

# Commentary on candidate evidence

## Candidate 2

The candidate evidence has achieved the following marks for the coursework assessment task.

The candidate was awarded **26 marks**.

**Topic:** *“Eliot and Existentialism: The use of setting in the search for meaning within ‘The Four Quartets’”*

### Task

The candidate has stated that they will look at the poet’s “journey into existentialism” through engaging with setting in ‘The Four Quartets’. In particular, the candidate will focus upon the discordancy between the modern world and the world of nature, and posits the thesis that “spiritual fulfilment” can only be gained through an engagement with, and appreciation of, nature. These ideas – dealt with individually – could be seen as ripe with the potential for complex discourse, but this candidate has actually chosen a challenging line of enquiry to follow in weaving these ideas together, and this task is most certainly appropriate at this level of study.

### Knowledge and Understanding

The candidate shows a **secure knowledge and understanding** of the poems in terms of their stated approach, and navigates through a range of settings which the candidate states are “settings embedded within [Eliot’s] own history” such as the “gardens of Norton Manor”, “Norton Manor”, “London Underground”, “East Coker”, the “oceanic setting” of “Les Trois Sauvages” and “the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Anglican monastery” of “Little Gidding”, all of which demonstrate **some insight** into ideas of spiritual fulfilment in the poems, and also create a **relevant exploration** of the topic **which demonstrates a secure consideration of the implications of the task**.

The candidate uses **extensive textual evidence** throughout the entire dissertation which is used **to support the demands of the task** and the selection of textual evidence **demonstrates a selection from across the breadth** of all four poems.

### Analysis

The candidate shows **relevant analysis of a task-appropriate range of literary techniques** – symbolism and metaphor, personification and juxtaposition, classical allusion, ‘cyclical imagery’ – all of which are explored in *Burnt Norton*, but most of the techniques are subsequently engaged with in the other three poems being dealt with in the dissertation. The candidate logically looks at *Burnt Norton* initially and introduces the quotation “Garlic and Sapphires in the mud/ Clot the bedded axle-tree” to explain that humanity fails “to appreciate the depth of nature’s untouched beauty”. At this early point in the dissertation “clot”, “bedded”, and “axle-tree” are analysed in a manner which possibly lacks the focus and cohesion of the subsequent analysis, but it is still strong enough to be

seen as **strengthen[ing] the line of argument**. The candidate then moves through into stronger areas of analysis with their comments on – to name but a few instances – “deception of the thrush”; “Nor plenitude nor vacancy”; “Into the village, in the electric heat/Hypnotised”; “Thunder rolled by the rolling cars/ Deployed in constellated wars”; and “The river .../ Is a strong brown god – sullen, untamed and intractable,/ Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;/ ... Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges”. The analysis is not always universally well-developed (as evidenced earlier with the “Garlic and Sapphires” analysis) yet the range and quality of comment are relevant and strongly contribute towards the **strengthen[ing of] the line of argument** the candidate has put forward.

### Evaluation

It is often the case that in the stronger dissertations – and this one is strong – the evaluative comment is integrated within the analytical comment itself, and evaluative momentum is gathered as the dissertation progresses: this is the case here. The candidate shows a **clearly identifiable evaluative stance** throughout the dissertation and finally in the conclusion where the candidate explains the connections between the four poems and their relevance in exemplifying the candidate’s thesis and is **securely based on evidence presented within the dissertation**.

### Expression

The candidate’s initial approach to structure is to deliver a serial treatment of the poems which is absolutely logical, but once the thesis is established in the analysis of *Burnt Norton*, the candidate then goes on to make consistent and relevant comparative comments to construct a more cohesive and compelling line of argument.

Another point of particular structural note is that Eliot himself uses *Burnt Norton* as a touchstone in that he establishes certain tropes which he then returns to – in varying degrees – in the other three poems, and the candidate actually mirrors this aspect of Eliot’s own structure (whether through accident or design, it is still worthy of note) and contributes towards a structure which, along with the obviously **skilful use language**, allows the dissertation to **develop an argument with a sustained focus on the task**.

Range: the evidence provided in the dissertation **fully meets the standard described** in the 26-23 band range and therefore the highest available mark from that band range should be awarded and this dissertation is placed at the top of 26-23 band range.

Mark: 26