

The Glass Menagerie

AQA A Level Drama Play Guide

Downloadable Worksheets

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Book page number

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Relationships between characters

Character revision

As you study the characters, use this table to note your discoveries.

Name of character	
Age and appearance	
Status/occupation/relationships (parent, sibling, friend, co-worker, etc)	
Background (place of birth, family, childhood, education, etc)	
Key role or function in play (protagonist/antagonist, parent, sibling, son/daughter, friend, lover, obstacle, foil, outsider). Explain their actions within their role.	
Key scenes/moments	
Key lines	
Costume and make-up design	

Form and structure

The scenes of the play

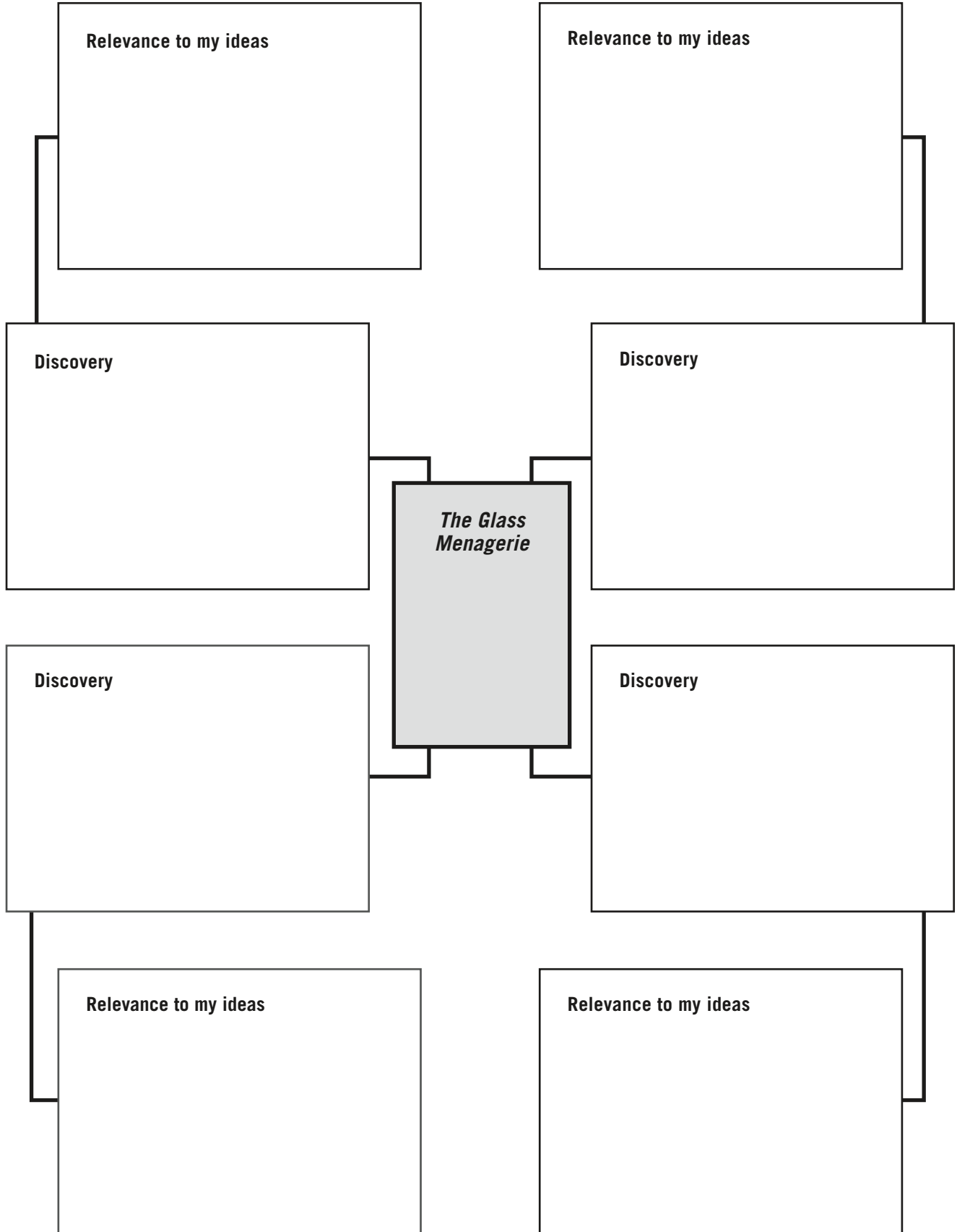
Use this chart to analyse the form and structure of the play. (An example has been suggested.)

