

# Edexcel English Literature GCSE

A Guide to Edexcel English Literature GCSE:  
Paper One



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# Introduction to Component 1

The written exam takes **1 hour 45 minutes** in total and is worth **50%** of your entire English Literature GCSE and is worth **80 marks**.

## Section A

### Shakespeare Play



Section A of paper 1 is worth **40 marks**. This section is split into two parts, **part a)** and **part b)**.

You will be given an **extract** from your chosen **Shakespearean play** which you must refer to within your response;

- In **Part A**, you must respond to the question by focusing on a **close language analysis** of the **extract**. **A02**
- In **Part B**, students are expected to focus on how a **theme** from the extract is explored **elsewhere in the play**. **A01** and **A03**

The written exam takes **1 hour 45 minutes** in total.

Therefore, it is recommended that you spend around **25 minutes** each on both part a) and b), including up to **5 minutes spent planning for each**, leaving the rest of the time to **write your essay**.

Remember that **planning is essential** as **examiners** found that a plan frequently led to a well-constructed answer, and **lack of planning proved an issue**.

## Section B

### Post-1914 British Play or Novel



Section B of paper 1 is also worth **40 marks**, but students will be required to answer **one question** from a **choice of two**.

Each question will be followed by a **short quotation** from the text to spur on your own response.

In this section, marks will **also be given for accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar** **A04** but **A02 will not be assessed**.

Therefore, the assessment objectives covered are **A01**, **A03** and **A04**.

Again, it is recommended that you spend **50 minutes on this section**, including **5 to 10 minutes spent planning**.



# Assessment Objectives 4.2

Assessment objectives (AOs) are the **same across all GCSE English Literature exam boards**, they are used by the examiner to mark and **evaluate** how well you have constructed your essay.

Paper 1 will measure **how you have achieved the following AO's** in order to give you your final mark:

## AO1 (38.8% of marks)

This will measure how you **read, understand and respond to texts** and includes your use of **quotations** to support and illustrate your interpretations.

**Tip** – to score highly in this AO students are expected to **maintain a critical and judicious writing style** throughout their whole essay. **DO NOT** just employ loads of quotes just because you have memorised them all, make sure that it is **relevant** and that you **analyse** it instead of just simply placing it there.

## AO2 (25% of marks)

This will measure how well you **analyse language, form and structure** to create **meanings** and **effects** using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.

**Tip** - For top grades, examiners are looking for students to **avoid** identifying nouns or verbs used by the writer in an attempt to demonstrate an appreciation of their work but rather the top students are expected to demonstrate a **fluent and confident** discussion of the writer's methods.

## AO3 (26.3% of marks)

This will measure how students understand the **relationships between the texts and the contexts** in which they were written. This includes relevant **historical, social and biographical** information. Note that the key word here is **RELEVANT**.

## AO4 (10% of marks)

This will only be assessed in **Section B** of Paper 1. AO4 will measure how accurately you are able to **spell and use punctuation**. To reach the top marks in this AO students are expected to use a **range of vocabulary and sentence structures**.



# Grade Boosters!

To reach the **top marks** for the most important AO's here are a few tips that will come in handy for Paper 1:

## ↑ AO1 GRADE BOOSTER ↑

### DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS

If you are looking to get a **grade 7 or above**, examiners are looking for you to show a **development in your ideas** as you write each paragraph.

You can **show this development through your argument**. For example, if the question you are given is about the theme **love**, you could state at the beginning of your second paragraph that the theme of love **develops** and becomes **increasingly potent** at a later stage in the text, and then in your final paragraph you could state that this particular section of the text is where love is **arguably the most potent**.

This clearly shows that you are writing about how the particular character or theme **develops** within the play by simply changing a few words at the beginning of each of your paragraphs!

## ↑ AO1 GRADE BOOSTER ↑

### RELEVANT QUOTES

Try to avoid remembering **large chunks of text** because not only does this **waste time**, but it also makes your writing look messy and decreases the fluidity of your essay.

Instead, examiners are looking for you to **employ relevant quotes** that are not **too lengthy** to increase the effectiveness of your response.

