* Men Should Weep
Ena Lamont Stewart
* Introduction to the play
* Historical background to the play
* Although set in the 30’s it was written in 1947. At that time the whole world was recovering from the hardships of war.

* The allies had defeated fascism in the form of Hitler’s Nazi Germany. Many in Britain were confident that inequality and injustice would be swept away and that a new social justice would replace the painful memories of both the 30’s and the war years.

* The 1947 production of the play, set about to depict life at the time as authentically as possible. It was deliberately dour with no attempt to relieve the squalor or to sugar the pill of its realism for the sake of entertainment.
* Historical background to the play
* The play was first produced by Glasgow Unity Theatre in January 1947. It was revived in May 1982 and Ena Lamont Stewart wrote the version for the 7:84 production.
* The play is about a Glasgow family trying to survive The Great Depression of the 1930’s, living below the bread line. The hardships that the characters endure show the real cost of poverty and unemployment. The plot reflects the struggles of the family and the harsh realities imposed on them.

* Think about the sarcasm in the title of ‘Men Should Weep’ – it also explores the social position of working class women in the home, self empowerment and promotes feminism.

* The play is set in the 30’s. A decade of huge political and social upheaval. Scotland, like so much of the industrialised world, was deep in economic recession. This resulted in unemployment, social deprivation and a crisis of confidence in the existing political and social structures.
* Historical background to the play
* The welfare state in the 40’s had yet to be invented. Some support systems were in place including a degree of unemployment benefit and pensions.

* Going to the unemployment Bureau (The Broo) was shameful, even though it was inevitably widespread.
* The loss of a job could feel like a personal affront to manhood, even if the status was shared by acquaintances (conveyed through the character of John.)

* What turned the knife was being reliant on the part-time earnings of your wife and children.
* Family duty was a traditional role engraved into each child.

* Communities and neighbours pulled together in the face of adversity.
* Historical background to the play
* Education in the broadest sense was making an impact, primarily on the middle classes though. The Carnegie Education Trust would automatically pay half of university fees and the Local Authority would meet the rest, but sadly this opportunity was often viewed beyond the working class.

* The priority instead was to contribute to the upkeep of the family. At the age of 14 you were able to bring a wage into the household.
* The women shouldered the burden of keeping up as respectable a front as possible.
* They managed with made-over clothes.

* You stuck by your man no matter what the trouble. Divorce was not an option because of money.
* Historical background to the play
* Malnutrition was rife. For a modern audience, it is surprising to see the fear of illness which grips the Morrisons. Bertie is suffering from T.B, a much feared infectious disease worsened by dampness, cold and malnutrition.

* Mice were rife.

* The women in the play are used to reinforce the women’s view of marriage and the gender roles within it.
* Little wonder that a breed of women slowly emerged desperate to escape the fate of their mothers (Jenny and Isa).
* Historical background to the play
* Close knit communities did mean loss of privacy, but when your own private business is publicly known, options are opened up for solidarity.
* There were unsanitary conditions in Eastern Glasgow tenements, with as many as eight large families sharing one lavatory, this worsened health hazards.
* Disease was a given. Only later, post World War II, did pressure increase to investigate urban illness and bring reforms. Within a decade, the infant mortality rate was halved.
* The Plot: Act One
* The play is set in the 1930's and it's a winter evening in the kitchen of the Morrisons home in the east end of Glasgow.
* The play opens on a disordered tenement household where five of the six children, two parents and Granny of the Morrison family live.
* The chaos of family life, held together by Maggie, is clearly depicted, but the overall tone is light-hearted and the audience can see that the family is a happy one.
* The tone begins to darken with the mention of the troublesome son Alec and his wife Isa whose home has collapsed.
* Alec and Isa arrive drunk at the Morrison household with conflicts immediately escalating between John and his son.
* As the drunken pair go to bed, John and Maggie discuss children.
* John realises Jenny isn't home and gets quite angry. Soon he hears her in the close mouth with a man and an argument ensues as he drags her in.
* Jenny is becoming more independent but John is uncomfortable with this and her growing sexuality.
* Jenny, who is fed up with the conditions the family has to live in, speaks of plans to leave.
* The Troubles of John Morrison
* John Morrison is a man with many troubles. Emasculated by a climate of unemployment, problems with his children and neighbours and forever lamenting his wife’s lack of a good “system”.
* In groups, bullet point all the troubles John has faced so far and find a quote as evidence for each of these struggles.
* The Role of Men in “Men Should Weep”
* From what we have read so far, summarise what you think men were expected to be like in 1930s Glasgow. Consider their attitudes towards their wives, their families, their role in society.
* Look at the situation of Alec. In what way does his behaviour go against the stereotypical view of a man in the 1930s.
* How is the domestic abuse at the hands of Mr Bone viewed by everyone else. Give quotes to back up your answer.
* The Plot

