**ENGLISH WRITTEN TEST II TERM II FORM 2LSCA**

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| **THE PRIORESS**  There also was a Nun, a Prioress,  Her way of smiling very simple and coy.  Her greatest oath was only “By St Loy!”  And she was known as Madam Eglantyne.  And well she sang a service, with a fine  Intoning through her nose, as was most seemly,  And she spoke daintily in French, extremely,  After the school of Stratford-atte-Bowe;  French in the Paris style she did not know.  At meat her manners were well taught withal;  No morsel from her lips did she let fall,  Nor dipped her fingers in the sauce too deep;  But she could carry a morsel up and keep  The smallest drop from falling on her breast.  For courtliness she had a special zest,  And she would wipe her upper lip so clean  That not a trace of grease was to be seen  Upon the cup when she had drunk; to eat,  She reached a band sedately for the meat.  She certainly was very entertaining,  Pleasant and friendly in her ways, and straining  To counterfeit a courtly kind of grace,  A stately bearing fitting to her place,  And to seem dignified in all her dealings.  As for her sympathies and tender feelings,  She was so charitably solicitous  She used to weep if she but saw a mouse  Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bleeding.  And she had little dogs she would be feeding  With roasted flesh, or milk, or fine white bread.  And bitterly she wept if one were dead  Or someone took a stick and made it smart,  She -was all sentiment and tender heart.  Her veil was gathered in a seemly way,  Her nose was elegant, her eyes glass-grey;  Her mouth was very small, but soft and red,  Her forehead, certainly, was fair of spread,  Almost a span across the brows, I own;  She was indeed by no means undergrown.  Her dock, I noticed, had a graceful charm.  She wore a coral trinket on her arm,  A set of beads, the gaudies tricked in green,  Whence hung a golden brooch of brightest sheen  On which there first was graven a crowned A,  And lower, Amor vincit omnia | **LA MONACA DI MONZA**  **….**  e vide una finestra d'una forma singolare, con due grosse e fitte grate di ferro, distanti l'una dall'altra un palmo; e dietro quelle una monaca ritta. Il suo aspetto, che poteva dimostrar venticinque anni, faceva a prima vista un'impressione di bellezza, ma d'una bellezza sbattuta, sfiorita e, direi quasi, scomposta. Un velo nero, sospeso e stirato orizzontalmente sulla testa, cadeva dalle due parti, discosto alquanto dal viso; sotto il velo, una bianchissima benda di lino cingeva, fino al mezzo, una fronte di diversa, ma non d'inferiore bianchezza; un'altra benda a pieghe circondava il viso, e terminava sotto il mento in un soggolo, che si stendeva alquanto sul petto, a coprire lo scollo d'un nero saio. Ma quella fronte si raggrinzava spesso, come per una contrazione dolorosa; e allora due sopraccigli neri si ravvicinavano, con un rapido movimento. Due occhi, neri neri anch'essi, si fissavano talora in viso alle persone, con un'investigazione superba; talora si chinavano in fretta, come per cercare un nascondiglio; in certi momenti, un attento osservatore avrebbe argomentato che chiedessero affetto, corrispondenza, pietà; altre volte avrebbe creduto coglierci la rivelazione istantanea d'un odio inveterato e compresso, un non so che di minaccioso e di feroce: quando restavano immobili e fissi senza attenzione, chi ci avrebbe immaginata una svogliatezza orgogliosa, chi avrebbe potuto sospettarci il travaglio d'un pensiero nascosto, d'una preoccupazione familiare all'animo, e più forte su quello che gli oggetti circostanti. Le gote pallidissime scendevano con un contorno delicato e grazioso, ma alterato e reso mancante da una lenta estenuazione. Le labbra, quantunque appena tinte d'un roseo sbiadito, pure, spiccavano in quel pallore: i loro moti erano, come quelli degli occhi, subitanei, vivi, pieni d'espressione e di mistero. La grandezza ben formata della persona scompariva in un certo abbandono del portamento, o compariva sfigurata in certe mosse repentine, irregolari e troppo risolute per una donna, non che per una monaca. Nel vestire stesso c'era qua e là qualcosa di studiato o di negletto, che annunziava una monaca singolare: la vita era attillata con una certa cura secolaresca, e dalla benda usciva sur una tempia una ciocchettina di neri capelli; cosa che dimostrava o dimenticanza o disprezzo della regola che prescriveva di tenerli sempre corti, da quando erano stati tagliati, nella cerimonia solenne del vestimento. ……. |