## ↑ AO2 GRADE BOOSTER ↑

### AVOID IRRELEVANT TERMS

For the top grades, examiners are looking for students to **AVOID** simply identifying Shakespeare's nouns or verbs, as this may limit the effectiveness of your analysis. For example, the 2017 **examiner's report** urges students to compare:

*"Shakespeare **uses the verb** 'bite' in 'bite my thumb' to..."*

with

*"Shakespeare creates an **aggressive tone** through the insult 'bite my thumb' to..."*

The report states that it is the **quality of your explanation** which determines your level, rather than the inclusion of a 'term'.

## ↑ AO3 GRADE BOOSTER ↑

### RELEVANT CONTEXT

The contextual factors that you employ must be **relevant!** Therefore, you must try to avoid bolting on **irrelevant contextual information** that does not correlate with your **argument** or the **question**, as this will decrease your essay's level of **sophistication**.

## ↑ AO3 GRADE BOOSTER ↑

### AVOID GENERALISATION

For the top grades, examiners are looking for students to **AVOID** making sweeping generalisations such as "**all Elizabethan women** were controlled by men".

Instead, examiners are seeking for students to make **sophisticated links** between **relevant contextual factors** and **the question**. For example, if you were speaking about Juliet in 'Romeo and Juliet' you could say instead that "it **perhaps** wouldn't be surprising for Shakespeare's audience to see that Juliet's father attempts to gain control over her, as **usually** within Elizabethan England most women were seen as properties of their husbands and fathers".



## Types of questions and how to approach them

The **types of questions** you could get asked in the exam are:



### CHARACTER



Example **character** question -

*'Explore how Shakespeare presents Juliet'*



### RELATIONSHIP



Example **relationship** question -

*'Explore how Shakespeare presents the relationship between Romeo and Juliet'*



### THEME



Example **theme** question -

*'Explore how Shakespeare presents the theme of love'*



### CONTEXT



Example **contextual** question -

*'Explore Shakespeare's attitudes towards the treatment of women'*



## Alternative Interpretations



For the top grades, examiners are looking for students to be able to write their responses in a **sophisticated manner**, showing the examiner that they have **understood the text thoroughly** and that they are able to write about **multiple, alternative interpretations** in regard to expressing their thoughts about the writer's craft.

**Alternative interpretations** show the examiner that you are a top student who has really **engaged with the text** at hand as it shows that you have a **sophisticated and broad understanding** of the writer's **purpose**.

Some **example sentence starters** that you could use to show the examiner that you are engaging with multiple interpretations are:

"Alternatively..."

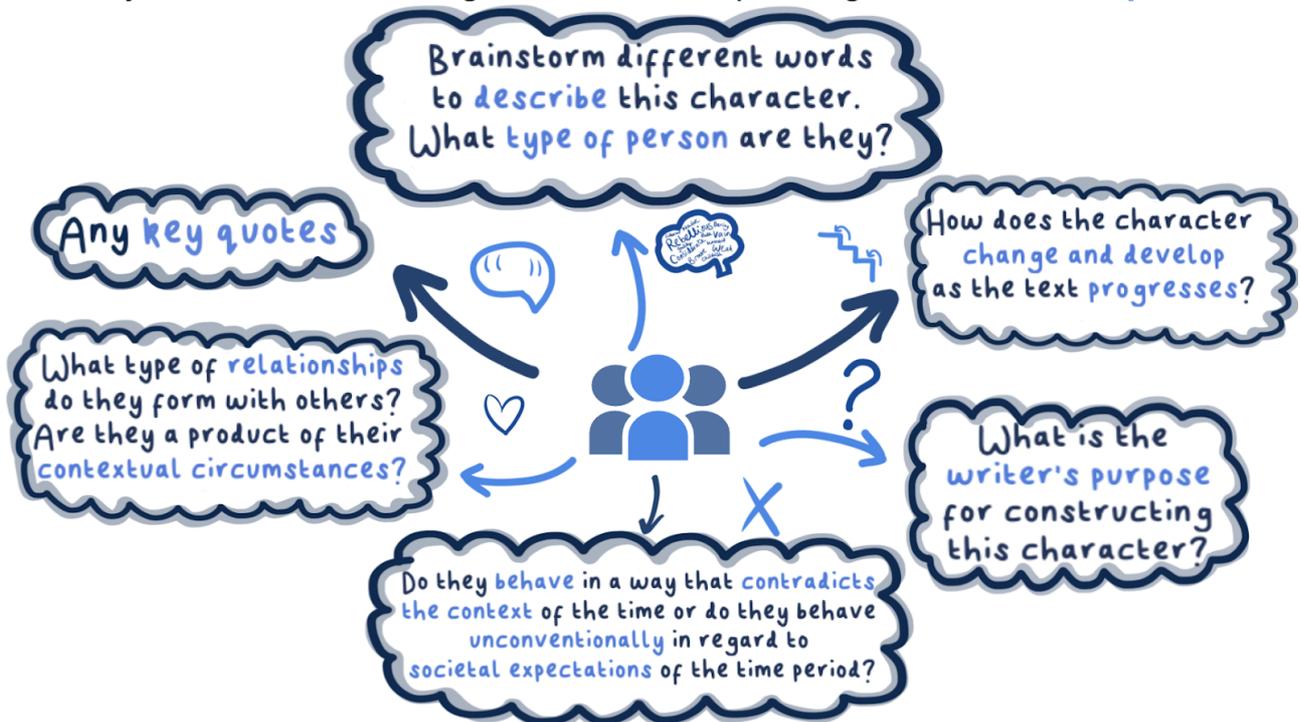
"On one level the writer could be revealing that...Yet, on another level it could be that the writer is trying to show the audience that..."

