

General Vision and Viewpoint | sample answers

Sample answer one (Wuthering heights and How many miles to Babylon? P1

Sample answer two (Sive and Purple Hibiscus) P6

"The general vision and viewpoint of a text can be shaped by the reader's attitude to a central character."

2012 Paper 2

Sample Answer One

Wuthering Heights

How many Miles to Babylon?

I can certainly attest to the accuracy of this statement with regard to the three texts I have studied including: 'Wuthering Heights' ('WH'), 'How Many Miles to Babylon?' ('HMMTB') and 'Casablanca' ('CB'). In each text both the author's depiction of a central character and our empathy and response toward them is paramount in interpreting the author's general vision and viewpoint. Oftentimes our attitude to a central character is conflicted- nothing is black or

white, the author blurs the lines of distinction between right and wrong, fair and unjust. Throughout my study of the comparative the central characters that I have encountered are those built on many complexities. The multifariousness of each character forces the reader to engage their intellect, account for these variegated complexities and understand the dynamics associated with the author's general vision. Whether it's Heathcliff and his trail of abhorrence, or Rick, lurking behind his façade of cynicism, or even Alec, wallowing in his world of isolationism, all of these central characters have something in common; hardship and suffering. These aspects are the fundamental structures to the complexities we talk about. They may either conflict or reiterate our attitude towards the central character and they enhance and aid us in the process of delineating the author's basal paradigm, inclusive of the general vision and viewpoint.

Heathcliff in 'WH' correlates with the above statement given his childhood circumstances. An orphan from the poverty stricken county of Liverpool, adopted into the heights by Mr. Earnshaw, grew up tortured by his childhood tormentor Hindley, whose "*treatment of the latter was enough to make a fiend of a saint.*" Heathcliff is the immediate elicitation of negativity in the novel, the very negativity which contributes to a rather sombre and grim vision and viewpoint, "*from the very beginning he bred bad feeling in the house*". He was a "*usurper*" of Mr. Earnshaws affections, and as a result he suffered the brunt of Hindley's anger. Similarly, in 'CB', Rick is initially seen immersed in his own misery, surrounded by a corona of pessimism as he sits alone, refusing to accept drinks from customers, indifferent to the war that is being waged around him and the desperate refugees flocking into Casablanca and ignorant of the affections of his lover Yvonne. Like Heathcliff, we can see that Rick is a man of

mystery, a man with a traumatic past of hardship. However this is not revealed to us until later in the film. Rick's suffering isn't developed in the film as well as Heathcliff's is in 'WH'.

As 'WH' progresses, an abstract divisive barrier is established between himself and the inhabitants of 'WH'. He is deemed unworthy of their companionship according to the Georgian society's bible of social normality. After all, Heathcliff is "*the imp of satan*", and a "*gypsy ploughboy*". It is only Catherine Earnshaw who chooses to identify with him and befriend him. It is through his relationship with Cathy Heathcliff relieves himself of the cruelty and misery inflicted on him by Hindley. This relationship provided him with solace, a flickering spectre of hope in the midst of his degradation and suffering. "*Miss Cathy and he were now very thick.*"

As is the case for Heathcliff, Alec Moore in 'HMMTB' finds himself confined to the world of his sparring parents; an ineffectual but genuine father and a cold, manipulative mother. The awful tension between two people at war with one another and the effect of these hostilities on their child is convincingly captured in the first part of the novel. "*Their conversations were always the same, like some terrible game, except that unlike normal games the winner was always the same. They never raised their voices, the words dropped malevolent and cool from their well bred mouths.*" By her own admission, this may be due in part to Johnston's own experience of the break of her parent's marriage when she was a child and her own divorce from her first husband. Like Heathcliff, Alec lived in isolation, an isolation brought about by society and the hierarchy of social standing; "*I was isolated from the surrounding children of my own age by the traditional barriers of class and education.*" Alec tries to escape the

limitations and confines imposed on him by forging a proscribed relationship with Jerry Crowe, someone from the opposite side of the great social, religious and political divide. "*I had a friend, a private and secret friend, I never went to his house nor he to mine.*" Like Heathcliff's relationship with Cathy, Alec finds relief and comfort from his statically bleak reality in his relationship with Jerry.

