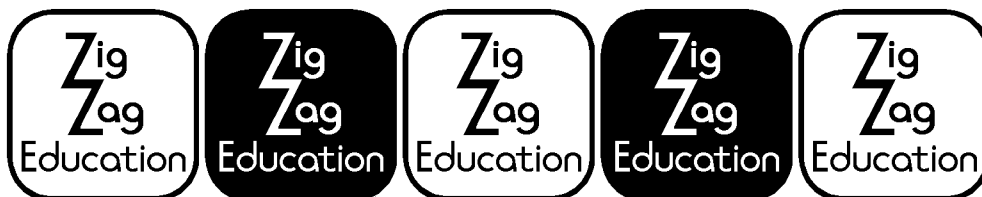# *Top Girls* and *The Color Purple* Comparison

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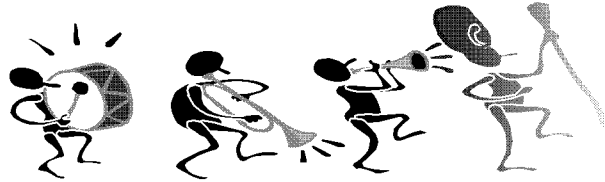
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their personal point of view and to the constraints of the specification and to o[...]
the process or delivery of the course. It is considered essential that the teach[...]
any parts of the contained material to suit their needs, the needs of the specifi[...]
and the needs of the individual or group concerned. As such, the teacher mus[...]
material, if any, to provide to students and which parts to use as background i[...]

In this matter they should also determine the nature of information or suppo[...]
consideration the medium and style of support. So specifically, they should d[...]
provide verbally, if any, and which, if any, to provide in written format. Simil[...]
inappropriate but the information or support itself is appropriate then the ma[...]
achieve this end. For example, if any of the contained material appears to ove[...]
may result in a downgrading of the student's project, then the teacher should [...]
avoid this unless it is the teacher's intention to do this to achieve a certain lev[...]

In summary, it is intended that these materials be used appropriately and at th[...]
that the teacher take into consideration the ability of the individual or group. [...]
to assess the suitability of coursework/project publications and to decide whic[...]
students.

Teacher's Introduction

Editions used in this resource are:

Churchill, C., *Top Girls,* **Methuen Student Edition, Open University** Pres

Walker, A., *The Color Purple,* **A Women's Press Classic, Open** Universit

Character notes for *Top Girls* are not necessary here as these are available in character work will be done later in the resource.

It is also worth drawing students' attention to the layout of Scene One (ov of conversation). This is fully explained in the book's notes after the comm reading can simply be performed line by line – as long as students are awa performance would sound. Draw attention to the impression of spontan 'female' speech (more on this later).

Most of the resource covers the drama task (*Top Girls*) as the required spli 60% main text and 40% secondary text (*The Color Purple*).

This resource builds towards students being able to answer this coursewor

'Compare the ways in which Churchill and Walker have structured their identity *in light of the view that* **Top Girls** *does so more effectively.'*

Notes for teachers have been indicated by a border around the page.

Please note that there are two versions of the worksheet 'Identity of "Stro *The Color Purple'.* Version A (p. 22) is for less able students as there are so complete the table, while version B (p. 23) is for more able students.

This resource has been written to comprehensively meet the requ
A Level AQA A Literature specification

Top Girls

General or Starter Tasks

1. Research Caryl Churchill. Write down four interesting facts about the a

2. Research *Top Girls*. Write down two interesting facts about the play.

3. What might the title suggest?

4. Research Thatcher and make a list of:
   a) her 'achievements'
   b) Thatcherite values

5. How do you react to this quotation from Margaret Thatcher in 1987:
   'There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and wom

6. How did the 1969 Divorce Act, which granted women the ability to dive
   change society including women's careers?
   Note: in Victorian times, only men could divorce on the grounds of unfa

7. Describe a 'career woman'.

8. Are career women 'soulless'?

9. Discuss/write about working women. Do they have to make sacrifices
   'male'?

10. Is it acceptable to tread on fellow employees to 'get on'?

11. What is feminism? Are feminists 'new patriarchs' or 'social feminists' (
    women, especially those disadvantaged, in society)? Is feminism linked

12. How, if at all, are women disadvantaged in society?

13. What is the perfect woman? (Describe in one sentence.)

14. What is similar about the suffering of the women in the opening scene

15. Do you sympathise with [choose character]? Was it hard to decide? Wh

16. Which character had the hardest life changing decisions to make (and v

17. Describe Churchill's style (at least four bullet points).

Teacher Notes on Form, Language and

Teacher notes are provided first.
Student tasks are suggested underneath where appropriate.

Form

1. Modern British socialist drama (moving away from earlier realism, e.g.
    development of characters was of utmost importance to a stage where
    significance). This challenges the audience to think and answer the qu
    part of the society being judged. It is not feminist realism – she did no
    there is much which is not realist, e.g. Scene One is dreamlike and fan
    characters are fairly realistic, e.g. Isabella Bird.

