**The following material is intended to support teachers in their marking and understanding of the expectations of the NEA task. You are encouraged to use it for departmental standardisation purposes. However, the material must not be shared with candidates, under any circumstance.**

# Component 4: Prose Study

# Candidate B: High Band 5

**AO1** confident, focused overview outlining some of key similarities and differences although this is very ambitious in scope and candidate does not have opportunity to develop all these ideas in 3,500 words.

# 'Journeys are a catalyst for the development of the self'. In light of this statement, compare and contrast the writers' presentation of identity in *Jane Eyre* and *Atonement*.

In Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (McEwan, 2001) and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (Bronte, 1847), the authors use physical and mental journeys to explore their protagonists’ sense of selfhood. Bronte uses physical journeys and the Bildungsroman model to present Jane’s coming-of-age whilst adopting the Gothic’s use of defamiliarization to explore hidden aspects of Jane’s psyche and Victorian social constructs concerning class identity and gender equality. In *Atonement,* McEwan uses contrasting settings and a progression through literary traditions, ranging from Austen-esque satire, modernism and post-modernism, to track Briony’s self-revelations, primarily in her pursuit of reconciliation. In light of this, Bronte and McEwan present journeys to be symbolic of a psychological journey of the self.

**AO4**

Purposeful, relevant link outlined

**AO1/AO4** Helpful topic sentence clearly establishing relevant connection

The presentation of childhood at the commencement of each narrative establishes the starting point for each character’s journey towards adulthood. In *Jane Eyre,* the opening line, 'there was no possibility of taking a walk that day... the cold winter had brought with it clouds so sombre' (p. 9), presents the immediate limitations imposed on Jane, illustrating her restricted position as a female orphan child in Victorian society, a subject many authors of the age focused on due to the marginalisation of dependent, poor children who lacked a sense of origin. In Davies' view, Bronte is 'lifting the lid on an England built on violence towards the young and helpless.' (Davies, 2006), enforced using pathetic fallacy. The adjectives 'cold' and 'sombre' may reflect Jane's mood and feelings towards Gateshead, indicating her dissatisfaction towards her currently restricted situation. The choice of 'winter', as a time when life is silently dormant, for the opening may reflect Jane's position before the beginning of her journey as uneventful and monotonous. As a device in eighteenth-century Gothic literature, extreme, hostile weather was used as a method of decoding the inner landscape of the protagonists, mirroring or magnifying their moods or emotions. However, in later nineteenth-century novels, the traditional Gothic landscapes served to shape the modern Gothic counterpart in portraying the horrors of the new urban settings and women’s entrapment in the domestic sphere. In a similar way, Jane becomes ‘shrined in double retirement’ (p. 10) when she hides behind the curtains away from her cousins, which initially enforces her desire for escapism from her present situation. Although this may be ambiguous, with the curtains being described to offer protection, her isolation is also confining. Bronte’s use of first person narration, which offers a dual perspective, is also revealed in the ambiguous reference to the ‘introductory pages’ (p. 11) of the book Jane is reading as this may be Bewick’s ‘History of British Birds’, (p. 10) or it may be self-referential in drawing attention to the ‘introductory pages’ of the novel itself, implying that the Jane is only at the start of her journey. McEwan uses the primary, more personal setting of Briony's bedroom to indicate her encapsulation within her innocence. The 'straight-backed dolls... under strict instructions not to touch the walls', (p. 5) are indicative of Briony’s restricted upbringing in the upper-middle class. The ‘walls’ become symbolic of societal boundaries, reflecting McEwan’s choice of setting within the 1930’s rather than the novels publication date in 2001 to allow for an exploration of rigid socioeconomic class distinctions. She is also restricted as a female, having limited career options with women rarely being awarded full degrees instead of certificates of education and Cambridge only beginning to award degrees to women in 1948. However, she becomes restrained in her childhood innocence due to her limited experiences with the adult world, an interpretation supported by Hidalgo in stating Briony is 'a heroine whose perception is distorted by…imperfect knowledge.’ (Hidalgo, 2005). The dolls may also act as an escape from reality, a microcosm of an ideal world forming a canvas for her perceptions of adulthood and identity, which then informs her view of reality. Although, in stating that ’no one wanted to know’ (p. 5) about the ‘squirrel’s skull’ (p. 5) she hides in an attempt to be ‘interesting’ (p. 5), it may be implied that there is an absence of parenting and adult influence for Briony. The heterodiegetic narrator then states that ‘none of this was particularly an affliction; or rather, it appeared so only in retrospect’, (p. 5) which implies that Briony's isolated and uneventful childhood results in her controlling need for order, a trait which ultimately leads to her accusation of Robbie as a rapist at the end of Part 1. In this sense, Briony's detrimental character trait is due to the failure of her parents. Like Bronte’s use of Bewick’s ‘History of British Birds’, (p. 10) from which Jane forms a ‘half comprehended notion’ (p. 11) of ‘death white realms’ (p. 10) away from Gateshead, both characters use their imaginations as a means to journey from their immediate environments*. Atonement* is arguably subtler in this exploration of societal limitations, the ‘dolls’ being examples of Briony’s controlling need to have ‘the world just so’, (p. 4) but Jane and Briony are both presented to be limited in determining the direction of their future.