"In one way this could show... In another way this could also show..."

"Explicitly, the writer is trying to show us that...however implicitly the writer could be showing us that..."

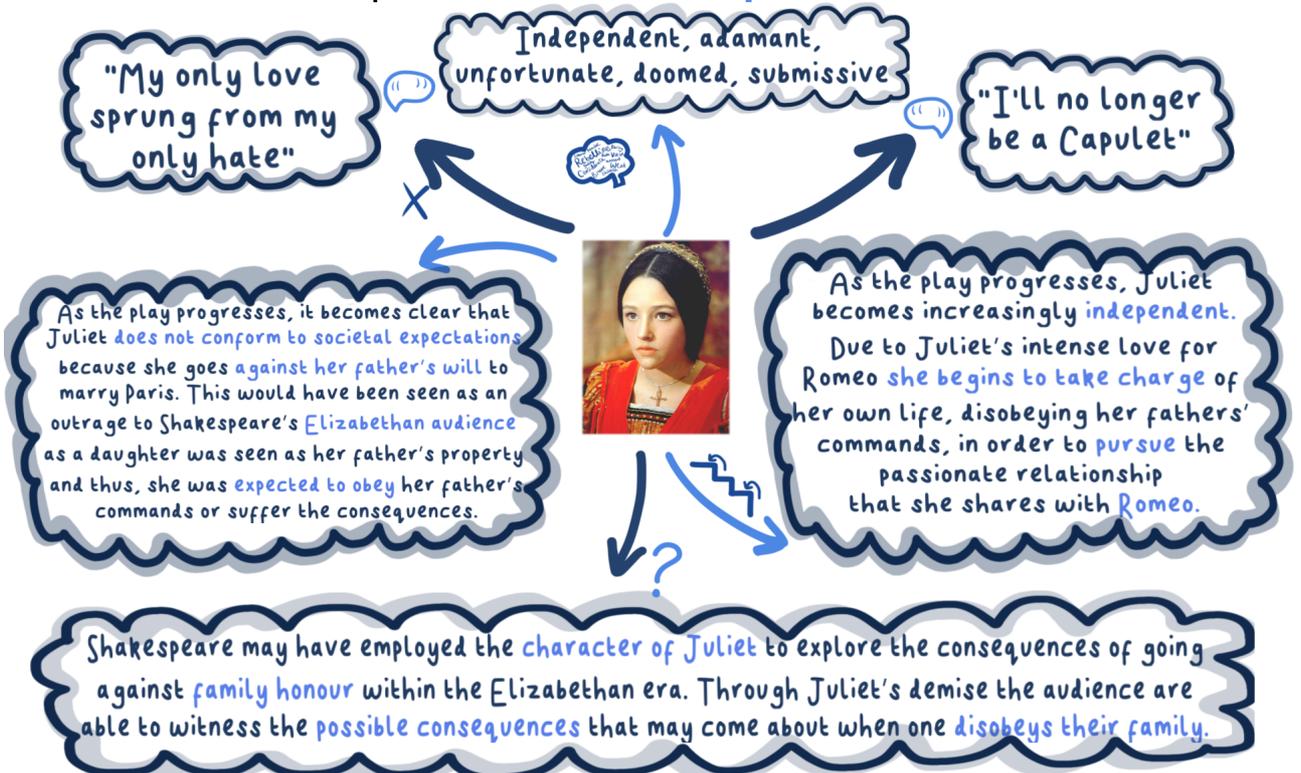


What you should be thinking about when responding to a **character question**:



Lastly, you should construct your main argument for this character.

### Example of a **character question** - Juliet

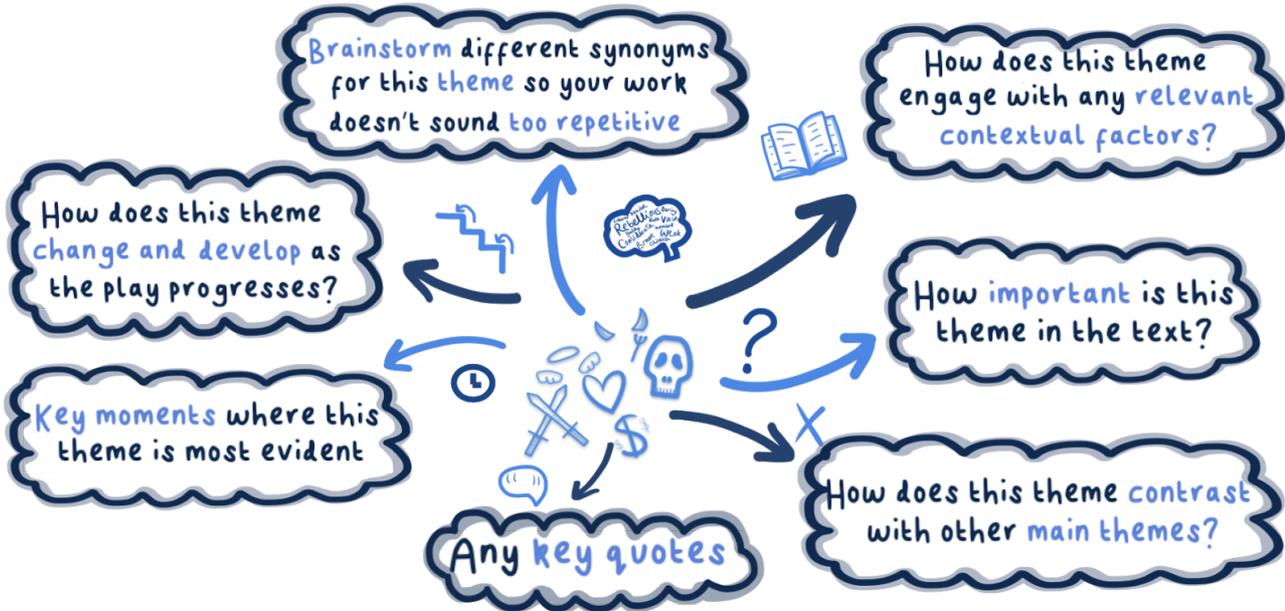


### Main Argument

Shakespeare presents Juliet as a character who becomes increasingly independent as the play progresses. Although to Shakespeare's contemporary audience this may be positive, perhaps it is clear to Shakespeare's Elizabethan audience that Juliet has no other choice but to die as she had gone against family honour to pursue an unconventional form of uncourtly love.