2. Feminist theatre (embraced as such even if this was not Churchill's orig

Structure

1. Non-linear, a feminist choice. In the summary, Churchill says, 'Wait a
    what plays might be is from plays written by men… And I remember long bef
    'maleness' of the traditional structure of plays, with conflict and building in a

    Student Task
    What are your views on the structuring of this play? Has Churchill been succe
    the short essay questions).

2. Rewrites history – from a female perspective.

3. Different characters represent different identities (explored later).

4. Many characters with equal amounts of dialogue allows sympathy wil
    evaluate their decisions.

    Student Task
    How do the high number of characters change the viewers' sympathies durin

5. Final scene delivers a twist – revelation that Marlene is Angie's real mo

    Student Task
    How did this revelation make you react to Marlene?

6. All the characters mirror something about Marlene's life.

    Student Task
    How do the other characters mirror Marlene? Choose four and write down b
    explain.

7. Women dominate the play – in work and domestic settings – and are n
    living their own lives, explaining their own decisions (which contrasts
    ancient melodramatic female dramatic stereotypes of harlot, hag and d
    the Victorian era).

8. Modern setting – historical women brought into modern day (1980s) – whether women's roles have changed, if feminism has 'worked'.

   Student Task

   Describe how the choice of a modern setting affects the message of the play.

9. Opening sequence is dreamlike, psychological, intriguing.

   Student Task

   Describe the opening scene in three words.

10. No denouement – questions are left unanswered, characters unfulfilled.

11. Irregular scenes and acts, e.g. one scene for Acts One and Three, three there could have been more (breaks with classical but male dictated m

12. Non standard punctuation, e.g. no punctuation marks.

Language

1. Feminist – gives women a voice. One problem – can they prove they a there are no male voices to challenge them or show mixed gender inte

   Student Task

   Answer the question above.

2. Voices of all generations and types of women (passive/dominant, youn

   Student Task

   Describe the language of the characters individually.

3. Do all the characters share the independent, honest and feminist traits about resentment?

   Dull Gret – inarticulate, monosyllabic, vulgar, honest, feminist, independen
   Pope Joan – aloof, intelligent, Latin, religious, honest, feminist, independen
   Lady Nijo – materialistic, religious, honest (socially conditioned so she canno
   Patient Griselda – forgiving
   Isabella Bird – affectionate, worldly, independent, feminist, honest

Questions on Act One

1. Describe the language in this scene.

2. The women duet and overlap (showing female qualities to their langua
   However, would you agree that at times they are not listening to one a

3. Why is the waitress nameless?

4. Who do you believe is a strong female character or role model in this s
   by using quotations.

5. Who do you believe Churchill presents as a weak woman in this scene?
   quotations.

6. Do you believe this scene would be successful (or enjoyable to watch)
   decision using quotations.

7. Does this scene educate or enlighten its audience on feminist topics?
   quotations.

Questions on Act Two

1. Why is this act separated into different scenes?

2. How would you describe the interviewing techniques of Marlene, Nell a
   the same or different? How would you feel being interviewed by them

3. Why is Act Two Scene Two so long? Why was it not broken into more

4. Why are the utterances shorter between Joyce/Angie/Kit than betwee

5. What parallels can you find between the characters in Act One and Act

Questions on Act Three

1. Do you think Marlene is a hard-nosed business woman? Explain your a

2. How has Marlene's working class background shaped her current ident

3. On page 68, what are the connotations of Marlene being offered 'tea'
   steak and frascati of Act One.

4. What does Angie mean by her twice repeated 'frightening'?

5. Write down a quotation that best describes Marlene, Joyce and Angie

6. Why was this scene left until last?

Identity

1. Why does Act One show female identities throughout history?

2. Do names signify identity? E.g. social class?
   Make a list of working, middle and upper class Christian names and su
   class has middle names and do they mean anything? Are there any na
   connotations?

3. How do you react to the dialect and accent used in *Top Girls*? What a
   about identity?

4. Examine a conversation in Scene One and explore the presentation of f
   presentation). See handout A.

5. Examine a conversation in the agency (to show career women identitie

6. Examine a conversation between Marlene and Mrs Kidd (to show clas

7. What type of identity is explored in *Top Girls*? See handout D.
   a) List at least four identities, e.g. businesswoman.
   b) Put your list into rank order as to which is most strongly portrayed
      important to the author's message).
   c) Choose one (or two) and explain how these identities are portraye

*All identities in this play seem to be questioned via juxtaposition. Some ide *
1. Feminine (individual) vs masculine
2. Female (as a group – the historical gathering, the Japanese ladies in so
3. Public/working vs private
4. Intellectual
5. Passive (forgiving) vs dominant (violent, controlling)
6. Religious vs secular
7. Independent vs involved/married
8. Lonely vs fulfilled
9. Honest vs dishonest
10. Motherhood vs childlessness

Identity Conversations – Teacher No[tes]

Following are close examinations of conversations scripted in *Top Girls*:
1. In Act One
2. In the employment agency
3. Between Marlene and Mrs Kidd

All are examined with a focus on 'identity'.

These handouts can be used as a model answer and students should be enco[uraged to find]
utterances to examine for clues to identity.