***Aims at very sophisticated and mature conceptual argument – perhaps a little wide-ranging and ambitious for 3,5000 words?***

**AO3**

Sound, secure reference to social contexts which influenced writer’s choice of setting.

**AO5**

Productive and illuminating connection outlined.

**AO2** Analyses prose technique – importance of narrative perspective

**AO2/AO5**

Develops link between Gothic convention and *JE*, considering alternative interpretations

**AO3**

Confident consideration of relationship between literary context and writer’s choices

**AO3** Sound, secure

**AO5** Makes purposeful use of relevant view linked closely to textual analysis

**AO2**

Perceptive close analysis of writer’s choices

**AO5**

Purposeful use of critical view

***A little more direct support might help consolidate point***

***Interesting interpretation but rather a ‘leap’ and some more support would avoid assertion***

**AO5** Sophisticated idea connecting texts and perhaps worthy or a little more development to make fully productive?

**AO4** Uses topic sentence to identify connection and develops first in relation to *JE.*

McEwan and Bronte use intertextual references in Briony and Jane's initial stages of development, examining their early influences to determine their role models and initial senses of identity. In *Jane Eyre*, Bronte refers to 'Pamela' (p. 11) and 'Henry Earl of Moorland' (p. 11). *Pamela* (Richardson, 1740) was a popular epistolary novel in which unwanted advances are made towards Pamela. This tale of seduction is juxtaposed with Brooke's *Henry, Earl of Moorland,* (Brooke, 1781) a favoured pious text. This may imply that Jane's identity is influenced through the medium of stories as a child, with books becoming a device for escapism as well as a means to construct a sense of self. However, these contrasting texts may be indicative of feminist theories regarding the divided nature of Jane's character. As Rosenfield states, 'the novelist …exploits physiological doubles' frequently juxtaposes 'two characters, the one representing the socially accepted or conventional personality, the other externalising the free, uninhibited, often criminal self.' (Rosenfield, 1967, p. 314) with Jane having two extremes to her nature; one being the extremely pious, 'socially acceptable' self, embodied by characters such as Helen Burns; the other being the overtly passionate self, manifested in Bertha Mason and Pamela. Hence, it is only when Bertha and Helen have died that Jane can reach a coherent selfhood. Additionally, the bleak image presented in Bewick’s ‘History of British Birds’ of ‘the rock standing up alone in a sea’ (p. 11) can be seen as a metaphor for Jane’s position within her society. The ‘rock’, standing steadfast in the face of adversity, can be seen as representing the tribulations Jane has yet to face while also implying a stubborn streak in her character. While Briony doesn't experience the same conflict, she is heavily influenced by the literature she reads and writes. The melodrama 'The Trials of Arabella' (p. 4) represents the extravagant extent of Briony's literary pretensions with the play inspiring 'terror, relief, and instruction, in that order', (p. 8) demonstrating her fixation with containing a simplified world within a dramatic microcosm. In some ways, this may be a reference to Aristotle's Poetics in that Briony conforms to his model of tragedy, containing 'incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions' (Aristotle, 335 BC (Aristotle, 335 BC)) within the safe environment of theatre. Raising the question of whether literature has a duty to instruct, it also reveals the limited scope of Briony's literary influences which go on to impact on her life. However, it is then revealed that ‘nothing else came near it for satisfaction, all else was dreams and frustration’ (p. 4) in regards to her achievement of the play. In this way, through the heterodiegetic narration, it is suggested that Briony’s life will remain empty in regards to achievement with the play becoming the climax of her fulfilment. Between Briony and Jane's childhood literary experiences, both McEwan and Bronte begin a subtle revelation of their protagonists’ journey towards selfhood, presenting experiences which are later revealed to be informative incidents. In this sense, they both use literary exploration as a form of psychological journey, rather than a physical journey, accelerating their progression towards selfhood.