The introduction to central characters in a text is vital in elucidating the fundamental structures of the author's general vision and viewpoint. Without the insight into Heathcliff's dire circumstances or Alec's solitude, our understanding of the author's perspective would lack much significance and reside in insipidity. In contrast to 'HMMTB' or 'WH', we are provided with little acumen into Rick's plight. He sits at the bar, a haggard man, inured to both the cruelties and the beauty of the world. There is a sense of mystery however, the viewer knows immediately that this is a man with a past. The film leaves us in wonderer, questioning what has caused this man to become so indifferent and so miserable. What has affected him so profoundly that he resides with suspicion and lacks any faith in his peers? "*I stick my neck out for nobody*".

Evidently, it is the character's previous situation and past trauma which may either conflict or justify one's attitude toward them, one's delineation of the author's vision and viewpoint as well as the character's actions thereafter. Perhaps it is their previous innocence or happiness which is later corrupted by external factors that manipulates the reader to respond to them in a certain way. For me, Heathcliff is the epitome, the perfect exemplification of this point. After Cathy rejects him in favour of being "*the greatest woman of the neighbourhood*" and

marrying Edgar Linton despite her "*eternal*" love for Heathcliff, he leaves the heights for three years. This is the first stage of Brontë's exploration of how treating an individual with great cruelty can impact upon generations to come. The pain, both physical and mental, inflicted on Heathcliff from a young age renders him feelingless to the plight of others and immerses him in selfishness. However, it is Cathy's betrayal of him that truly elicits his desire for revenge on those that have wronged him. His *raison d'être* is to seek relief from his heartbreak and mistreatment by inflicting terror on all of those who dare cross his path. "*I am trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it at last, I hope he will not die before I do.*" Hindley is Heathcliff's first target, once he gets a taste of the destruction he causes, he continues his reign of terror in order to seek a satisfaction, a satisfaction which doesn't in fact, exist.

Similarly, in 'CB', after Rick's flashback to Paris with Ilsa, where we see them driving through the streets of Paris, boating down the river Seine, dancing and opening champagne, we begin to understand how Rick becomes so embittered by life- like Heathcliff. His torturous separation from Ilsa and her betrayal of him has caused Rick to metamorphose into a man, hidden behind his demeanour of insensitivity, sheltered by his mental walls of protection. We learn that Rick is not coldhearted, rather, he is brokenhearted. Initially, upon Laszlo and Ilsa's arrival into Casablanca, Rick angrily refuses to give them the highly coveted letters of transit; "*I'm the only case i'm interested in.*" However, as the story unfolds, Rick's protective barrier diminishes, his façade of cynicism disintegrates. This is antagonistic to Heathcliff's cycle of change, as Heathcliff surrenders with reticence to the overwhelming emotions of hatred and anger, instead of overcoming his past.