Explore a conversation in Scene One and examine the presentation of identity

Page 5   ISABELLA: *Grief always overwhelmed me at the time*
To Page 6   NIJO: *I wouldn't know*

> *Yes, but I was very unhappy. / It hurt to remember*

How does Marlene see Nijo's identity?

> *What I fancy is a rare steak.*

How is Marlene's identity portrayed?
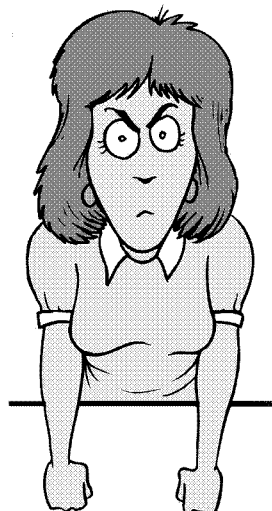
Explore a conversation in the employment agency and examine the
Write out the pragmatics (what the speaker is really thinking – the s
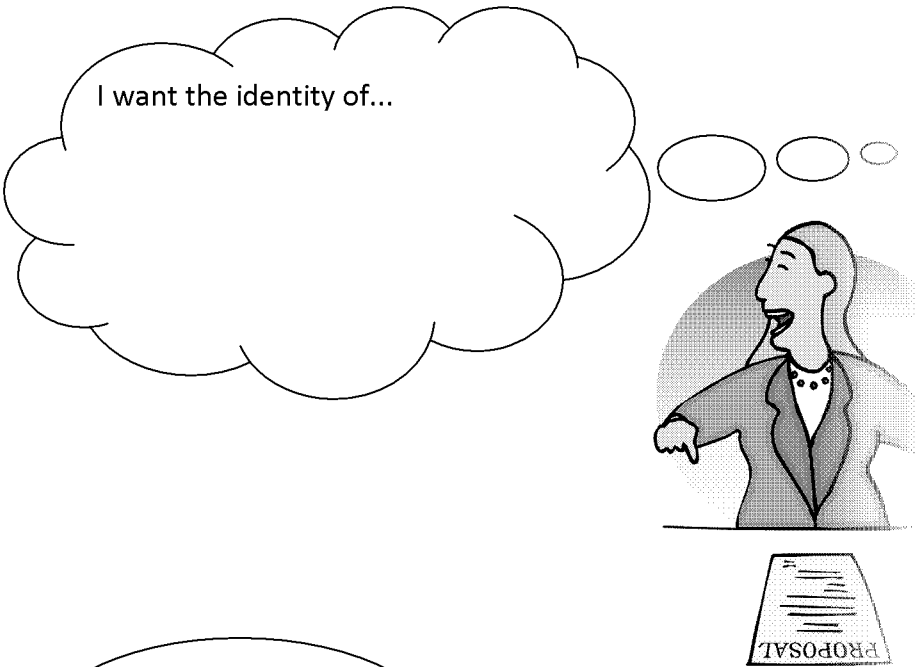
MARLENE: *But where do the prospects come in? No kids for a bit?* (p. 31)

Wo

I want the identity of...

PROPOSAL

WIN: *You shouldn't talk too much at an interview.* (p. 53)

You

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Explore the conversation between Marlene and Mrs Kidd and examine the presentation of their identities.

MRS KIDD: I'm sorry if I'm interrupting your work. I know office work isn't like housework / which is all interruptions.

Mrs Kidd's identity:

Marlene's identity:

MARLENE: Could you please piss off?

Fill in the table below with the two sides of the presentations of both mothe...

Look for the balance in all these identities. Churchill tries to give balanced ...
audience decide where their sympathies lie – although with the plethora of ...
she gives us, this is not an easy task.

Motherhood vs Childlessness

Presentation of Motherhood	Presentatio...
Joyce	

Classic Theatre
There are three main theories of theatrical structure: Aristotle, Shakespea

Aristotle
Aristotle, in his Poetics, declared that drama:
- Was divided into five acts
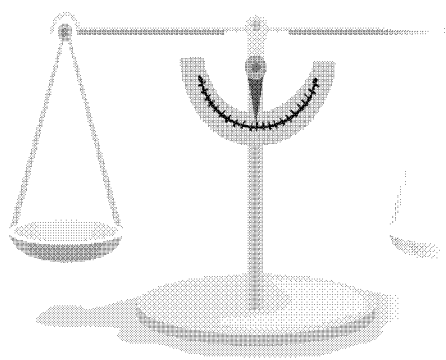- Should take place in no more than one setting
- Should not recreate time longer than 24 hours

Shakespeare
Shakespeare introduced:
- Soliloquy
- Three act structure
- Was the first dramatist to break with Aristotle's classical example

Freytag
Freytag, a modern dramatic theorist, took Aristotle's work further and desi
triangular) structure to explain ancient Greek theatre
(**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dramatic_structure**):