**AO4**

Develops link in *Atonement*

**AO5** Explores alternative interpretations showing clear understanding of critical view quoted. Confident use.

**AO2+AO5**

Roots discussion in text

**AO3** Uses literary context to discuss Bronte’s presentation of Jane.

**AO3/AO5/AO2**

Confident and well-informed discussion of possible contextual influences couched in appropriately tentative terms and with some support and consideration of writer’s use of prose technique.

AO1/AO4 Ambitious in scope.

Creatively engaged although word limitation means not all points are fully developed later in essay.

**AO1/AO2** Thorough knowledge of text allowing careful choice of quoted support and helpful, succinct establishing of extract’s context within text without becoming narrative**.**

However, physical journeys are still employed as a means of exploring Jane and Briony’s attitudes at the midpoints of their narratives. In *Jane Eyre*, as Jane walks to Hay before first meeting Rochester, she is 'just leaving the stile; yet the path was narrow.' (p. 132) In this instance, the landscape becomes symbolic, the 'stile' being seen geographically both as a resting place and a crossing point. This image suggests that Jane is at a crucial turning point in her journey towards selfhood, but also that her experiences so far at Gateshead and Lowood have informed her sense of identity thus far. Contrastingly, the use of the adjective 'narrow' may be a symbolic reference to Jane's career as a female, lower-middle class governess. In the context of the Victorian period, governesses were marginalised figures within society as they were above the lower classes and servants but below their employers and masters in the higher classes. More interestingly, the description of this episode slips into the present continuous tense ('leaving' rather than 'left'), to create a sense of immediacy and immersion for the reader. Although, this may serve as a reminder that ‘the world conjured in Jane Eyre is not reality... but a world constructed by Brontë in which to tell a story’. (Allott, 1973) Jane as a retrospective narrator reflects on her state of emerging sexuality in stating that she is a ‘maturing youth.’ (p. 132) In this sense, there is a recognition that Jane has the potential to view Rochester from both ‘bright and dark’ (p. 132) perspectives at their initial meeting, recognising that she has the potential to become overly passionate at this stage in her development. Elements of the Gothic are also introduced in this passage through the reference to the supernatural ‘Gytrash’ (p. 132), an omen in folklore who led people astray, often symbolising death. In introducing an impending sense of the unknown, parallels can be drawn between Rochester’s Byronic hero and the beast-like nature of the ‘Gytrash’. However, once Rochester enters, Jane states that ‘the man...broke the spell at once’, (p. 133) possibly implying that through her first experience with men Jane begins to view relationships realistically rather than in a romanticised way, showing her developing understanding of the world. On the other hand, McEwan's setting for the start of Part Three contrasts with the peaceful country of Bronte's novel but also the closing scene of Part Two with Robbie falling into ‘a thousand hours of sleep’ (p. 267). This change of setting to the hospital in London, however, begins to build a sense of tension, possibly becoming an embodiment of Britain’s fearful feelings concerning war. The ‘turbulent brown river’ which rises with the 'unease' (p. 269) mirroring the hospital’s atmosphere is both changeable, unpredictable and unnatural in its colour, reflecting the unsanitary frontline environment in France, as a corrupted violent threat to the civility of London. This sense of foreboding may be a result of Germany's invasion of Norway, then Denmark in 1940 with the ultimate goal of invading France. It is against this backdrop that British troops converged on Dunkirk in a chaotic panic at the end of May 1940. However, the turbulence of the river may also reflect Briony’s inner conflict and her guilt, in attempting to atone her actions. Wood states that 'trauma, in McEwan's work, inaugurates a loss of innocence', (Wood, 2009) implying that it is in this section that Briony will achieve some sense of maturity, contrasting to her previous characterisation in Part One as an egotistical, naïve child ‘demanding her family’s total attention’. (pp. 16-7) In this way, Bronte and McEwan differ in presenting their characters’ journey of identity as while Briony is shown to be in a state of chaotic inner turmoil, Bronte’s use of a relatively tranquil setting allows for a more subdued reflection on Jane’s status at Thornfield.

***Focus on literary journey could be sharper and more clearly signposted here.***

***A little more brief quotation might help consolidate point***

**AO5/AO3 confident integration of critical view and discussion of possible influence of literary context.**

**AO2/AO3/AO5**

Probing implied meaning, with clear sense of generic features of novel, linked tentatively to social context as possible alternative reading.

