**AVFTB-Conflict Model Essay**

**Essay Q**

Answers to questions on Drama should refer to the text and to such relevant features as characterisation, key scene(s), structure, climax, theme, plot, conflict, setting...

**Choose a play in which a central character is in conflict with or rejects another character.**

**Briefly explain the circumstances of the conflict or rejection and go on to discuss the consequences of this conflict or rejection for the play as a whole.**

‘A View from the Bridge’ by Arthur Miller is a tragedy, set in the tight-knit community of Red Hook-a hub of Italian immigrant families in the 1950s. The play revolves around the choices made by main protagonist Eddie, whose life is altered by the arrival of his wife’s cousins from Italy. Over the course of the action, he is forced to admit feelings he has tried to deny, and betray the moral code of his community. Within the play there is a conflict between the hyper masculine longshoreman Eddie and the ‘new man’ of the 1950s, Rodolpho-one of the cousins from Italy. This conflict becomes important within the play as it illustrates Miller’s theme of toxic masculinity, and the impact this can have on an individual.

To begin, Miller establishes conflict between Eddie and Rodolpho in their initial meeting, as right from the offset Rodolpho demonstrates a very different view of masculinity from Eddie’s expectations. Eddie believes men should be stereotypically macho: provide for the family, do manual labour, and not reveal their feelings. However when Rodolpho arrives at the Carbone household, he sings. Eddie’s niece Catherine is instantly impressed, whereas Eddies is less amused:

“he is sizing up Rodolpho, and there is a concealed suspicion.”

Miller’s use of stage directions here indicate that Eddie is watching Rodolpho closely, indicating that he sees him as a rival. The use of the phrase ‘sizing up’ conveys the idea that Eddie sees Rodolpho as a challenge for Catherine’s affections. Eddie is suspicious of Rodolpho’s confidence, and following this reprimands Rodolpho for ‘revealing’ their whereabouts through his singing. The audience can view this as Eddie attempting to reassert his authority within the home, after seeing Catherine so enraptured by Rodolpho. However, at this point in the play, Eddie is careful to hide his true feelings from the other characters, as he wants to portray the idea of a strong, welcoming family man. Here Miller introduces the theme of toxic masculinity, as Eddie is threatened by Rodolpho’s ability to charm Catherine, despite not acting traditionally ‘manly’.

Further to this, the conflict between Eddie and Rodolpho progresses as Catherine becomes closer to Rodolpho. Eddie becomes frustrated at the amount of time Catherine is spending with Rodolpho, and so tries to subtly undermine Rodolpho’s masculinity at any opportunity:

“Paper Doll they’re callin’ him. Canary. He’s like a weird...with that wacky hair, he’s like a chorus girl or sump’m.”

In his dialogue with Beatrice, Eddie emphasises what he sees as the more ‘feminine’ qualities Rodolpho exhibits-he sees him as less of a man than his brother Marco, and as a result of this shows him less respect. As the audience we can see the developing jealousy Eddie feels towards Rodolpho, but he masks this as a concern for Catherine. The allusions to his hair and voice indicate a subtle undermining of qualities that he knows Catherine admires in Rodolpho, and Eddie uses these qualities to insinuate Rodolpho is homosexual, and lacking the manly qualities necessary to look after a woman. Eddie continues to undermine Rodolpho by suggesting his feelings for Catherine are inauthentic: “Katie, he’s only bowin’ to his passport.” Here Eddie openly questions Rodolpho’s intentions with Catherine, suggesting that Rodolpho is only interested in Catherine in order to become an American citizen. Eddie’s blatant disapproval of Rodolpho is shocking to Catherine and the audience, as he has tried to mask his distrust from the family. This indicates the growing resentment Eddie feels towards Rodolpho, and the disgust he feels that Catherine, who once admired him, is now so enraptured by someone who is the antithesis of Eddie’s macho manner.

The climax of the conflict between Eddie and Rodolpho takes place in the last scene of Act 1. In this scene, Eddie is angered by Catherine and Rodolpho’s closeness:

“he has been unconsciously twisting the newspaper into a tight roll. They are all regarding him now; he senses he is exposing the issue and he is driven on”

Miller’s use of stage directions indicate how he uses body language to convey Eddie’s deep-seated distrust and resentment towards Rodolpho. He twists the paper as an outlet for his aggression, demonstrating his frustration at the relationship growing between Catherine and Rodolpho. As he is doing this “unconsciously”, the audience and other characters are made aware of the resentment previously concealed by Eddie, and he is now is so consumed by anger that he no longer worries about appearing jealous. The conflict further develops when Eddie responds, and as a demonstration of bravado, he offers to ‘teach’ Rodolpho how to box:

“He feints with his left hand and lands with his right. It mildly staggers Rodolpho. Marco rises.”

At the climax of this scene, Eddie tries to trick Rodolpho in order to appear like the alpha male-he is desperate to hold onto his position as man of the house, strongest and more dominant. In this interaction, Rodolpho is overcome: physically undermined as well as verbally. The conflict between the characters clearly illustrates Miller’s theme of toxic masculinity: Eddie’s power play is a typical macho move to undermine Rodolpho, and ultimately reveals his dark, jealous and manipulative nature. Rodolpho’s polite reaction and dismissal of any wrongdoing by Eddie indicates a more sympathetic nature, showing his emotional maturity versus Eddie’s suppressed feelings.

As a consequence of this incident, a new conflict arises between Marco and Eddie. Marco, witnessing Eddie’s treatment of Rodolpho, poses himself as a worthy opponent against Eddie:

“Marco is face to face with Eddie, a strained tension gripping his eyes and jaw, his neck stiff, the chair raised like a weapon…he transforms what might appear like a glare of warning into a smile of triumph, and Eddie’s grin vanishes as he absorbs his look.”

Marco retaliates against Eddie’s comments about Rodolpho by making himself seem intimidating and threatening, ensuring Eddie is fully aware that he is no longer the most powerful person in the Carbone household, and that Rodolpho is protected. The use of “strained tension” indicates that Marco has held back before now out of politeness and deference towards Eddie, but is now confident in demonstrating his power. He gives Eddie a clear warning about his behaviour, but masks this as showmanship for the rest of the group. Yet Eddie realises the threat in Marco’s chair demonstration, and is taken aback by Marco’s strength and opposition. Eddie is now presented with a rival he deems a worthy opponent, and is cowed by this. The aggressive actions of both Marco and Eddie in this scene demonstrate the destructive nature of toxic masculinity, as a conflict between both of these masculine figures can only result in tragedy.

Ultimately, the conflicts arising in Miller’s ‘A View from the Bridge’ reflects the conflict in ideas of masculinity in the 1950s. Eddie’s aggressive and intimidating behaviour demonstrates the insecurity of the working man at a time of change in America, and his targeting of Rodolpho shows a distaste for the new. The rising conflict between Marco and Eddie acts as a warning of the dangers of toxic masculinity, and the tragedy that may ensue if men are not able to express their emotions fully.