Climax

Rising Action

Falling Action

Exposition   De
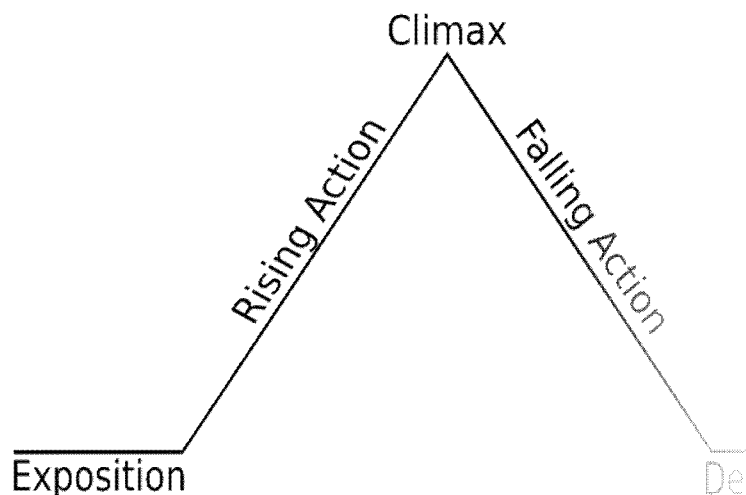
Modern Theatre
Modern drama can have different 'falling action' to ancient plays. For exar
increased the dramatic impetus of the final moments / falling action (where
simply show the protagonist (hero/heroine) winning or losing against the a

Modern drama can also have a different denouement. Classical denoueme
better off in the end (comedy genre) or worse off (tragedy).
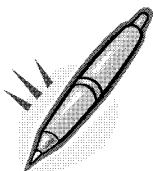
Task

Explain whether the falling action and denouement in Top Girls *fo*
example. Draw the pyramid and enter appropriate moments of
see how Churchill has or has not used this model.

Female Conversational Traits

Robin Lakoff was a sociolinguist. Her *Language and Woman's Place* introdu
the way women talk (in contrast to male language). The following are idea
familiar to Churchill, some of which she introduced throughout the structu
below with examples from *Top Girls*.

Linguistic Trait	Explanation	Exampl
Hedging	Phrases like 'sort of', 'kind of', 'it seems like'	
Super Polite Forms	'Would you mind...' 'Is it o.k. if...?' '...if it's not too much to ask'	
Apologising	Frequent phrases, e.g. 'I'm sorry but...'	
Tag Questions	'You don't mind, do you?' 'That was good, wasn't it?'	
Hyper Correct Grammar and Pronunciation	Use of prestige or standard forms	
Indirect Requests	Relying on subtext to carry a less direct message, e.g. 'I'm so hungry'	
Speaking in Italics	Using tone for emphasis, e.g. 'so', 'very', 'quite'	
Speaking Less Frequently		
Less Taboo or Coarse Language		

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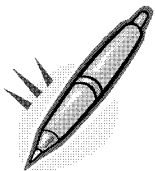
✏ **Tasks**
1. *Why did Churchill include some of these female characteristics*
2. *Which did she exclude and why?*
3. *What would happen in performance if a male speaker was intr*

Short Essay Questions

1. Does Scene One add to the rest of the play? Is it a necessary scene?

2. How has Churchill demolished 'the "maleness" of the traditional struct[...] building in a certain way to climax'?

3. How far do you agree with this statement?

   '*A large part of women's trouble comes from successful women not h[...] and future women to achieve success.*' *Adrian Jones, 1999.*

4. How far do you agree that Churchill has achieved this statement below

   '*Additionally overlapping the language of Top Girls are Churchill's fe[...] explained in an interview with Emily Mann:*

   What I was intending to do was make it first look as though it was ce[...] women then – by showing the main character Marlene, being success[...] destructive, capitalist way – ask, what kind of achievement is that? T[...] start out looking like a feminist play and turn into a socialist one, as [...]

   http://www.womenwriters[...]

The Color Purple

General or Starter Tasks

1. Research Alice Walker. Write down four interesting facts about the au

2. Research *The Color Purple*. Write down two interesting facts about the

3. Research the epistolary novel form and its history (e.g. *Dracula, Pamel*

4. What might the title suggest?

5. Research America's Southern States in the 1950s. Be prepared to discu
   for the novel.

6. Do you sympathise with [choose character]? Was it hard to decide? Wh

7. Which character had the hardest life? Why?

8. Describe Walker's style (at least two bullet points):

9. Are there any female conversational traits, e.g. Lakoff, present in this t

Teacher Notes on Form, Language and

Teacher notes are provided first. Student tasks are suggested underneath where ap

Form
1.   Modern American realist epistolary novel (letter format).

2.   Bildungsroman (growth of narrator from child to adulthood).

3.   Use of narrator. In contrast to plays, novels are usually longer and mo
     narrator. However, this is a first person narration and students must re
     narrative voice.

4.   Feminist (although this is by no means its only presentation).

Structure
1.   Linear (the epistles are chronological).

     Student Task

     Describe your understanding of Celie's character when you realise she is writi

2.   Final scene delivers a traditional denouement.

     Student Task

     How did you react to the ending? Did you find it satisfactory?

3.   Women do not dominate the play but there is an obvious bias created b
     letter writers are women: Celie, Nettie, Shug).

     Student Task

     Are these characters stereotypes of females (e.g. melodramatic Victorian hard

4.   Modern(ish) setting

Language
1.   Feminist – gives women a voice. One problem – the male voices are quote

     Student Task

     Do you trust Celie as a narrator? Explain your answer.