Key events	Structure/purpose	Explanation
Amanda asks Laura about her gentlemen callers and remembers her own.	Scene 1: Introduction to the characters, contrasts between Amanda and Laura and conflict between Amanda and Tom. The 'gentleman callers' line foreshadows Jim's later visit.	This first scene establishes the very different personalities of the Wingfields, most particularly Amanda's attempts to recapture the past and enforce standards.

Researching context, genre and style

Your discoveries and ideas

Use the mind map below to begin noting your discoveries.



Noting your rehearsal discoveries

Motivations, skills and effects

Using a grid like the one below, locate a key line or stage direction, then consider what the characters want, the skills to be used and the effect on the audience.

Character Line Actions/motivations	Acting skills used (vocal, physical; interactions, spatial relationships, reactions, etc)	Effect on audience (understanding of character and/or situation, creation of conflict/tension/comedy/surprise, etc)
Tom, Scene 1, page 4: 'To begin with, I turn back time.' Tom establishes his relationship with the audience and that there are two time periods in the play.	Tom stands jauntily on the stage-right fire escape and looks directly at the audience, smiling. He makes a sweeping arm gesture. The lighting, soft and warm, illuminates the Wingfield apartment centre stage. He looks at the apartment with interest.	The audience are introduced to the genre – it is a 'memory play' and there will be two time periods. Tom's expressions show that he is inviting the audience into the performance. He reacts to the set, indicating its importance to him.

Noting your rehearsal discoveries

Notes on a section of the play

Use this grid to collate your overall discoveries about a scene.

Act _____ Pages _____	
Positioning of characters on stage Are they standing or seated? Downstage, centre or upstage? How do they use the set?	(You could sketch this.)
Characters' motivations/actions What do they want? How will they try to achieve their wishes?	
Sources of conflict What obstacles do they face? How are their desires in opposition to another character's?	
Vocal and physical skills Changes in pitch, volume, tone, etc. Use of pause/pace. Gestures, movements, stillness, handling of props, etc.	
Spatial relationships How near or far are they from each other? Do they avoid or dominate another character?	
Listening and reacting How do they react to key moments? (Expressions, stillness, gestures, eye contact, etc)	
Pause/pace/silence Does the scene speed up or slow down? Are there pauses or silences? Why?	
Use of props/costume/set How do props, costumes and the set aid the scene?	(You could sketch an example.)
Purpose of scene; its effect on the audience What is the importance of this scene? How does it further the plot or reveal information or insight? How do we feel about the characters and plot here?	

Acting choices

Vocal skills on key lines

When you are experimenting with vocal skills to convey the character and their situation, use this chart to note the effect you want and how you could accomplish it. (An example has been started.)

Scene/line	Desired effect/understanding	Vocal skills used
Amanda: Things have a way of turning out so badly. (page 84)	To show that Amanda realises the tragedy of this moment and that her plans and hopes have been dashed. It is another catastrophe in her life and one that she doesn't know how to rise above.	My tone is thoughtful and my volume and pitch low as I am speaking to myself, reflecting on past and present losses. I use my habitual Southern accent and linger on the words 'things' and 'badly' for emphasis.

Acting choices

Physical skills in key moments

One way of exploring physicality is to choose a few key moments when movement, gestures, posture and so on might change or develop. The chart below has been started to show how you could note ideas for Amanda.

Chosen moment	Physical skills	Effect
Moment 1: Scene 1, Amanda at the dinner table (page 6)	Amanda sits very upright, facing the audience, with her children on either side, so she can comment on and correct them – vocally and through gestures. She points at Tom with a mimed fork and then elegantly demonstrates eating leisurely, by slowly and gracefully miming raising a fork to her lips. She leans her head back when she imagines the 'delicate flavours' of the food. Her words at times are sharp, but she smiles and nods pleasantly, as if giving a lecture.	This is the audience's introduction to Amanda and I want them to see the larger-than-life character that she is and how she controls her children through her domineering manner, but also through her habitual chatty charm. Her arms and hands are essential to her ability to communicate and she uses them persuasively and elegantly.
Moment 2:		
Moment 3:		
Moment 4:		
Moment 5:		
Moment 6:		