**AO2/AO3**

Securely links textual analysis to sound context

***Draws texts together in relevant way but link would be strengthened by more textual evidence for claims***

Briony and Jane both experience an erosion of their identities as each narrative progresses. Bronte utilises one of the few excursions away from Thornfield to show Jane's struggle for a sense of identity. At the silk warehouse in Milcote, Jane is described to be 'sitting like a Second Danae' (p. 309) creating a classical allusion to the story of Danae. In this story, Danae was imprisoned and showered with gold by Zeus who then impregnated her by this method of seduction. The allusion to this story may, therefore, represent the materialistic struggle between the couple, as Rochester, like a domineering Zeus, is intending to adorn Jane in affluent clothing. Bronte uses a further simile, with Jane ‘dressed like a doll by Mr Rochester’ (p. 309), characterising Jane as a helpless puppet under Rochester’s control. Much like Briony’s toy ‘dolls’, Rochester may perceive Jane as a blank slate on which he can imprint his personal ideas of conventional identity onto. The use of the vocative ‘Mr.’ additionally implies a formal distance between them. In the context of the novel pre- Married Women's Property Act 1870, a women's property could only remain her own so long as she remained unmarried, a vital factor in the dependency of women, as seen through Jane's feelings of ‘annoyance and degradation' (p. 310) in knowing that she will become financially dependent on Rochester without property. In light of this, Vaughon's view that Jane is ‘a passionate heroine… desperately trying to reconcile her desire for love and acceptance with the... social doctrines of the Victorian era’ (Vaughon, 1993) is not necessarily supported. It may be suggested that Jane's pursuit of independence is ultimately futile as she cannot improve her social standing without marriage but will lose claim to her independent wealth once she is married. But Vaughon's observation that she is 'desperately trying to reconcile herself' is demonstrated through the 'pressure' (p. 310) she feels to uphold this controlled, reserved appearance. In a similar way, Briony begins to lose her sense of identity through her occupation as a nurse. She is referred to as 'Nurse Tallis' (p. 275) possibly signifying the erosion of her sense of self, in her neglect of her true vocation as a writer and through the removal of class barriers during the war. A sense of self-doubt can be seen through Briony’s ‘footsteps’ (p. 270) making an ‘apologetic sound’ (p. 270), personifying the sound to imply an emotionally tentative state. She becomes defined by her function, social condition, guilt and occupation, enfeebling her as shown through the simile 'the blacked out city like a mental dusk'. (p. 269) This comparison may relate to the darkening mood of the interbellum period in the build up to war, linking to the Blitz of London. At this time, blackouts were enforced to minimise outdoor light, making the cities less visible from the air. Thus, McEwan reflects the condition accurately during the war whilst this landscape becomes a physiological space for Briony’s development. It can also demonstrate Briony’s lack of foresight in the horrors of war she has yet to face and the deaths of Robbie and Cecilia, entering a ‘mental dusk’ of ignorance, enforcing 'a connection between the microcosm of the lives Briony has disrupted and the macrocosm of a world at war.’ (Finney, 2004). In the case of both novels, the stripping away of identity due to the boundaries of social codes and mental barriers prove to be harmful to the two protagonists. While the Victorian socio-historic context surrounding women entraps Jane, the restrictions of World War Two from 1939 onwards captures Briony, and her personal mental controversy concerning her guilt. Such a sense of alienation may act as a catalyst for progression towards selfhood, allowing for a sense of clarity in their identities rather than subscribing to the social norms of their respective eras.

**AO2/AO4**

Supports link with apt support and close analysis of language.

**AO5**

Engages with and discusses critical view showing autonomy as reader.