Heathcliff commits a string of morally reprehensible acts in 'WH'. He ensures Hindley drinks and gambles away his entitlement to 'WH', he encourages Isabella's infatuation with him only to treat her appallingly later on, he degrades Hareton; "*I have him faster than his scoundrel of a father secured me*"; he tricks young Cathy Linton into visiting the heights and forces her to marry his son Linton, all because he wants to see his descendant "*fairly lord of their estates*". Heathcliff ensures that nobody associated with either the Earnshaws or the Lintons escapes the indescribable pain and suffering which he was made to endure throughout his life. Brontë does the same thing to the reader as Heathcliff does to Isabella, testing us to see how many times we can be shocked by his gratuitous violence yet still, masochistically insist on him being a romantic hero. Heathcliff defies being understood and it is difficult to resist seeing what the author wants or expects us to see in him. We are teased with the possibility that his cruelty is merely an expression of his frustrated love for Cathy, or that his sinister behaviours serve to conceal the heart of a romantic hero. This is undoubtedly elemental of Brontë's literary intellect which proves so vital in her ideation of vision and viewpoint. She raises an important question as to whether one's own pain and trauma can be proportionate to the pain and trauma they inflict on others. It reiterates her theory that by not allowing true emotions to bloom and replacing them with anger, violence and desire to exact revenge, can lead to resentment, hatred and eventually chaos. She exemplifies the lack of satisfaction yet addictiveness associated with revenge. As Isabella infamously says; "*Violence and treachery are spears pointed at both ends, they wound those who resort to them worse than their enemies.*"

In contrast to 'WH' and 'CB', Alec Moore stands as a type of role model for Heathcliff. He does what Heathcliff should have done in asserting his own humanity above the violence and horror of war, the misery of his circumstances and his mother's betrayal of him. Unlike Heathcliff and Rick, Alec refuses to be overcome by bitterness and anger. He is persistent and strong in his moral standing and there is very little that alters this. Alec was self-aware, he recognised the possibility of becoming immersed in indifference, insensitivity, hatred, violence and anger; "*I was afraid that one day I might wake up and find that I had come to accept the grotesque obscenity of the way we lived.*" It is difficult not to admire Alec, his whole life has been marked by cowardice and indecision, though ironically, it is the one brave and decisive act which both saves him and laments his tragic fate. Alec plays a major role in developing Johnston's general vision and viewpoint, one which emphasises the futility of war. This, however is paradoxical in relation to Heathcliff as Johnston, through the characterisation of Alec, expresses the importance of maintaining one's morality and loyalty only to result in the fatal end of Alec and Jerry. Whereas in 'WH', Brontë emphasises the chaos and terror resulting from one's surrender to hatred and anger, only to conclude with Heathcliff's happiness, where he "*sleeps the last sleep with that sleeper, with his heart stopped and cheek frozen against hers.*"

As is the case for 'HMMTB', we witness Rick redeeming himself and salvaging his true heroic nature. He finally recognises that "*the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world.*" He sacrifices both his future with Ilsa and his comfortable life in Casablanca so that Laszlo can escape with Ilsa and continue his important political work. Instead of dwelling on this, he reassures Ilsa that they "*still have Paris.*" Rick heroically puts his

personal feelings aside for a greater cause and this is the very epitome of Michael Curtiz's general vision and viewpoint.

In conclusion, it is most certainly evident that central characters are essential in shaping the perception of the author's general vision and viewpoint of a text. The main character, their actions, their relationships, their past and their psyche sit at the crux of the basic plot and stand as the main factors in developing the authors general vision and viewpoint, whether optimistic or pessimistic. They are instruments used to reiterate and elucidate various aspects of morality and justice, whether it is Rick's patriotism or Alec's heroism and loyalty or even Heathcliff's transition into a man wreathing in hatred and spite; these are ll significant elements which help us cultivate an understanding of the author's main paradigm, their perspective and general message attached to the text. However, our own attitude toward such characters is also helpful in delineating the author's concept of general vision and viewpoint. It helps us to overcome any lack of distinction or complexity which we may encounter on interpretation by forcing the reader to engage in intelligent thinking.

Sample answer two

Purple Hibiscus

Sive

“The GVVP of a text can be shaped by the reader’s attitude to a central character” Discuss.