2.   Voices of all generations and types of women (passive/dominant, youn

     Student Task

     Describe the language of the characters individually.

3.   Use of dialect.

     Student Task

     How does Walker use dialect to represent Celie?

4.   Different voices are represented by Celie's letters.

     Student Task

     Describe how Nettie's voice is different to Celie's.

The Identity of Marlene and Celie

Create two graphs to examine the identity of these two important charact
- Use the following headings or your own choices
- Try to analyse language as well as structure of the text

For the X axis, use headings similar to those below or your own (include qu
For the Y axis, use numbers one to ten with the heading 'strength of identit

Marlene
☞ Dinner party in her honour – her language is masculine (egotistical, ag

☞ Banters with colleagues – her language is aggressive, self-aggrandising,

☞ Interviews a client – her language is abrupt and demeaning, showing c

☞ Angie arrives – Marlene is shocked but remains in control

☞ Marlene goes home to visit Joyce and Angie – her language is abrupt a
   sobs and apologises (one year previous to what we already know)

Celie
☞ Begins as an abused child

☞ Loses her sister

☞ Forced into an abusive marriage with Albert

☞ Meets Shug Avery

☞ Discovers she can feel happy with herself

☞ Leaves Albert to live with Shug

☞ Has her own business making trousers

☞ Shug leaves Celie for a younger man

☞ Celie discovers Albert can be her friend

☞ Shug returns

☞ Nettie returns

Identity in *Top Girls* and *The Color Purple*

1. Make a list of characters from each text whose identity you feel is worth
2. Write out a quotation(s) which depicts their identity (or growth of iden
3. Examine the language used.

You can use the quotations and analysis below as a starting point and/or de

This work will be helpful when writing coursework essays (developing AO2
structure, language).

Character	Quotation	How 'Identity' Is Presented/Revealed
Celie	'It nearly kill me to think she [Nettie] might marry somebody like Mr ____ or end up in some white lady kitchen.' (p. 17)	Sisterly identity – her closeness and reliance on Nettie makes her removal seem harsher and we realise Celie will struggle without her support. Also a foreshadowing of Sofia's fate.
	'Beat her [Sofia]. I say.' (p. 35)	Celie sides with her abusers. Her identity as wife includes violence.
	'Now that my eye's opening, I feels like a fool. Next to any little scrub of brush in my yard, Mr ____ 's evil sort of shrink.' (p. 168)	Her own identity becomes stronger. She becomes more confident, though not yet assertive. She identifies herself within a beautiful world, no longer estranged from it.

Character	Quotation	How 'Identity' is Presented/Revealed
Shug	'You sure *is* ugly, she say' (p. 42)	
	'Shug tell everybody I got a fever and she put me to bed.' (p. 103)	
	'Celie is coming with us, say Shug.' (p. 170)	
Sofia	'You ought to bash Mr. _____ head open' (p. 39)	
	'Sofia say, Hell no' (p. 76)	
	'I'm here to watch, not to throw' (p. 87)	
	'I do not love Reynolds Stanley Earl' (p. 224).	

Character	Quotation	How 'Identity' is Presented/Revealed
Marlene	'To our courage and the way we changed our lives and our extraordinary achievements' (p. 13).	
	'Oh God, why are we all so miserable?' (p. 18)	
	'You haven't got the speeds anyway.' (p. 32)	
	'I think you could make me believe it if you put your mind to it.' (p. 33)	
	'I think he's going to have to get over it.' (p. 58)	
	'I can't write letters but I do think of you.' (p. 82)	

Character	Quotation	How 'Identity' Is Presented/Revealed
Joyce	'Want a cup of tea… rotten little c**t'. (p. 37)	
	'I don't know who'd have her, mind.' (p. 43)	
	'You've caught me on the hop with the place in a mess.' (p. 68)	
	'We can do without you.' (p. 78)	
	'I've got four different cleaning jobs.' (p. 82)	
	'I spit when I see a Rolls Royce' (p. 85)	
	'I expect her children will say what a wasted life she had.' (p. 86)	

Identity of 'Strong' Women in *Top Girls* and *The*

Who are the strongest women in these two texts? Have these women lost
important to keep their status/identity as a strong woman?

	Name of the strongest woman	What have they given up or lost?	Importa
Top Girls			
The Color Purple			'That whe Shug talk 'Shug Ave ain't you 'Shug mak 'Shug act (p. 228) 'Sofia say 'You a low I say' (p.

Short Essay

How do the two authors present the identity of strong women?

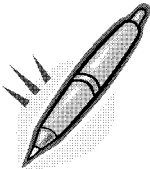# Identity of 'Strong' Women in *Top Girls* and *The*

Who are the strongest women in these two texts? Have these women lost
important to keep their status/identity as a strong woman?

	Name of the strongest woman	What have they given up or lost?	Importa
Top Girls			
The Color Purple			

Short Essay

How do the two authors present the identity of strong women?

Similarities and Differences between *Top Girls* and

Complete a table to show the similarities and differences between these
- ✓ Form, language and structure must be covered.
- ✓ This table can form the basis for your coursework essay: *'Compare the Walker have structured their works to explore issues of identity in light does so more effectively.'*
- ✓ Remember AO3 is highly weighted (compare and contrast).

