Arthur Miller
A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Intermediate 2 Questions

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

Essay Question

Copy this question out at the start of your answer

Choose a play in which a central character behaves in an obsessive manner. Describe the nature of the character's obsessive behaviour and discuss the influence this behaviour has on your understanding of the character in the play as a whole.

Essay Structure

Intro
View from the Bridge – Arthur Miller.
Play about family breakdown – Red Hook – New York – 50s – incest – forbidden desire.
Role of obsession – character of Eddie – behaviour defines the direction and outcome of the play.

Synopsis
Eddie – longshoreman – masculine society – breadwinner – niece – hidden desire – uncomfortable – arrival of immigrant cousins from Italy – conflict – Rodolpho/ Marco – K+R fall in love – Eddie's fear and anger – leads to betrayal – Eddie destroyed by betrayal of own culture – killed in street. All told by Alfieri.

One
Eddie Carbone – Traditional Masculine figure – obsessed with niece. Unacceptable in any society.
Tries to hide his feelings.
Katherine seemingly oblivious to this – too young to understand, or pretending not to understand?
Beatrice – long-suffering. Wants to keep the peace.

Two
Cousins serve role of forcing Eddie's feelings into the open.
Compels him to defend his position as head of family.
Believes he can influence Katherine by being the alpha-male.
Tries to ridicule Rodolpho.

Three
Eddie tries to explain away his fear of losing Catherine as a fear that Rodolpho is tarnishing the family name.
An elaborate attempt to divert attention from the truth.
Conversation with Louis and Mike.
Eddie goes to Alfieri to denounce Rodolpho.

Four
The obsession does not respect either the law of the land or law of the community.
Alfieri tells Eddie he has no recourse in the law.
Eddie knows he will be a social leper if he betrays his community.
He is left powerless if he tries to remain within these social codes.
His obsession forces him to break the code of his community – he betrays his own family.
This is foreshadowed earlier in the play with the story about Vinny Bolzano.
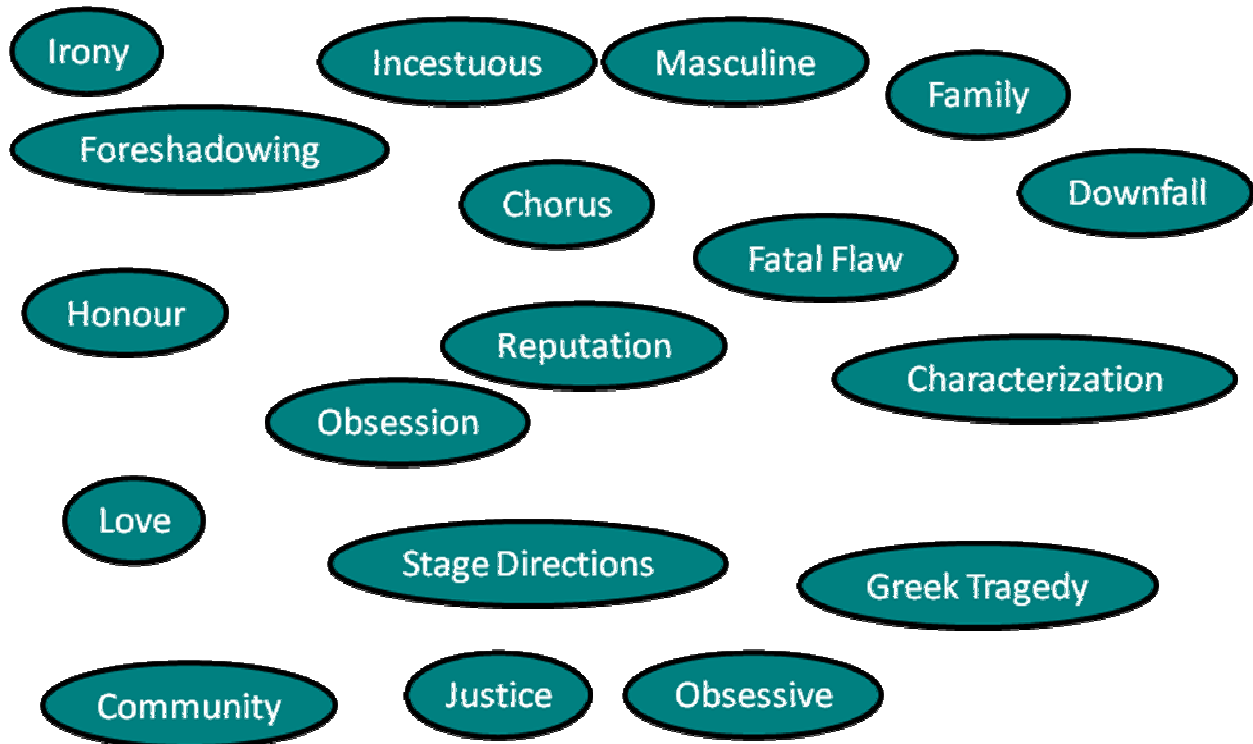Ironically, he has destroyed the family name he accused Rodolpho of tarnishing.

Five
In the final scenes Beatrice makes explicit what has only been implied.
Eddie still clings to his identity as a family/ community man.
He is appalled at the accusation – he is in denial – even when the Kat is out of the bag.
He continues to fight – claiming his name has been taken from him.
His denial is fuelled by an obsession to be respected whilst also breaking the codes.
Eddie cannot have it both ways – this makes "settle for half" all the more poignant.
Eddie cannot "settle for half" – he wants both.

Conclusion
Obsession fuels Eddie's spiral.
He cannot relinquish his desire for his niece.
He cannot relinquish his masculine role in the community.
The play demonstrates the destructive power of obsession.
Eddie is a broken man – exposed as a liar, and worse.
When he is killed the community feels Marco is vindicated – it is a just end for Eddie?

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE Essay: Key Words

Irony

Incestuous

Masculine

Family

Foreshadowing

Chorus

Downfall

Fatal Flaw

Honour

Reputation

Characterization

Obsession

Love

Stage Directions

Greek Tragedy

Community

Justice

Obsessive

Notes

Quality revision notes on **A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE** can be found free online at:
www.sparknotes.com/drama/viewbridge
www.shmoop.com/view-from-the-bridge
www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/english_literature/dramaviewbridge

Productions

The student production of **A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE** can be viewed from:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4aLMNrdl5s