Stage space

Locations in the play

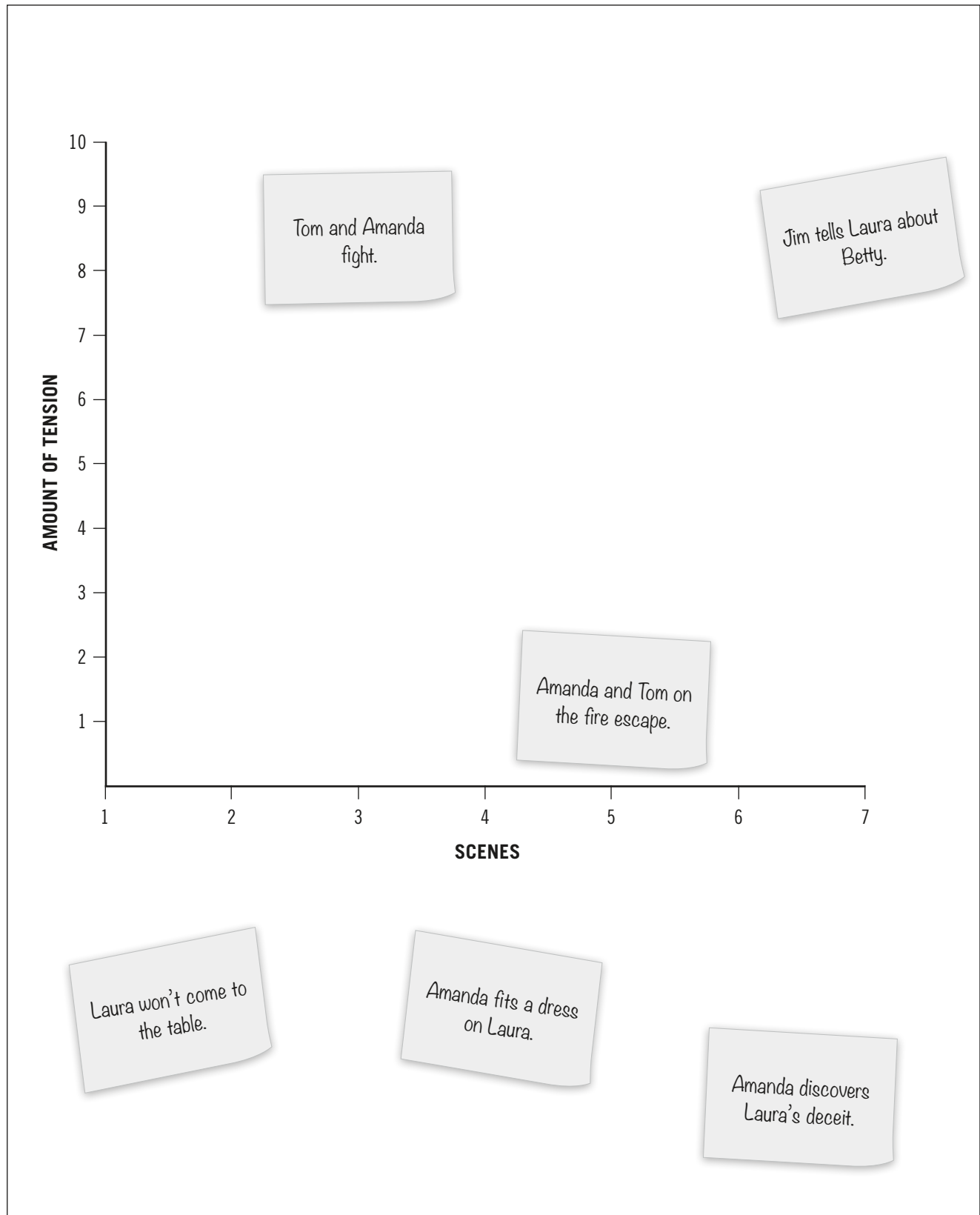
All of the action takes place in the Wingfield apartment and on the fire escape, but these spaces may be imagined in different ways and their appearance may change depending on the actions and time of day. Use the grid below to help you prepare your ideas. (Some examples have been suggested.)