Top Girls	*The Color Purple*	Similarities or D

Quick Recap Before Writing the Essa

The essay title ensures that AO2 is covered (structure – although of course i be a focus also) and AO3 (compare and contrast).

The essay title also ensures that a critical view is covered (something AQA f essay titles).

Essay Title:
Compare the ways in which Churchill and Walker have structured their wor in light of the view that Top Girls does so more effectively.

Identity explored in *Top Girls*	Identity explore

Make a list of the different identities explored in both texts using the table your essay.

Choose a handful of 'identity' issues to discuss – both these texts offer a ple should choose issues which complement one another, e.g. strong contrasts

Ensure your essay covers the drama 60% and the prose 40%.

Use the handouts (especially J and K) as starting points.

Ensure you have used a number of quotations – more so from the drama te full analysis (AO1).

An A* Example Essay

*Compare ways in which Churchill and Walker have structured their works ~~to~~
the light of the view that Top Girls does so more effectively*

Top Girls and *The Color Purple* both feature female characters who
dominated societies in which they live. Subsequently, both works are
literature, which display the tribulations suffered by women in their
identities of the central characters are complex, and develop through
Top Girls and *The Color Purple* contrast in the way they are structu
and soon establish key themes in the texts.

Top Girls was written to be performed on stage, and would be a dy
performance to watch, due to Churchill's realistic use of overlapping
contains examples of choral and overlapping speech, which helps to e

> 'NIJO: So when the time came I did nothing but cry. M
>   badly ripped. But even that morning when he le
>   robe with a scarlet lining and
> MARLENE: Are you saying he raped you?'

The overlapping ('/') of speech is a realistic representation of the wa
another, according to the linguistic theorist Robin Lakoff. Lakoff put
women speak less frequently than men. [1] This is correct in the ope
Purple, but the theory is incorrect when applied to the women in *T*
Churchill's intention is to explore ways in which characters express t
language and morals (i.e. constant disruption of speech). The aggress
Marlene interrupts Nijo, suggests that instead of comforting Nijo, it
for Marlene to demonstrate her feminist views and position as alpha
overlaps text, also suggesting the inadequacy she feels being surroun
women.

In contrast, *The Color Purple* is a more traditional, realistic novel w
perspective. Therefore, Walker must present Celie's views in a way w
Walker chooses to structure her work in a simplistic way, which refle

> 'I lay there thinking bout Nettie while he on top of me, wonde

Celie talks about her marriage in which she is trapped, without deta
she is accustomed to the way that men treat her. Celie does not try
of sophisticated language, unlike Marlene, who feels under constant
approval. Naturally, the audience develops sympathy for Celie. She
eloquently as Marlene is able, yet is determined to remain positive

Nettie. Walker's use of family provides a feminist structure of sisterh...

Top Girls. In comparison, Marlene appears to take her position as co...
granted and seldom talks about her family, revealing priorities that ...
identity.

In order to make her performance more engaging, the play includes...
the actors; to create accurate representations of Churchill's characte...
introduce the contrasting roles of women within modern society.

> 'Restaurant. Table set for dinner with white tablecloth. Six plac...
> MARLENE and WAITRESS.'

Marlene and the waitress have opposing identities, which creates a fi...
two characters. The waitress remains nameless throughout Top Girls...
status in the view of Marlene, who represents the 'modern woman'...
waitress represents the working class background. Marlene is subject...
women could not easily balance children with a career. It becomes cl...
large proportion of Marlene's identity is her success in the workplace...
modern feminism is failing as women lose their identity in order to s...
increasingly conforming to a male norm. Marlene represents this the...
nature becomes more obvious throughout the play. At no point does...
the way that Celie does, which suggests that Marlene believes she is b...
and consequently has stopped striving for equality.

However, Walker in *The Color Purple* utilises language and first pers...
make her novel work. *The Color Purple* introduces Celie as a charact...
men. Celie finds herself with little freedom, which contrasts with Ch...
'the modern woman'. Walker allows the reader to become intimate ...
result of the novel's format. *The Color Purple* is written as an episto...
private letters from Celie. Consequently, empathy is created betwee...
the opening stages of the novel and her lack of intent to send the le...
innocence of Celie at the beginning of the novel. These are merely an...
which creates a sense of loneliness.

> 'You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mamm...

This gives the impression that Celie has confided in the reader. This ...
Celie is distressing and introduces themes which become fundamenta...
Celie's identity as a female in a prejudiced era.

The Color Purple is a confessional novel: a number of letters writte...
are no dates, little sense of the passage of time, which represents th...

the early stages of her life. Simplistic language helps to show this.

'Dear God, My mama dead. She die screaming and cussing. She cuss at me. I'm big. I can't move fast enough.'

The dialectal spelling which Walker adopts for Celie shows the lack of received within a male dominated society, while the use of euphemist emphasises once more the innocence of Celie in the opening stages of lack of awareness of her identity as a woman; she is unaware of the body.

