**AVFTB Higher Key Scene Model Essay**

**Choose a play which has an effective opening or concluding scene.**

**By briefly referring to details of the scene, explain how the dramatist made it effective and discuss how it contributes to your appreciation of the text as a whole.**

‘A View From the Bridge’ is a compelling drama written by Arthur Miller, which follows the classic Greek tragedy structure. Set in 1950’s Brooklyn, in the Italian dominated community of Red Hook, the plot centres around main protagonist Eddie Carbone, a working class Italian American, whose life is altered dramatically by the arrival of his wife’s illegal immigrant cousins. 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. This results in a powerful concluding scene, which follows the classic dramatic ending of a Greek tragedy, and exemplifies Miller’s key concern of the value of moral justice.

Initially, Miller uses the Greek choric figure of Alfieri to introduce the community of Red Hook, and present one of the key themes within the play: the value of moral justice. As a choric figure, Alfieri acts as a narrator, and explains directly to the audience about the inner workings of Red Hook and its values: “Now we settle for half, and I like it better.” Here Alfieri highlights the contrast between Italy and the Italian community in New York: he explains that there is a less passionate desire for justice, and more of a respect for the law in America. This is a key concept explored through Eddie Carbone’s character, as he transforms from pillar of the community, upholding strong community values, to a selfish betrayer of all he previously held dear. Alfieri’s speech is important in establishing this theme, as Miller’s message about the value of moral justice is clearly exemplified in the final scene.

At the beginning of the play, our main protagonist Eddie is presented as a character who fiercely believes in this community code, and is loyal to his fellow man. This is demonstrated when Eddie warns his niece Catherine and wife Beatrice about the dangers of ‘snitching’, through an anecdote about a teenager who betrayed his family to the immigration bureau: “a guy do a thing like that? How’s he gonna show his face?” Eddie’s disgust towards Vinny, the accused here, emphasises his strong community values, and understanding of the consequences of betraying one’s own family. In light of the dramatic concluding scene, Eddie here foreshadows his own fate, as he too is ostracised from the community. Eddie’s initial characterisation is important and helps build to the climactic final scene, as the contrast in his values adds to the drama of the ending.

Furthermore, Miller uses Alfieri’s frequent discussions with Eddie to demonstrate the change in Eddie from community hero to betrayer. As Eddie’s frustrations about Rodolpho and Catherine’s budding relationship become stronger, he appeals to Alfieri and his knowledge of the law to help him break them apart. However, Alfieri advises Eddie that this will have consequences:

“When the law is wrong it’s because it’s unnatural, but in this case it is natural and a river will drown you if you buck it now.”

Eddie, driven by his inappropriate desire for his niece, desperately seeks a way of separating Rodolpho and Catherine. Alfieri, in his dual role as choric figure and advisor, tries to persuade Eddie against taking legal action against Rodolpho due to his illegal status in the country, knowing the consequences it may have for him. Miller’s allusion in Alfieri’s dialogue to Eddie fighting against a current, drowning, expresses how his change in attitude towards punishment by law is completely at odds with the community that surrounds him. Alfieri’s ominous words foreshadow Eddie’s shunning from the Red Hook community, and his ultimate downfall as a result of his inappropriate love for Catherine-his fatal flaw.

Following this, Miller creates a key scene, building towards his dramatic conclusion and demonstrating Eddie’s gradual downfall. In Act two, it is revealed that Eddie has betrayed his family to the immigration bureau in front of the entire Red Hook community: “Marco…dashes into the room and faces Eddie…spits into Eddie’s face.” Marco’s reaction here is symbolic of the hatred and disgust he feels towards Eddie: previously, Eddie and Marco bonded over their shared family values and strong masculine natures, therefore this sign of disrespect seriously affects Eddie, causing him shame and indignation. The rest of the community react in a similarly negative manner: “Lipari and wife exit…Louis barely turns, then walks off.” Lipari, the butcher in the community, represents the wider community as a whole: rejecting and shunning Eddie as a result of his treacherous actions. Eddie’s friend Louis’ desertion also emphasises Miller’s theme of the value of moral justice, as Eddie’s reputation is left in tatters after his betrayal. This is a key moment in the play, building towards the climax, as we are given insight into Eddie’s motivations for revenge against Marco, and desire for respect that leads to his tragic demise.

The final explosive concluding scene is particularly effective, as Eddie faces up to his betrayal of his family and community values. The scene ends in a confrontation between Eddie and Marco, where Eddie challenges Marco in order to regain his respect and dignity, which he blames Marco for destroying:

“Eddie lunges with the knife. Marco grabs his arm, turning the blade inward and pressing it home…Eddie, the knife still in his hand, falls to his knees before Marco.”

The nature of Eddie’s death is very significant in terms of his behaviour throughout the play. As a tragic hero, his misguided actions throughout the play have been motivated by his fatal flaw: his desire for Catherine. This has led him to disregard his previous values and beliefs, and ultimately has resulted in his downfall. The symbolic nature of Eddie dying at the hands of his own knife emphasises this idea perfectly, and acts as a fitting end for this Greek tragedy. Miller emphasises his theme of the value of moral justice here in Eddie’s death: Eddie pays the ultimate price for betraying his community values.

Ultimately, Miller’s choice to structure ‘A View from the Bridge’ as a Greek Tragedy ensures that the concluding scene is satisfying for the audience. The use of Alfieri as a choric figure throughout effectively foreshadows Eddie’s foolish choices, creating tension as the audience anticipate his downfall, and Miller’s key concern of the value of moral justice is perfectly exemplified in Eddie’s fall from grace.