**ACTIVITY**: In an argumentative text format, **write a comparative analysis** of the two nuns with reference to the overall effect and the strategies used in the two characterisations.

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**COMPETENCES**

**L4 - Utilizzare una lingua straniera per scopi comunicativi ed operativi**

L4c. Descrivere in maniera semplice esperienze ed eventi, relativi all’ambito personale e sociale

L4d. Utilizzare in modo adeguato le strutture grammaticali

L4f. Scrivere brevi testi di interesse personale, sociale o professionale

**ENGLISH WRITTEN TEST:**

The object of the present work is to analyse, therefore compare, the Monaca di Monza, by Alessandro Manzoni’s *I Promessi Sposi*, and the Prioress’ characterization, by Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.

The present work will discuss the differences and the similarities of the structure of the two characterizations.

An analysis of both characterization will be first provided, on a second moment singular elements will be considered to pinpoint differences and similarities.

The most important strategies used by the narrator to characterize the Monaca are: reputation; setting; the character’s way to relate with other people; dressing style; physical appearance; body language.

First of all, the narrator makes clear that it is very difficult for anyone to approach the nun using the strategy of setting, thus creating a feeling of distance between the nun and anyone else and increasing the already-present suspense.

Indeed, the two women have to go through eight places, that looks almost like obstacles, to reach her: the first courtyard, a room, the second courtyard, the ground-level room, the parlor, an angle, a window and eventually a metal grill.

Furthermore, the narrator highlights the above-mentioned aspects of the nun also using the strategy of her way to relate with the people surrounding her, indeed she expects everyone to address her with obeisance, thus developing the idea of unavailability.

Thus far the nun appears either very well-protected from the outer world or as a prisoner in the monastery. The reader might relate more to the second option because of the metaphor of the metal grill, indeed a metal grill is usually associated to a prison.

Using the strategy of physical language and physical description the narrator underlines her arrogant, intimidatory, harsh and aristocratic trait, “una monaca ritta”, and her beauty, connoted by the idiom “sbattuta, sfiorita, scomposta”, that is highlighted by the alliteration of sound “s”, that recalls the opening setting, thus creating a decaying atmosphere.

Last but not least, considering body language and dressing style, the narrator presents a contrast between black and white that connotes the nun herself, and her conflicting presence. Also her eyes, that: “due occhi, neri neri anch’essi, si fissavano talora in viso alle persone, con un’investigazione superba; talora si chinavano in fretta, come per cercare un nascondiglio; in certi momenti, un attento osservatore avrebbe argomentato che chiedessero affetto, corrispondenza, pietà; altre volte avrebbe creduto coglierci la rivelazione istantanea d'un odio inveterato e compresso, un non so che di minaccioso e di feroce: quando restavano immobili e fissi senza attenzione, chi ci avrebbe immaginata una svogliatezza orgogliosa, chi avrebbe potuto sospettarci il travaglio d'un pensiero nascosto, d'una preoccupazione familiare all'animo, e più forte su quello che gli oggetti circostanti”, connotes a very conflicting trait of her.

Indeed she doesn’t look like an ordinary nun, someone who generally inhabit a monastery: “compariva sfigurata in certe mosse repentine, irregolari e troppo risolute per una donna, non che per una monaca”, “Nel vestire stesso c'era qua e là qualcosa di studiato o di negletto, che annunziava una monaca singolare: la vita era attillata con una certa cura secolaresca”, and “dalla benda usciva sur una tempia una ciocchettina di neri capelli; cosa che dimostrava o dimenticanza o disprezzo della regola che prescriveva di tenerli sempre corti, da quando erano stati tagliati, nella cerimonia solenne del vestimento”.

