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

**Surname: SORRENTINO Name: ALESSANDRA Date** 17/03/2021

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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

The goal of the present work is to write a comparative analysis of the characterization between the two nuns.

The prioress is one of the twenty-four pilgrims going to Canterbury and she is introduced in the general prologue to Geoffrey Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, while “La Monaca di Monza” is one of the characters in the novel "I Promessi Sposi" by Alessandro Manzoni.

In both texts, the characterization takes place through an indirect one by the narrator who speaks in third person. The two characters have got a negative effect on the reader and in both cases, the narrator wants to make a critique of the clergy and of the church in general.

The most frequent strategy used to characterize the Prioress is that of irony which has the function to ridicule the women and to criticize the ecclesiastical institutions and the Church.   
Irony emerges thanks to the use of other strategies to characterize the Prioress, such as: her social status, hierarchical role, her way of speaking and in particular irony about her expressions, her actions, the way she behaves especially on singing, her attitudes, her eating style, her affected appearance, her relationship with animals and last but not least her physical description.

Regarding the characterization of “La Monaca di Monza”, the most frequent strategy used is the one of mystery, exposed through a climatic construction that makes the reader more and more curious. It happens through the cinematographic technique of “slowup”.   
To achieve his goal, that is to characterize La Monaca di Monza, Manzoni uses different strategies, such as her social status, her hierarchical position, her family background, her attitude, narration of the place where she stays, her reputation, her physical description, her body language and her actions.

For both the nuns, the narrators start to characterize the women by highlighting their social status and their hierarchical role: they belong to the clergy.

Irony is used from the very beginning when the Prioress is presented as a nun with an important role. In the text it is amplified more and more so that, at the end of the reading, the reader realizes that the characterization seems more that of a courtesan interested in the way she appears rather than that of a nun who should devote herself to values such as humility and prayer.  
Unlike that of the prioress, the one of the Monaca is a psychological portrait where irony is not present. The reader is curious about the social position of the nun within the monastery and his attention is also focuses by the title "the Nun of Monza" used to refer to the lady. Here there are two terms to underline her peculiarity: "la", a definite article which refers to a specific person, used to convey a peculiar definition, and "di Monza", the place inhabited by the powerful, the ones that rule the region, the Spanish ones. Moreover, there is also an alliteration of sound “m” that underlines more and more the concept of her origins.

Afterwards, the narrator uses the strategy of physical description to characterize nun. The description is structured in a very precise way: first he characterizes her through a general look; then follows a double movement from top to back considering first what surrounds the face and finally back to the face itself.   
So, at first, he refers to her beauty, defining her as “*sfiorita, sbattuta e scomposta*” thus representing the repressed beauty a young woman should have. The narrator uses an alliteration of sound "s" at the beginning of each word and they end with the syllable "ta", playing on the auditory level of the reader.

The descriptive movement is made more visually effective by the juxtaposition of black and white colors. The prevalence of these two opposite colors reflects the complex and conflicting character of the nun. Even the presence of adversative terms such as "ma" and "talora" further accentuates the complexity of the character.

Even from her eyes we can identify her inner conflict, *“talvolta si chinavano in fretta*" as if they were looking for a hiding place, affection and pity, sometimes one could see in them a hatred of ancient origin, long repressed, possible to identify in the expression "*occhi immobili e fissi senza attenzione*".

Moreover, some expressions like “*il velo discosto alquanto dal viso*”, *“dalla benda usciva sur una tempia una ciocchettina di neri capelli”* e *“la vita era attillata con una certa cura scolaresca”* represent the rebellion and transgression of the nun against the rules belonging to the monastic life. Thus, in conclusion, they represent the forcing with which the nun was introduced into the religious world, as it was done for the Prioress.

Regarding the Prioress, irony is particularly highlighted when the narrator tells the prioress's singing and her knowledge of the French language, which is connected as a rather poor skill. There is a climax process regarding irony that increases when the narrator tells the way in which the prioress poses at the table. Indeed, she seems more interested in table manners than in religious services. Here irony emerges in the meticulous description of all the gestures of the prioress at the table. Thus, the woman seems to pay particular attention also in the way in which she presents herself and it can be understood from the line “And to seem dignified in all her dealings”.

The narrator continues with the presentation of the relationship between the woman and animals, which seemed to make her more sorry than a suffering human being. So, the reader feels amused because after a first initial mention of belonging to the woman's clergy, there is no longer any reference to the church.

The narrator dedicates the conclusion to the physical description of the woman. The detailed description highlights the beautiful appearance of the woman who seems to have nothing to do with the religious world as well as her interests are different from religious ones. Indeed, as I said at the beginning of the text, the characterization on the whole seems more that of a courtesan.

At the end of the reading, the intelligent reader can understand that the Prioress has been forced to enter the religious world. He or she can understand it from the line “and straining/ To counterfeit a courtly kind of grace” that brings out her unhappiness.

Concluding, the two nuns share the feeling of unhappiness they feel towards the conditions of a nun, a social role imposed on them by their families. The reader can understand it especially from their body language and from the behaviors that they assume within the religious place in which they are forced to live. Thus, the two nuns lived in two different periods, but despite this their condition was not so different.