**Act 2**

**Scene 1**

* The scene opens a week later with Granny being sent away to live with John's sister-in-law Lizzie, who is portrayed as a hard-hearted character, and greedy for Granny's pension. After Granny's bed is taken by the removal men, Maggie arrives, grief stricken as Bertie has been kept in hospital because of Tuberculosis. Everybody sympathises, even Lizzie. In the midst of this, Jenny packs her bags and leaves, as John arrives. John complains bitterly about being born into poverty and the scene closes dramatically with an emotional speech.
* The Poisonous Relationship between Alec and Isa
* Do you think that Maggie is a good mother to Alec? Is Alec a good son?
* How good a mother-in-law is she? Is Isa a good daughter-in-law?
* How well does Maggie handle her relationship with Alec and Isa?
* Does Maggie always make the best decisions where Alec and Isa are concerned?
* Homework for Tuesday 24th November

Look closely at the marriage of Alec and Isa. In what ways does their relationship appear unhealthy or unusual for 1930s Glasgow? With evidence from the text comment on the relationship between the pair and compare it with other characters’ marriages. You may use examples from throughout the play.

* Act Two Scene Two

**Scene 2**

* The scene opens a month later with Alec and Isa (still living in the Morrison household) arguing. Isa threatens to leave the poor Alec for another man named Peter Robb. At this point Alec strangles her but quickly releases his hold in a panic. The argument concludes with Isa storming into the bedroom. A tired Maggie then arrives on the scene complaining that no one does anything around the house, but also does her best to comfort Alec, who does his best to abuse this care.
* Scene Two: Find Quotes for each bullet point.
* John arrives in the middle of a conflict between Isa and Maggie and crucially, takes Isa's side rather than his wife's.
* Maggie leaves in a rage and Isa flirts with John. The children enter and Maggie returns with some chips.
* At the sight of Ernest's scuffed boots, Maggie cracks, flying into a rage at the rest of the family.
* The scene calms down and concludes with a speech from Maggie who claims that her heart is burning
* Act Three
* The scene opens in a contrastingly cheery Morrison household prepared for Christmas. There is a wireless and the children have presents. Granny is back. John arrives with a red hat, reminiscent of courting days, for Maggie, who is delighted. However others criticise the gift, including the arriving neighbours. Lily arrives, shortly followed by Alec who is looking for Isa. The mood darkens as he disrupts the atmosphere. There are mentions of Jenny who seems not to be doing too well. Soon after the neighbours leave there is a time lapse.
* Act Three
* Isa is now packing her bags to leave (without telling anyone). As she reaches the door however, she meets Alec who is hysterical, and realising her plans, tries to kill her. Isa however manipulates Alec and manages to escape with Alec hot on her heels. Maggie and Lily discover the evidence of the struggle but Lily hides the knife to keep Maggie calm.
* Act Three
* Jenny returns looking like she's met with success but tells of how she nearly committed suicide. She has returned to try to get the family out of their dreadful living conditions so that Bertie can come home again (with money from a man she is living with). However John arrives and wants nothing to do with her "whore's winnins". Maggie counters this by bringing up their own early relationship to show John's hypocrisy. The scene, and play, ends on an emotional climax but with a note of hope for the future
* Gender Issues in Men Should Weep
1. Think about the heading. What is the play’s message?
2. What are the roles men were expected to fulfil in this society?
3. How does John embody the 1930s male chauvinist with a sense of misplaced male pride?
4. How does Alec’s fate go against the norm of the day?
5. What attitude do people have towards Lily and her life?
6. How does Maggie assert herself in the end?
* Group Presentations

Task: Each group will look at a particular character or group of characters and present a three minute revision session to the rest of the class.