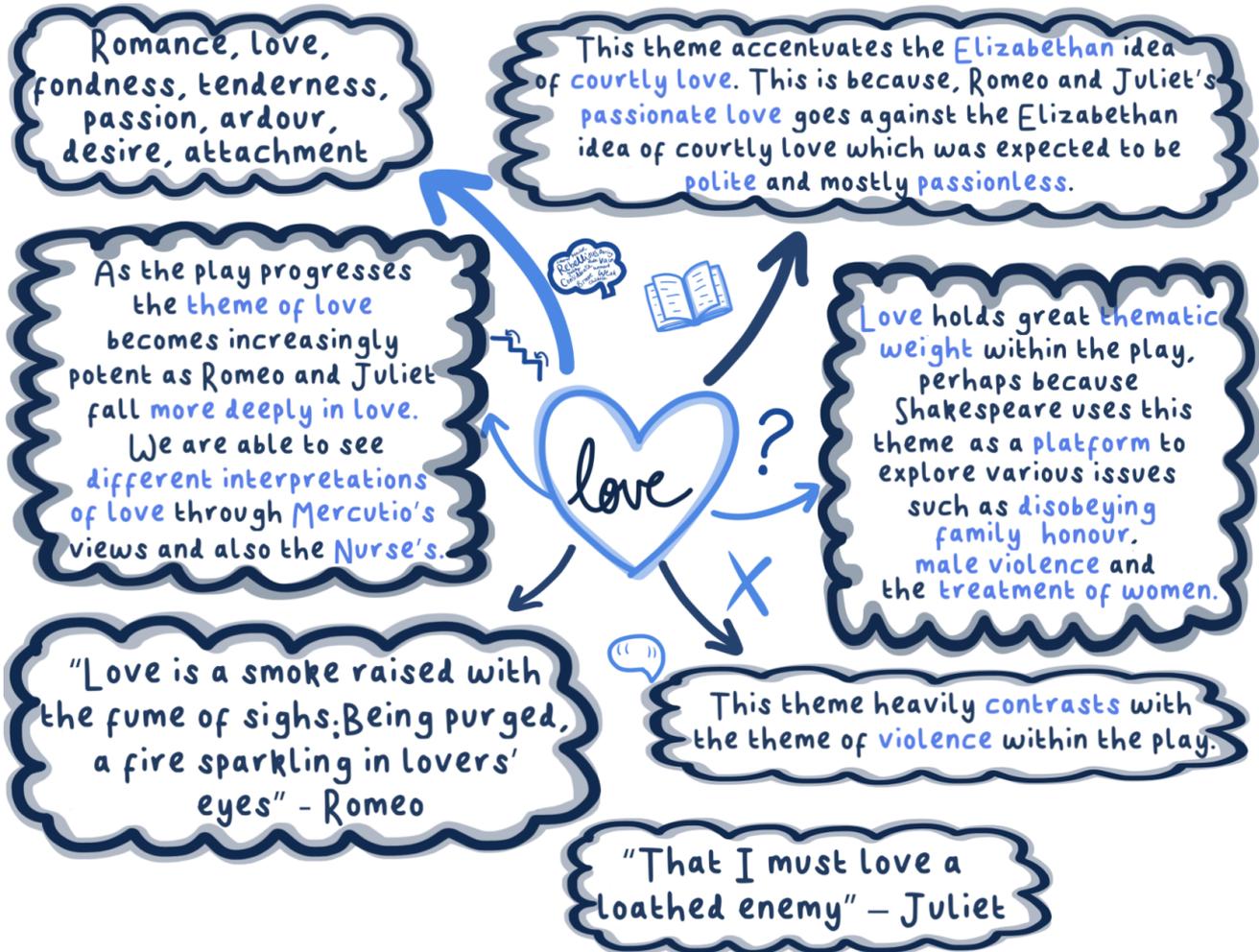


What you should be thinking about when responding to a **theme question**:

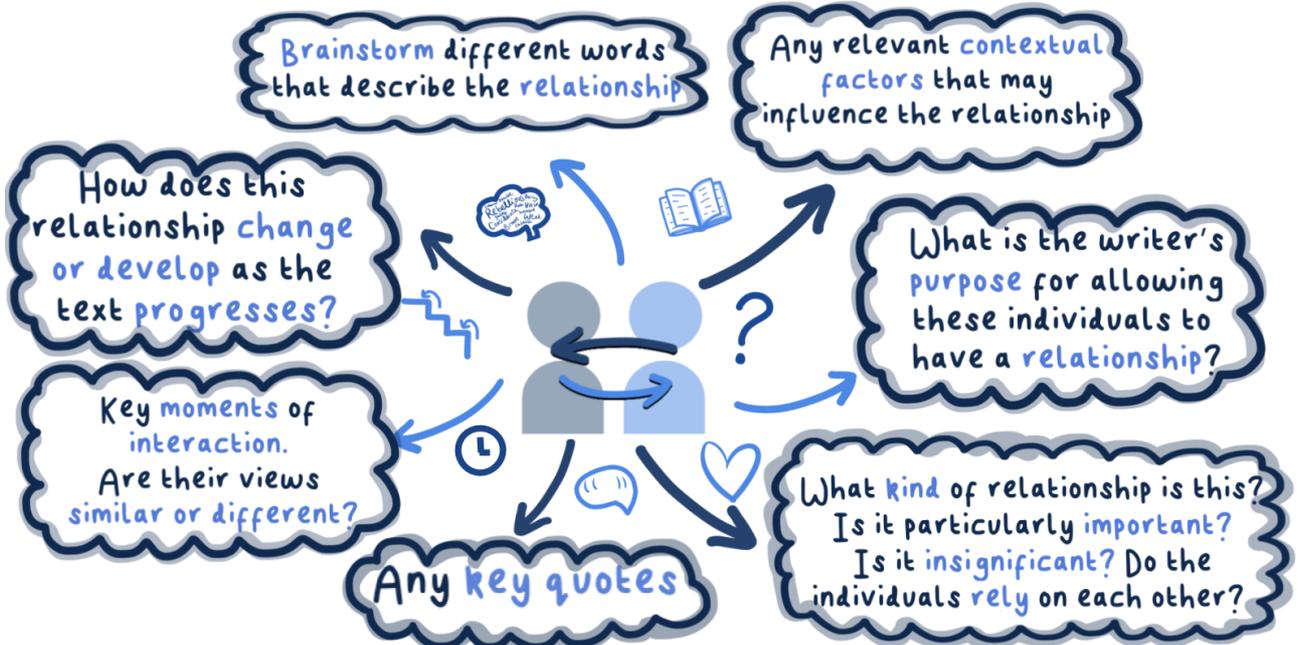


Lastly, you should construct your main argument for this character.