**AO2/AO3**

Sound social context informs reading of text

**AO2/AO3**

Context of classical mythology used to inform purposeful analysis

**AO4**

Perspective gained from one text in reading other

**AO2/AO3** Uses context to inform interpretation of implied meaning.

***Another perceptive and ambitious link between texts but a little thinly sketched?***

The conclusions of both texts aim to determine whether each protagonist achieves a clearly defined sense of self. However, each resolution differs significantly. The end of *Jane Eyre* primarily consists of Jane's journey to Fearndean to meet Rochester. As Jane enters Fearndean, she passes through 'iron gates between granite pillars' which show her 'where to enter'. (p. 496) This open entrance is one of solidarity and endurance, which may be indicative of Jane’s strong sense of selfhood in her independent wealth but also in her reconciliation of Rochester as her soul mate. There is also a sense of direction here unlike previous journeys, such as her journey to Lowood when Jane is anxious, 'feeling very strange, and mortally apprehensive'. (p. 57) This path forwards may be due to Rochester’s widowhood, but it may also signify Jane's openness to conventional marriage, previously absent due to her moral stance against a bigamous marriage. Hence, with a detailed depiction of the external environment representing the inner human psyche, this physical journey illustrates Jane's final uncovering of a distinct sense of identity. Jane's definitive statement in the closing chapter, 'Reader, I married him', infers through the syntactical placement that Jane is now the subject of the relationship and Rochester the object. In this sense, Jane is marrying Rochester rather than the partnership being equal. Eagleton supports this in stating 'inheritance allows Jane independence and power over Rochester'. (Eagleton, 1975) However, contrary interpretations suggest that Jane subscribes to societal expectations by getting married, losing her strived for 'liberty'. (p. 102) Yet, she reconciles this debate through stating that she is as 'free as in solitude, as gay as in company' (p. 519) expressing that it is better to compromise and exchange total isolated independence for a marriage with restrictions. With this sense of finality, Bronte complies to her Victorian audience’s expectations to have a sense of closure, unlike Atonement’s Epilogue which reveals a metanarrative enclosing a new complexity of truth exposing Robbie and Cecilia's reunion to be false. In a post-modernist style, this turns the focus onto the writing itself deconstructing the previous text. The section begins with 'a journey into the country, a dinner in [Briony's] honour, a renewal of family bonds,' (p. 361) an ending which would typify what is an expected resolution for readers, who at this point still believe that Robbie and Cecilia are alive. This also implies that the centre of the action remains around Briony, with the possessive pronoun 'my’ (p. 361) used to describe the purpose of the dinner, indicating that she is still as egocentric as she was as a child. Hence, it is suggested that Briony has not 'come of age' or achieved a well-defined identity. Unlike Jane, Briony doesn’t reach a level of acceptance of her social circumstances. In her final reflection, the unveiled narrator Briony refers to the truth that Robbie and Cecilia died during the war and asks 'how could that constitute an ending?' (p. 371) This reversal of the reader’s desire for an ‘old ending that panders to temporal expectations’ (Kermode, 1967) raises the question of whether a novelist is under an obligation to deliver the truth. In this sense ‘McEwan plays on the complacency of readerly expectation’ (Wood, 2009) leaving the reader involved in the creation of Atonement's resolution, giving them an option of creating an altered, rectified conclusion. The journey, therefore, results in Briony’s recognition that there is no atonement for her childhood crime. In light of this, identity is shown to be a continuously changing construct rather than a fixed point of acceptance as in *Jane Eyre*. Thus, while Briony’s journey remains unfulfilled in a complex ending, the more conventional closure of Bronte’s novel allows for a full acceptance of Jane’s authentic identity as Rochester’s partner.

**AO2**

Confident awareness of concepts of literary prose and novel genre

**AO1+AO4**

**sophisticated**

**AO5**

Confident discussion of range of views/readings

**AO2** Perceptive, confident analysis and discussion of implied meaning with *some* apt support

***A little more brief quotation might help consolidate point***

**AO5** Clear evidence of autonomous reader handling range of views which have influenced own conceptual reading to further sophisticated argument.

**AO4** Illuminating link. Perspective of *JE* enhances understanding of *Atonement.*

Overall the concept that journeys are a catalyst for the development of identity holds true in both novels as the protagonists’ experience forms of moral development, a growth which becomes the main thrust of the narrative in line with Bildungsroman tropes. Jane and Briony are isolated as children and lost in worlds of fiction, warping their sense of reality. However, by leaving their childhood homes, they begin a journey of painful soul searching, leading them astray before eventually achieving selfhood. While Jane successfully overcomes her unruly passionate nature to mature, Briony is less successful in achieving this sense of selfhood. Briony continues to use fiction as a method of shaping reality, failing to come to terms with the truth of Robbie and Cecilia's deaths. But, she does reach a degree of acceptance for her wrongful conviction of Robbie, realising that she can never fully atone. In both texts, Briony and Jane not only narrate their own experiences but also create their individual identities as narrators, highlighting the native of how identity is constructed and suggesting that identity is composed through narratives. Therefore, identity becomes a personal, fictional concept which is then outwardly projected. In this sense, Bronte and McEwan present journeys to be a catalytic device, guiding their unknowing protagonists towards a state of enlightened adulthood, while using these journeys to question the nature of identity itself.

[Word Count: 3,509]

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