*In any way you wish* you should present to the class your findings on the character(s) which focus on:

* The impact the character has on the play
* A summary on the type of person they are and how they conform to 1930s stereotypes
* How they progress from the start to the end of the play.
* Their high point and their lowest ebb.
* Key Quotations which sum up their characterisation
* What’s their most important moment?
* Groups
* Reece, Connor and Callum: **John**
* Kieran, Jordin and James: **Alec**
* Rebecca, Hannah, Katy and Laura: **Maggie**
* Megan, Briony and Kathleen: **Granny**
* Allysandra, Hannah and Elena: **Jenny**
* Francesca, Niamh and Rebecca: **Isa**
* Emily, Rebecca and Adeline: **The Neighbours**
* Scott, Liam, Sean and Buffy: **Lily**
* Whole Class Activity
* What role do John and Maggie’s younger children play in Men Should Weep?

 *Focus on Bertie, Ernest and Edie in particular.*

* How does the setting transform as the fortunes of the Morrison family transform?
* How important do you think the setting in time and place makes an impact on the play?
* Men Should Weep: Preparation for the Scottish Set Text Question

**Act One Scene One (Recap)**

* Serves as an introduction to the characters and key themes.

Key Themes in Men Should Weep:

1. Poverty
2. Gender Issues
3. Societal Problems

Maggie Morrison is the matriarch and the real head of the house. How is this conveyed?

* Act One Scene Two(p18)
* We will look at the impact of Isa and Alec on the family dynamics.
* We will also take a close look at the Scottish Set Text Question in the exam and how to approach it.
* We will look at the relationship between John and Maggie
* We will look at the role of Jenny.
* Isa and Alec

We hear about Isa and Alec before we meet them.

1. What difficulties are they facing?
2. How does this exacerbate the situation in the Morrison’s household (how do the stage directions exemplify this?
* In groups, discuss how our first impression of both Isa and Alec are not good. What kind of people are they and how does their arrival at the Morrison’s house back this up.
* Maggie and Alec / John and Isa

1. From this introduction and from what Lily has mentioned in Act One Scene One (page 12). Why is Maggie often held responsible for Alec’s failings?

2. How far do you think this is justified?

3. From the “certain smile” Isa gives John to the situation in Act Two Scene Two (pages 46 and 47). What can you say about the relationship between the daughter in law and her father in law?

4. Why do you think Isa is so keen to make a play for John?

* Scottish Set Text: Critical Reading
* A short extract from the ANY part of the play.
* 4 Questions on the particular extract (worth 10 marks)
* A mini essay which will ask you to evaluate how this any of the issues from this particular extract is reflected in the play as a whole.
* John and Maggie
1. In groups, show how the relationship between John and Maggie appears to be a healthy one despite all their hardships.
2. Bertie’s coughing pierces the happy atmosphere. How does this lead on to John lecturing Maggie about falling out with the neighbours?
3. How does Maggie act as a buffer between John’s temper and the children?
* The Characters:

The Characters:
Maggie Morrison

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* Downtrodden, oppressed, poor, overburdened, working class at the opening but emancipated by the end.
* She works within and out with the home.
* At the start of the play she is very supportive of her husband. She gives him his place and makes sure others do the same.
* She has six children.
* She makes a personal journey and becomes a stronger woman through the play.
* Her journey is the central theme of the play and reaches fruition at the end, when she stands up and humiliates John. She accepts Jenny’s money to enable the family to move to a healthier environment where Bertie can live with them. She has taken control of her own life and her family’s future.

* The Characters:
John Morrison
* John is out of work, idle and a chauvinist, but he is portrayed with a clever sympathy throughout.

* The play contains criticisms of male power, female oppression, misplaced pride and vanity and works towards his humiliation at the end of the play.

* The fact that Jenny claims that she couldn’t get a decent fella because of their poor living conditions is a blow to his pride as is Lily’s claims that she has done more to support ‘his’ family. Maggie’s comment about his un-restrained sexual appetite undermines him completely.

* John cares about Maggie but not enough to risk his masculinity by helping to ease her work load.

* There is a change in his role as the head of the house as the play progresses.
* The Characters:
Jenny Morrison
* Her role in the play is mainly two-fold.
* She acts as an agent of John’s guilt by revealing how wide the disparity between the families ambitions and their social and economic reality.
* She is a young woman who wants to experience life, who wants a better life.
* She is both the apple of her father’s eye and the recipient of his aggression.

