions, and basks in drunken revelry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hedda wants Loevborg to drink alcohol again so he can liberate himself from social expectations and restore his free will → She wants him to have "<u>the courage to live according to his own principles</u>" so that she may live vicariously through him. Loevborg does not want to be Dionysus. He prefers his clean, sober life with Mrs Elvsted. 	<p>Resolution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone but Hedda recovers from their momentary loss and finds fulfillment Hedda commits suicide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hedda finally controls a human destiny (an act of empowerment) Hedda surrenders to the suffocation of life in a patriarchal society (an act of escape) Brack says, "<u>People don't do such things</u>" to dismiss the poignancy and weight of Hedda's decision to kill herself → Hedda's society remains a male-dominated world that is blind to the plight of women. 						