Writers often use their pieces of writing to voice their personal opinions or to persuade the audience of their point of view of various topics. Each text is their unique canvas in which they paint both their ideas and their opinions. It is such ideas which are examined during our study of general vision and viewpoint. It cannot be denied that writer often uses their protagonist and other central characters to persuade their audience of these opinions. This is certainly the case in three texts I have studied during the comparative study, Nigerian novel ‘Purple Hibiscus’ by Chimamanda Adiche, Irish tragedy ‘Sive’ by John B. Keane and Italian film ‘I’m not Scared’ directed by Gabriele Salvatores. We see the cruelty and patriarchal nature of 1950’s Ireland through examining the central characters in ‘Sive’. Similarly ‘Purple Hibiscus’ is used to criticize a society, but this time 1990’s Nigeria. While it is incredibly dark and depressing at times, it offers more hope and optimism for change than ‘Sive’. Likewise, ‘I’m not Scared’ explores disturbing themes while upsetting the viewer on occasions. However, through the central characters it can also uplift them as they convey the power of friendship. During the course of these texts, we can form a sense of the optimism or pessimism with which life is portrayed. Each of these texts influenced my perspective on humanity while making me question right from wrong. I was appalled by the cruelty of humanity but uplifted and inspired

by the compassion and heroism conveyed in these texts. These emotions are developed as a result of the development of each of the central characters. Each character plays an essential role in presenting the viewpoint of the author as they voice their opinions on life, marriage, gender roles and a range of other topics and themes.

From the opening of each text we form an opinion on the central characters. From the opening of 'Purple Hibiscus' we learn that the family being portrayed is extremely dysfunctional. On Palm Sunday, a sudden act of violence punctuates the repressed atmosphere. Religious, domineering Papa throws a missal at his son Jaja for refusing Holy Communion. Mama Beatrice and Kambili don't interject and we realise that this violence isn't in any way out of the ordinary in this household. As a reader, I instantly formed a critical opinion of Papa through Adichie's negative descriptions of him. Similarly, tension is evident in 'Sive'. The atmosphere appears far from affectionate and a sense of bitterness fills the air. Mena and Nanna Galvin appear to be bickering, creating an uncomfortable environment. There is no violence evident in comparison to 'Purple Hibiscus' but the atmosphere remains just as tense. We learn from this key moment that 'Sive' also features a dysfunctional family. From this evidence we form yet another critical opinion but this time of Mena. She insults her mother-in-law repeatedly and appears rude and bad mannered. The opening shots of 'I'm not Scared' reveal a dark and gloomy setting. This intimidation is evident again when we meet bully Skull. Although he appears no more than twelve, he gains great pleasure in the pain and embarrassment of others. He succeeds in making young girl Barbara increasingly uncomfortable by forcing her to perform a humiliating forfeit. Michele, the protagonist, is then ordered to undertake a dangerous task risking serious injury because he has bravely stood up

for his friend, Barbara. Michele's bravery, strength and good will indicate that this character may be the mouthpiece for Salvatores' views. We also see from the cruelty amongst the children that the director is establishing a mood of hostility which is evident throughout the film. Through the opening of these three texts we gain insight into the themes and viewpoints of the writer while forming critical opinions of various central characters.

In all three texts we grow fonder of the protagonist as the texts develop. We watch each of the main characters struggle with various issues such as their abusive families, their narrow-minded society and even a horrific kidnapping. We watch each of the main characters struggle through uncomfortable family environments and horrible situations. In 'Purple Hibiscus', Kambili is a defenceless victim of abuse. She cannot control her own future as a result of suffering Papa's tyranny. She is deeply disturbed by the fact that her mother is also being severely abused. Mama loses many unborn babies as a result of Papa's violence and Kambili is left to pick up the pieces both literally and figuratively, when she is made clean up her own mother's blood. The reader can't help but sympathise with Kambili as she suffers through her teenage years. This sympathy is created so that the reader forms a positive attitude towards Kambili as Adichie presents the importance of freedom. Similar to this, we feel empathy towards Sive. Her family don't show her much kindness or understanding. She is polite at home and works hard at school but doesn't get any praise. Mena, her aunt-in-law, attempts to force her into an arranged marriage and shows no mercy when she politely refuses. Mena shows her no sense of family love, creating empathy within the reader. This sense of sympathy reminds the reader of Keane's negative viewpoint of arranged marriage through his sympathetic portrayal of Sive. In conjunction with this, we also grow sympathetic towards main