* She becomes disenchanted with the restrictions poverty imposes, so she leaves home.
* Jenny’s second role in the drama is to provide a neat and resolved ending to the plot.
* The Characters:
Lily Gibb
* Single. Working. Independent and highly dismissive of men, not stereotypical for her time
* She is often seen as criticising John and his role within the family. However, Maggie sticks up for him and defends him.
* Lily has an unusual role for a woman of her day, as a spinster. Maggie feels sorry for her, having no man in her life and no children. Lily on the other hand can’t see how the want to be a ‘slave’ to a husband and family is a life of satisfaction.

* Her relationship with Maggie is an integral part of the play and her presence in the final scene underlines her role within her sister’s family. They see each others faults but both want what’s best for the family.
* The Characters:
Alec and Isa Morrison
* These two characters act as a sub-plot to the play.

* Isa is portrayed as a conniving woman. She is cunning, manipulative and displays nothing but contempt for Alec.

* Alec is shown to be weak and violent.

* Isa knows that by reinforcing John’s masculinity she undermines his relationship with Maggie. She flirts with him and teases him.

* Alec is the eldest son and Maggie’s favourite. Maggie defends him against Isa (she does not like her).

* He is madly in love with his wife and cannot see her faults.

* He is lazy and appears to be on the criminal fringes.
* The Characters:
Granny Morrison
* A caricature - but makes the point that as an elderly woman she has absolutely no independence whatsoever and is reliant upon others for everything - even being put to bed.
* Some humour surrounds her – ‘eatin' and ‘greetin' but her role does not forward the plot significantly.
* The Characters:
The Neighbours

•Mrs Wilson, Mrs Harris and Mrs Bone

•Gossips and part of the community and therefore insiders to the drama but also symbolic of the wider society and therefore can comment on the action as outsiders.

•They can also help to amplify certain themes such as the social and economic control men have over women (Mrs Bone's husband bangs on the floor for her, Mrs Wilson leaves in case Mr Wilson wants his tea, and Mrs Harris says she doesn't need her husband but needs his wages). Other themes and issues they help highlight are the female social experience, domestic relationships and Maggie's situation and circumstances.

•Issues (physical violence and domestic abuse, economic dependence and socialisation) are raised but never fully developed through these characters or their interactions with others. Some humour comes through these characters too.

* Characters
* Maggie
* John
* Lily
* Jenny
* Granny
* Isa
* Alec
* The Neighbours
* Sketch or draw the character in the middle of the page.
* Select key quotations which sums what this characters adds to the play (it can be another character describing them)
* Highlight words which describes the character’s personality
* Men Should Weep
* Social Conditions
* The play is set in a tenement home in the East End of Glasgow. The set itself makes a statement about social effects of poverty (see the stage directions.)

* The period that the play is set is very significant in discussing the situations and lives of the characters and in terms of the huge political and social upheaval.

* We are automatically aware of the housing conditions as the curtain opens to reveal a one bedroom apartment, which three generations are living in. It is overcrowded and there is clutter everywhere, they are all sharing rooms. John and Maggie end up sleeping on the floor and Granny is being moved out to Lizzie’s to make room for Alec and Isa.
* Edie wears an old coat and tattered pyjamas. Coats are used as bedding. The room is also bare with very little furniture.
* Social Conditions
* Cleanliness is expected and it is an affront to be dirty.

* The lives of the characters are affected by the lack of work available for the breadwinner. John claims ‘…hundreds of us begging for the chance to put a roof over our heids.’
* John is desperate, as he finds himself unable to support his family. He speaks of this and the affect this has on his self-respect and his family.

* All of the characters are victims of the establishment; born into poverty.
* The hardship that the characters endure exemplifies the effect the government had on the lives of the people (Jenny wants to move out, Lily highlighting that if John can’t provide then he shouldn’t be bringing more children into the world.)
* Social Conditions
* The children are also used to show the poor health, caused by poor sanitation, diet and housing.
* Bertie has T.B and is not allowed to come home because the overcrowding and poor, damp living conditions would hinder his recovery.
* Lack of education was a social problem of the time. Maggie gives Christopher sugar to help his teeth.
* Disease and illness where rife: the discussion of Edie having lice and Christopher having Rickets (lack of vitamin D).
* Sense of poverty is also displayed in that they are dependant to a certain extent on Granny’s pension to buy food and other supplies. This is also why Lizzie kicks up a stink about not getting Granny’s pension.
* Social Conditions
* The play is full of issues surrounding the roles of women as wives, daughter, mother, granny, sister, sister-in-law, prostitute and spinster.
* Maggie does some part time cleaning work and this initiates one of the most remarkable scenes in the play, when she comes home to find that no work has been done in the house to help her. John rages against this and claims that he is not a ‘skivvy.’ Although this demonstrates our view of inequality, given the social context of the time, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect anything else.