The predominant theme of feminism is displayed in the opening stag Purple and Top Girls. The opening stages of each text contribute to t for each character, which is extended as the texts develop. Churchill demonstrate the harsh realities of a male dominated society through central characters. Marlene promotes herself as a ruthless business w ironically, makes her appear masculine. In contrast, Celie accepts the opening stages of the novel. However, her character develops as she life without men. Often, Churchill critiques Marlene's feminism, yet presenting their own ideologies on the subject.

Churchill chooses to further express her feminist views through her s ensuring the play is the antithesis of the traditional male norm. Until Churchill does not use a structure typical of Freytag's Pyramid in cre chronological plot of Top Girls is an anti-traditional format, which c development of Marlene as a feminist character.

'MARLENE cries.

JOYCE: Don't grizzle, Marlene, for God's sake.'

The break down of Marlene's façade in Act Three is emphasised by th nature of Top Girls and adds dimension to Marlene's character. How disorientates the audience with abstract messages, it could reflect th for the feminism Marlene represents. Marlene believes that 'the socia labour is natural and unchanging', which contrasts with her ambitio Celie does not have such an abrupt break in character. Instead, she changing environment, which aids the development of Celie's charact

In conclusion, both texts explore the identities of women in contrast Walker and Churchill incorporate moral dilemmas within the texts. the texts reflects the views and characteristics of Celie and Marlene. opening scene, the dream banquet, was 'a way of putting Marlene i

who was celebrating extraordinary achievements'. [2] Churchill uses
social significance in order to question Marlene's route to success. In
as a way of conveying Churchill's feminist views through the medium
can celebrate success just as any man would. In comparison, Walker
characters formed themselves, suggesting very little of her own influ

> 'When I was sure the characters of my new novel were trying t
> make plans to leave New York.' *(In search of Our Mother's Gar*

This suggests that the form of *The Color Purple* was of less significan
the development of the characters and their individual identities. In
on building the characters around the non-traditional form of *Top*
help to emphasise the unusual format and feminist ideas.

Predominantly, *Top Girls* explores issues of identity through feminis
the character of Marlene. However, feminism is a product of the inf
Walker's *The Color Purple*. Therefore, I would venture that *Top Girl*
exploring issues of identity, due to the ambitious nature of the chara
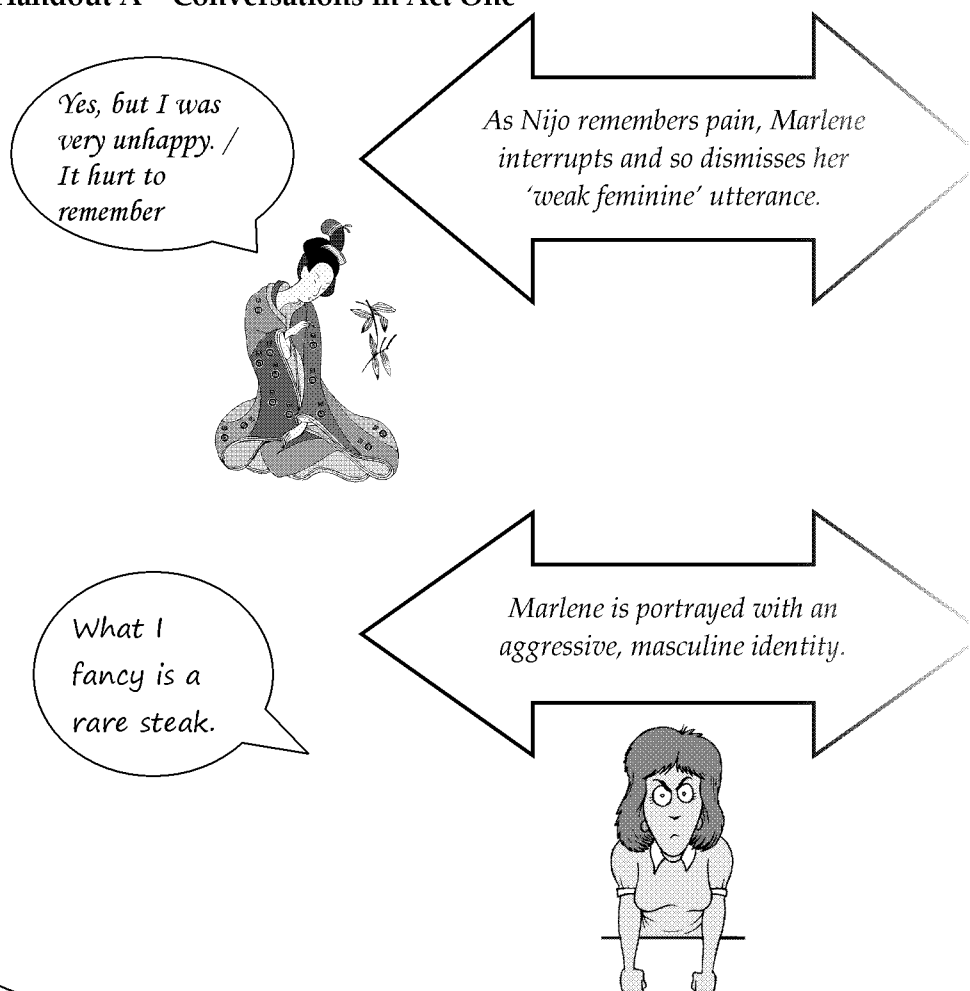portrayal of them.