character Michele in 'I'm not Scared'. Personally, he is my favourite character out of all three texts. His family environment forces him to be like everybody else and accept what is wrong but Michele chooses to fight for what he believes in, regardless. He shows a maturity and bravery that isn't evident in any of the characters in 'Purple Hibiscus' or 'Sive'. He does not stay idle when his family would prefer him to but instead fights for the greater good by attempting to rescue trapped Filippo. Personally, I think Michele feels a greater bond between him and Filippo than he does with his family because he can identify with his feelings of entrapment. Michele is not encouraged to think freely or express opinions, similar to Kambili in 'Purple Hibiscus'. The positive attitude he displays while trapped in a negative situation influences the reader's opinion of him. Through this portrayal, we immediately root for Michele and agree with his strong sense of morality, something the director is clearly trying to show important to his audience. My enjoyment and analysis of each text was certainly influenced by the writers' admirable, sympathetic depiction of the protagonist in each text.

The three authors use characterisation to great effect, using each character as a platform to voice their own opinions. They use heroic characters as mouthpieces for their viewpoint. They also use villains to contrast their own opinions. The portrayal of characters can also influence the reader's own vision and viewpoint. For instance in 'Sive', we grow fond of Sive as her character develops and as we see her growing more depressed, our sympathy grows deeper. Keane does this intentionally so we agree that young women like her were in fact mistreated. This is similar to the depiction of Filippo, from the moment we learn of his entrapment we wish for him to be set free. Villainous characters also work to great effect. They convince the reader that what the author is criticizing is in fact worthy of criticism. Mena and Thomasheen

are set up as selfish, unlikable characters from the start of 'Sive'. They treat Sive terribly and are forceful of their own opinions. They invoke the positive aspects of it, which appear superficial to me as a reader. Similarly, Sergio is a powerful and sinister character. He has a coarse, insulting nature as he curses and tells people to 'shut up' on numerous occasions. He shows no sympathy for Filippo and remains immoral throughout the film. His commitment to this violent crime portrays Salvatores' dark viewpoint. This violent nature reminds us of Papa Eugene. He is aggressive and brutal proving himself as the villain of the novel. Adichie uses his character to depict the cruelty of domestic violence and the hypocrisy sometimes involved in religious figures. As a reader I was not unhappy when Papa Eugene died. This shows the effect characterisation can have the outlook of the ending of a text. The reader is disgusted by these characters and feels the need to disagree with everything they believe in and therefore convincing the reader of his negative viewpoint.

We root for the heroes and are more likely to agree with their opinions. Sive and Liam Scuab are against arranged marriage and speak of this on numerous occasions throughout the play. Liam Scuab is a mouthpiece for Keane's vision and viewpoint when he speaks critically on the matter saying 'Imagine a marriage between two people who never saw each other before.' Michele is another example of a hero who represents a positive viewpoint on freedom. He yearns for Filippo's freedom and finds his suffering intolerable. Through his eyes, we too yearn to see the day when Fillipo is freed. Similarly, we aspire for Kambili's freedom. This idea of freedom is introduced by heroine Aunty Ifeoma. Like Michele, she promotes ideas of liberation and freedom. We admire her attitude on life. We later come to the conclusion that she too acts as a mouthpiece for Adichie's vision, similar to Liam Scuab. These inspirational characters point out how society can be improved portraying a brightness in their viewpoint.