* There is also a sense of community, as the neighbours look after Granny.
* Again Ena Lamont Stewart uses colloquial language, to set the play but also to reveal the social class.

* Men Should Weep
* Issues of Gender
* The men are portrayed in a negative manner. John as lazy, opinionated and chauvinistic.
* Alec as lazy, needy and as a criminal.
* The women are central to the plot development.
* Traditional male and females roles are re defined at the end of the play.
* Jenny becomes an independent woman who can support her family, unlike John can.
* Family is central to the play and the characters rely on each other.
* Issues of Gender
* Most of the women accept ‘traditional’ roles for the time as house wives, mothers and work in domesticated jobs.
* The exception is Lily who works in a pub and is a spinster.
* The women have a hard life and many have to endure bad relationships with their husbands.
* The younger generation are desperate to change their social situation and lives.
* The younger females in the play have different morals and concerns, which causes conflict in the play. We see arguments between older and younger females.
* Issues of Gender
* Strong family ties and expectations are what eventually pushes Jenny away.
* Family look after each other, Maggie would not turn Alec and Isa away.
* Family bonds were strong though as even through disagreements, Lily with John and Alec and Jenny and John, they pull together in the end.
* The women such as Lily, Jenny and Isa would have been ‘unconventional’ at the time.
* Attitudes toward domestic violence

Page 12

*Maggie: Alec’d never lift a finger tae Isa*

*Lily: I wouldnae bet on that – if she riles him enough. Goad help her if he starts for he’ll no ken when tae stop. Ye mind yon tempers? Mind the time he just missed me wi the breid knife?*

With close reference to three other parts of the play, show how the characters display a casual acceptance of violence against women / domestic violence

* Issues of Gender
* The women within this play are all more domineering than the men. Even Maggie becomes so at the end of the play.
* Alec is the most submissive of the male characters and although he tries to dominate Isa, she out wills him.
* John becomes submissive at the end of the play as he breaks down as Maggie highlights his hypocrisy at how he treats Jenny.
* History, Nostalgia and Popular Tradition
* History, Nostalgia and Popular Tradition
* Set in 1930’s working class Glasgow. How much have times changed?
* Many issues could be highlighted from housing/living conditions, health, work/ employment etc.
* An audience today finds itself facing rising unemployment and the onset of recession (some have called it a depression).
* We now have a National Health Service but outbreaks of dysentery were recorded in 1990’s in Glasgow Housing schemes.
* The issue of female emancipation is as relevant today as it was in 1947 and 1982. Women often have careers now, laws have changed to protect women from institutionalised sexism … but legal rights and what is common practice is not necessarily the same thing.
* Women’s right’s movements have had less effect on working class.
* Key Themes
* Domestic violence
* Sexism
* Poverty
* Overcrowding / poor quality housing
* Transformation of Maggie
* Key Themes
* Sexism
* Overcrowding / Poor Quality Housing
* Look at pages 25 and 26
* Final Question:

Explain how the theme of poverty is explored in this section and throughout the play. 10 marks

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2 marks for opening statement showing that poverty is key theme throughout the play and is clearly demonstrated in this extract

2 marks are available for a detailed examination of the theme of poverty from the extract in front of you. (This means 2 relevant quotations and analysis)

6 marks are available for discussing the theme of poverty from elsewhere in the play. (three different examples, with quotations, examined in detail).

* Structure of the Final Question
* Start with an opening statement mentioning how poverty is a theme which is examined throughout the play in a variety of ways.

Things to consider:

* John’s unemployment
* Overcrowding (especially with the arrival of Alec and Isa)
* Their poor diet and poor condition of the house.
* How poverty puts a strain on the family to the extent they rely on Lily for hand outs.
* Jenny’s embarrassment at her family turning up at her shop looking for cast offs.
* Bertie’s illness and Granny’s situation

By the end of the play, though, John’s new job, offers the family hope. Mention some of the things that have changed but how Bertie still can’t be released from hospital because of their house.

End by saying how Jenny offers the family the chance to escape.