Suggested Answers

General or Starter Tasks for *Top Girls*

3. What might the title suggest?
    *   *That it is a feminist play – point out to students that Churchill did not int⋯*
        just the way she sees things.
    *   *It could be sarcastic (women in business are not always 'top', e.g. not mum⋯*

6. How did the 1969 Divorce Act, which granted women the ability to div⋯
    change society including women's careers? Note: in Victorian times, on⋯
    grounds of unfaithfulness.
    *   *More women divorced men*
    *   *Women needed to support themselves (and their children as there were also ⋯*
    *   *Women needed better jobs to achieve this*
    *   *To achieve this, employers needed to widen opportunities for women (outsid⋯*
        stackers, dinner ladies etc.).

17. Describe Churchill's style (at least four bullet points):
    1. *Uses wit to bring important issues to the fore*
    2. *Non-linear structure*
    3. *Creates many complex characters so sympathy is shared*
    4. *Feminist*
    5. *Uses dialect*
    6. *Uses non standard punctuation and syntax*

Handout A – Conversations in Act One

> Yes, but I was very unhappy. / It hurt to remember

As Nijo remembers pain, Marlene interrupts and so dismisses her 'weak feminine' utterance.

> What I fancy is a rare steak.

Marlene is portrayed with an aggressive, masculine identity.

Handout B – Conversations in the Employment Agency

> MARLENE: *But where do the prospects come in? No kids for a bit?* (p. 31)

> Women's ide:
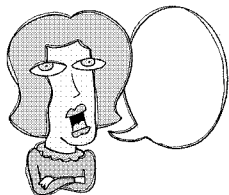> linked with d:
> your identity
> you can't be s:
> business.

> I want the identity of... *a hard-nosed (and therefore successful) businesswoman.*

> WIN: *You shouldn't talk too much at an interview.* (p. 53)

PROPOSAL

> You have t:
> a typical, c:
> woman. N:
> take you sc:

Handout C – Conversations Between Marlene and Mrs Kidd

> MRS KIDD: *I'm sorry if I'm interrupting your work. I know office work isn't like housework / which is all interruptions.*

> Mrs Kidd's identity:
> Taught to know her p:
> A martyr to her posi:

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> MARLENE: *Could you please piss off?*

> Marlene's identity:
> • *In control*
> • *Hard-nosed*
> • *Masculine*
> • *Tries to distance*
>   *ameliorating the*

Zig Zag Education

Handout D – Presentation of Identities

Presentation of Motherhood	Present...
Joyce	
Plus: Caring, natural maternal instincts as she took in Angie as her own. *Joyce: I don't know how you could leave your own child.* **Minus:** Perhaps Joyce used Angie for company or an anchor so she would not have to choose another life. *Marlene: You wanted it, you said you were glad...* Unfulfilment – life as a parent is not easy. *Angie: Wish she was dead.*	**Plus:** She has a successfu... *Marlene: There's...* high-flying lady. **Minus:** She is alone. She has no sense o... *Marlene: No. Let...*

Short Essay Questions for *Top Girls*

2. How has Churchill demolished 'the "maleness" of the traditional structure of in a certain way to climax'?
   - *No obvious link between Scene One and the rest*
   - *No standard denouement – nothing is neatly solved*
   - *Doesn't follow Aristotle's or Freytag's examples (see Handouts E and F)*
   - *No psychological examination of Marlene, more 'Modern British socialist theatr...*
   - *No male characters present (and female characters are non-traditional)*

General or Starter Tasks for *The Color Purple*

4. What might the title suggest?
   That it is a feminist play – a feminine colour, discussion about colour. It could be a sp...

8. Describe Walker's style (at least two bullet points):
   feminist, uses dialect, epistolary style, spiritual, biased?

9. Are there any female conversational traits, e.g. Lakoff, present in this text? (se...
   Shug does use italics (You sure 'is' ugly).

Similarities and Differences Between *Top Girls* And *The Color Purple*

Top Girls	The Color Purple	Similarities or Differences (AO...
Feminist	←	Churchill was not explicitly feminist whereas Walker ... of feminism was closely linked to Cora Kaplan's 'mul... women.
Non-linear	Linear	The play is explicitly anti-traditional in structure. The novel is linear so we have the sense of a story un... our sympathies around it, waiting for the denouemen...
Uses dialect	←	Churchill uses dialect to expose class differences linked t... Walker uses dialect more fondly, to give Celie an initi... adds to the first person characterisation.
Play	Prose	This play has many characters (and therefore sympath... narrator lets them speak for themselves and involves t... where their sympathy lies. More balanced. The novel has a first person biased narrator but lends ... touch to Celie in the bildungsroman form, especially s... plight of children. There are more descriptions of plac...
Realistic and surreal	Realism	The novel is more realistic, if not more biased. Howeve... the play allow Churchill's play to explore female identit...
The Identity of women	←	Both texts explore macho women, e.g. Marlene, Dull, S... them seem to get on well in life – to varying degrees (s...