Example of a **theme question - Love**

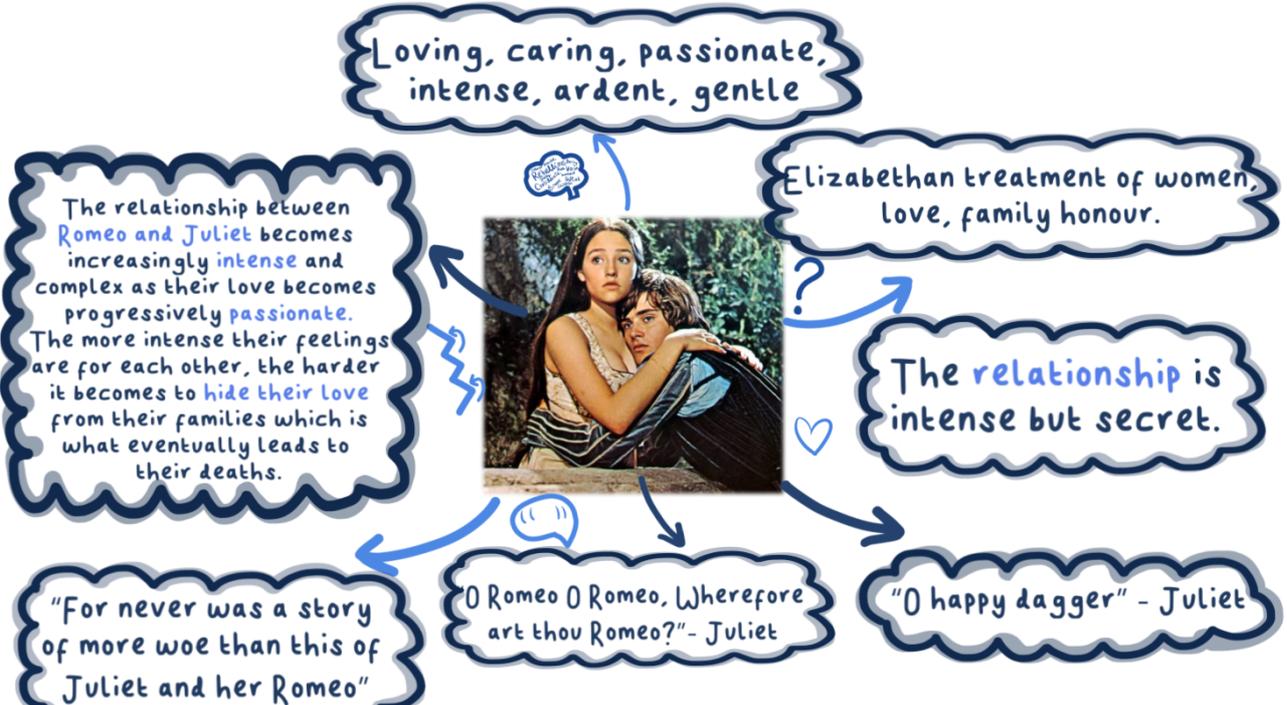


What you should be thinking about when responding to a **relationship question**:



Lastly, you should construct your main argument for this character.

Example of a **relationship question** - **Romeo and Juliet**

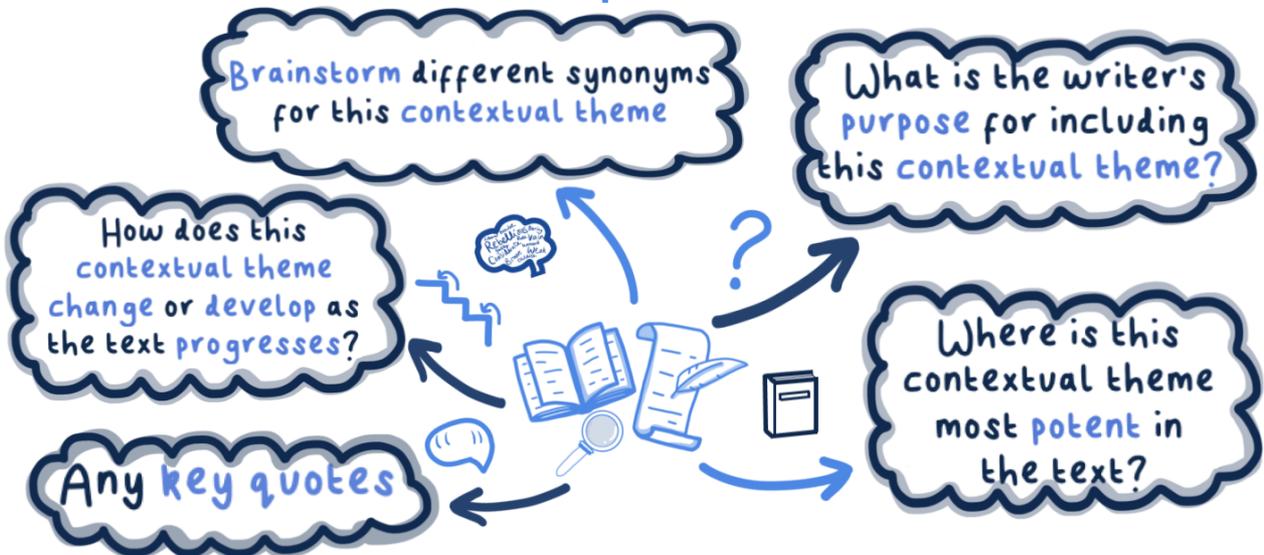


## Main Argument

Shakespeare allows **Romeo and Juliet's** relationship to act as a platform that he can use to broadcast his views on **family honour, love and violence**.



What you should be thinking about when responding to a **question based upon context:**



Lastly, you should construct your main argument for this character.

Example of a **context question** - **Shakespeare's attitudes towards the treatment of women**

Misogyny, discrimination, prejudice, bias, sexism, gender, chauvinism

"My child is yet a stranger to the world"  
- Lord Capulet

"Holy shrine"  
Romeo about Juliet

Throughout the play, the audience are able to witness how **Lord Capulet** treats Juliet as an **object**, as he believes that he should make her decisions on who she should marry and views her as his **property**.

Similarly, one could argue that **Romeo** views Juliet as an object as well as he **objectifies** her as a "holy shrine". Yet, Romeo is mostly gentle towards Juliet and perhaps uses this **religious metaphor** to worship her and to reveal his **love** for her.

## Main Argument

Clearly, Shakespeare explores **different attitudes towards women** within his play to highlight the **discrimination** and the consequences of living within a **misogynist society**.