Each text offers a critical view of the marriage which they portray within the text. In 'Sive', John B. Keane criticizes the concept of arranged marriage. He does this through his portrayal of central characters, Mena and Mike, an unhappy product of an arranged marriage. Thomasheen foolishly reiterates this point by saying 'Did you ever hear the word 'love' on his lips?' when describing Mena and Mike's loveless marriage. Their absence of love and affection is in contrast to Liam and Sive, who are deeply in love and together of their own accord. Keane cleverly uses this contrast to convince the reader that matchmaking is in fact a failing tradition. Keane also uses Mena and Thomasheen Sean Rua to portray his negative perspective on arranged marriage. Thomasheen is a matchmaker by trade and is persistent in forcing the arranged marriage of Sive to Sean Dota. Thomasheen could be described as a catalyst character bringing a severely negative change to the lives of Sive and even Liam Scwab. He promotes the idea of arranged marriage to a borderline forceful degree. He has a very cynical view of love and uses his power of manipulation to bring Mena to his side. Together Mena and Thomasheen use the power of their combined greed to get their own way and enforce the arranged marriage. This corruption and darkness that Keane portrays persuades the reader that there is in fact cruelty in arranged marriages as we are encouraged to root for the love between Sive and Liam Scwab. Cruelty is also evident in the marriage between Beatrice and Eugene. Eugene is an extremely domineering, aggressive character who abuses his wife and children while Beatrice appears passive and frightened to speak out. Adichie uses this calamitous relationship and two contrasting characters to show her viewpoint on domestic violence. Mama's silence frightens the reader as we realise that we are never fully aware of what goes on behind closed doors. The rest of the town in Enugu consider Beatrice to be 'lucky' to have such a wonderful, charismatic husband when in fact she is desperately unlucky

to be in a position of immense suffering and fear. This creates a dark, negative viewpoint showing the harsh reality of an unhappy marriage. However, Anna and Pino present a more balanced view of marriage. As a viewer, I found it harder to determine their happiness in comparison to Mike and Mena or Beatrice and Eugene. There is little evidence of affection but there is also no evidence of abuse or harm. Anna appears stressed in most scenes and the kidnapping seems to be testing their relationship. Unlike Beatrice, Anna appears tense and disapproving of this male dominance. She fears her son Michele becoming another version of his father, 'Promise me that when you're big you'll leave this place.' It is evident that Anna struggles to love the man that Pino has become now that he is trapped in a world of corruption. She is not afraid to question her husband but still remains fearful of raising her voice in her own home. This characterisation represents a more common viewpoint on the struggles of marriage while portraying a sense of compassion that is not evident in the other two texts.

The closing scenes of each of these texts help the reader to gain full insight into the general vision and viewpoint of the author. They use the ending to develop their ideas and to leave the reader to feel either uplifted or disheartened. In 'Sive', the tragic ending makes the reader sympathetic towards the characters of Sive and Liam Scuab. Personally, I felt moved by Sive's suicide. This is realistic and powerful ending that leaves us in full agreement with the strong negativity associated with Keane's viewpoint. He uses the audience's attachment and positive opinion of Sive to ultimately convince the reader of his viewpoint. This disheartening ending is in great contrast to the uplifting ending of 'I'm Not Scared'. Personally, as I watched the film I expected the worst for protagonist Michele and his friend Filippo. The relief in realising that

they will both survive and more than likely escape freely makes the reader realise how much they have grown to sympathise with these characters. This is due to the wonderful portrayal of a more hopeful viewpoint that uplifts the viewer by the end titles of the movie. The closing chapter of 'Purple Hibiscus' also promotes the idea of freedom finally being achieved. The family's suffering is evident but we finally see them reunited and without the burden and cruelty of Papa. This is reiterated by the image of rain that convinces the reader that they are hopeful of the future, similar to the image of light at the end of 'I'm not Scared'. Our positive or negative attitude towards central characters certainly impacts our reactions to the endings of these texts and to the author's viewpoint.

To conclude, I strongly agree that the general vision and viewpoint of the text is shaped by the reader's attitude towards central characters. Each text used characterisation to great effect; creating characters I loved and admired or ones I loathed. These attitudes certainly impacted by analysis of each writer's general vision and viewpoint.