As a result she looks out of place, and her body language, her sudden movements interchanged with blurred and discoloured moments, also suggests a buried pain: “monaca ritta”, “bellezza sbattuta, sfiorita e, direi quasi, scomposta”, “quella fronte si raggrinzava spesso, come per una contrazione dolorosa”, “due sopraccigli neri si ravvicinavano, con un rapido movimento”, “le labbra, quantunque appena tinte d'un roseo sbiadito, pure, spiccavano in quel pallore: i loro moti erano, come quelli degli occhi, subitanei, vivi, pieni d'espressione e di mistero”, “abbandono del portamento”, and “compariva sfigurata in certe mosse repentine, irregolari e troppo risolute”.

Hence, the reader can confirm his or her first hypothesis: the Monaca looks exactly like a prisoner.

Moving forward, the most important strategy used by the narrator to characterize the Prioress is irony, which is a figure of speech used to express a concept through its exact opposite. Irony is then expanded to a series of sub-strategies, such as: social status; body language; way of speaking; eating style; affected appearance; her relationship with animals; physical description.

Right from the start the narrator exploits the character’s social status and hierarchic role, a prioress, which becomes essential to the reader in order to gather the distinctive ironic tone of the economy of the text.

Indeed, every strategy used later on by the narrator is connoted with irony:

First of all her way of finely smile, nicely speaking and singing and her way of speaking French, all highlighted by the alliteration of sound “s”: “smiling very simple”, “she sang a service”, “seemly, and she spoke”, “school of Stratford-atte-Bowe”, suggest an unconventional behaviour from a nun, which is more likely of a courtly maid.

Hence, the reader wonders why she’s acting in that specific way.

Moving forward with the reading, the intelligent reader realises that “acting” is exactly the key word to understand the prioress’ characterization.

Indeed the narrator, digressing with the illustration of all the peculiarities of her eating manners, which strike the reader attention at the beginning of the list with the alliteration of sound “w”: “were well-taught withal”, isn’t picturing a nun anymore, but a courtly lady.

As a consequence, the reader is both curious and entertained, since he can sense the irony coming out of the lines that creates a ridiculous atmosphere.

The reader’s curiosity is later satisfied with the idiom “to counterfeit a courtly kind of grace”, that not only underlines the Prioress’ bent to courtliness, but makes explicit that her whole appearance is contrived.

Following with criticizing her tender heart towards animals instead of people, a very not nun-likely behaviour, her well-thought dressing style and her attended physical appearance, the narrator add to the idea of an affected character and increase the ironic tone.

In conclusion, they’re both nuns, but while the Monaca has no hierarchic role in the monastery despite of being well-respected, the Prioress has a high hierarchic role without being respected. Indeed, the Prioress is characterized by a ridiculous aura conveyed by the omnipresent irony, on the contrary the aura conveyed by the Monaca’s characterization is dim and serious, it recalls the setting of the monastery and it is also conveyed by her physical description and her body language.

Last but not least, their physical appearance are very different, but at the same time they presents some similarities: while the Monaca looks like she doesn’t care at all of her physical appearance: “bellezza sbattuta, sfiorita e, direi quasi, scomposta”, “la grandezza ben formata della persona scompariva in un certo abbandono del portamento”; the Prioress’ meticulous physical description makes clear that it is her only concern. Nevertheless, the reader can recognise that even the Monaca has an affected appearance and her physical appearance is contrived, indeed: “nel vestire stesso c’era qua e là qualcosa di studiato o di negletto”.

Therefore, to get to the point, whilst being very different, the two nuns have a remarkable similarity that can’t be ignored: they both look out of place.

The crucial element conveys two different author’s point of view of the church institution. The criticism exploits some analogies even if the authors outdistance a gap of almost four hundred years, hence the reader is forced to try to make sense and figure out what’s the point of it. Although in the medieval society the religious values were the most important ones, a disapproval of the Church institution is still present.