Event/page	Set/lighting/props/sounds	Effect on audience
Tom's entrance and first speech (pages 3–5)	Scaffolding upstage represents the industrial cityscape, with small areas of illumination like distant windows or neon signs. Lighting on stage is dim and bleak. A follow-spot picks out Tom as he walks along the scaffolding. When he lights a cigarette, there is an additional pinpoint of light. When he mentions memory, a haunting flute tune plays, and, as he introduces his mother and sister, spotlights appear on them. A tightly focused profile lantern illuminates his father's photograph in an oval frame hanging suspended in space.	Lighting choices establish that it is evening in an unforgiving city. The follow-spot identifies Tom as our protagonist and the character who will lead us through the play. Design choices support the memory play by showing the difference between the harsh light outside and the warmer, more nostalgic lighting within the apartment. The flute theme is delicate and mournful and, as the play goes on, is increasingly associated with Laura.
First dinner scene (pages 6–9)		
Amanda discovers Laura's deception (pages 10–14)		
Tom's late drunken entrance (pages 23–25)		
Amanda and Tom on the fire escape (pages 36–38)		
Jim's arrival in the apartment (page 52)		
Jim and Laura by candlelight (pages 63–79)		
The play's ending (pages 86–87)		

Using tension in the play

A tension graph

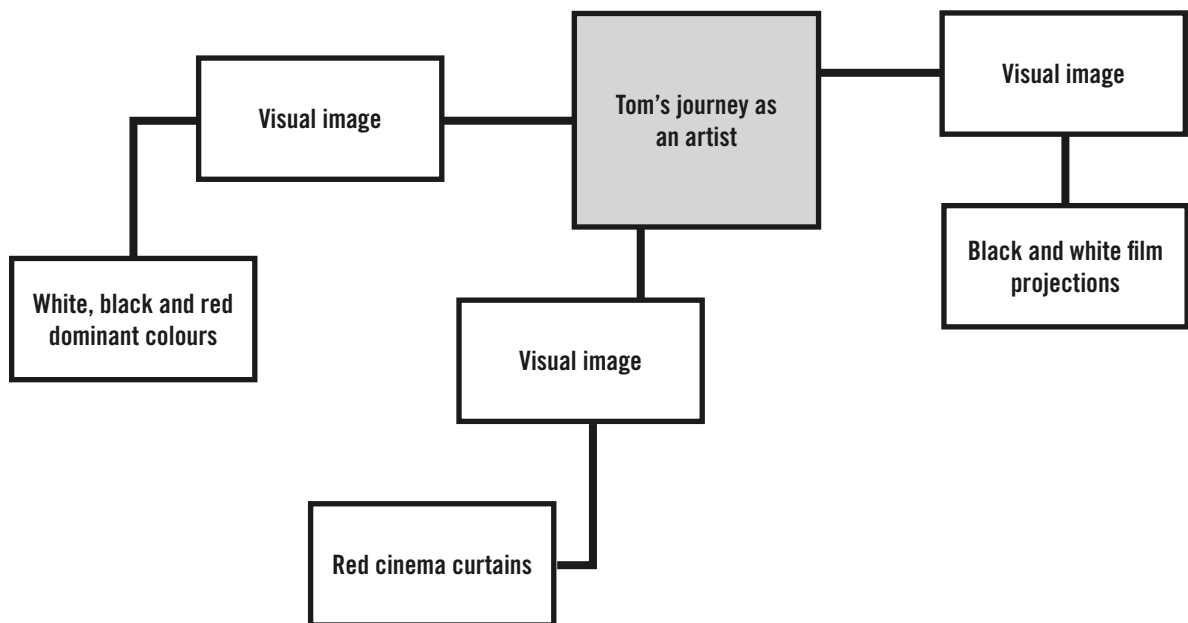
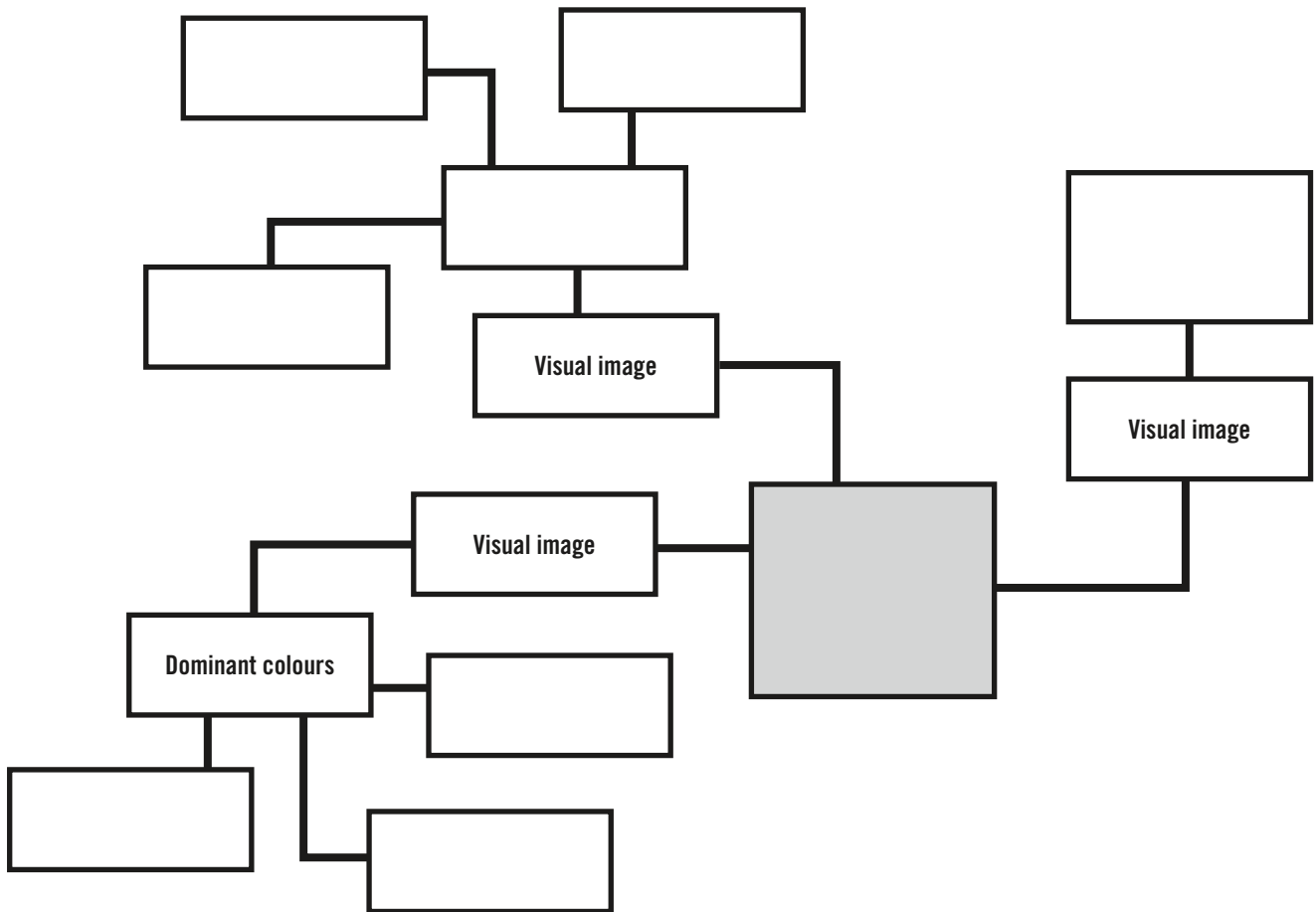
Use the graph below to locate the moments in the play that are most tense and those that are most relaxed. A few moments have been plotted for you. Add others that you think are important, such as scenes when characters make decisions or take key actions.



Set design

Visual imagery

Think about what the play means to you and how you can use items in the set to help the audience understand that meaning. You could use a mind map, like the examples below, to set out your concept.



Lighting and sound design

Lighting and sound design grid

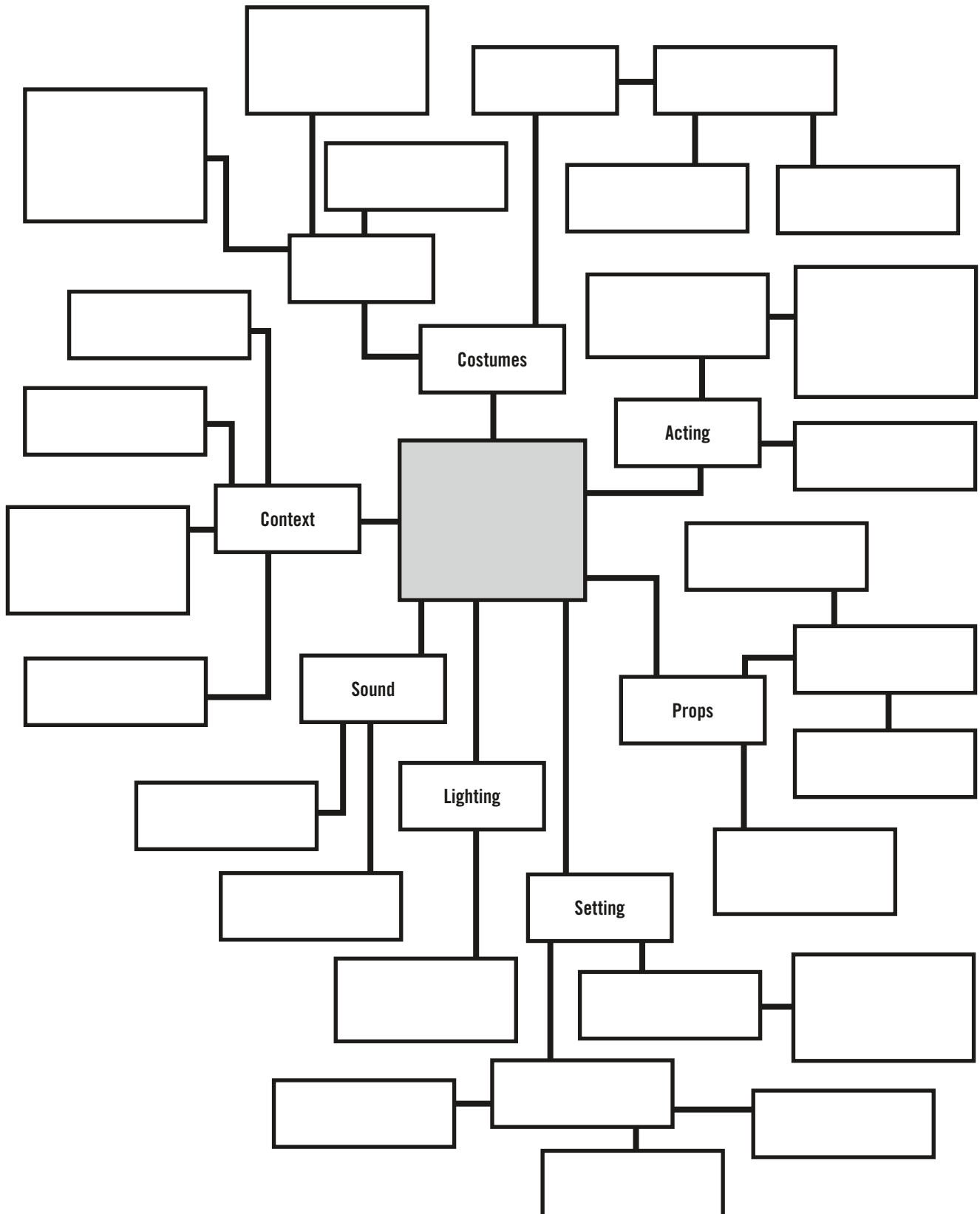
Use the grid below to begin planning your lighting and sound design choices for important moments in the play.

Scene/key moment	Lighting (intensity, angle, colours, lanterns, etc)	Sound (music, sound effects, live, recorded, volume, etc)	Effect on audience (setting, mood, context, tension, psychological insight)
Opening of play: Tom's monologue			
Scene 1: First supper scene			
Scene 2: Amanda discovers Laura's deceit			
Scene 3: Tom and Amanda fight			
Scene 4: Very early morning; Tom, Laura, Amanda			
Scene 5: The fire escape; Tom and Amanda			
Scene 6: Preparations for the gentleman caller			
Scene 6: Jim meets Amanda and they go to the supper table			
Scene 7: Jim and Laura			
Scene 7: The play's ending			

Creating a cohesive concept: acting, directing, design

Ideas for your production

Use the mind map below to set out your ideas for your ideal production.



Making a plan

Mind map

Use this mind map to plan a response to an exam question about set and lighting design. (You could use a similar map for another question.)

