

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate 1

The evidence for this candidate has achieved the following marks for this course assessment component. The candidate was awarded **10 marks**.

Q22. Compare the roles and functions of the principal female characters in any two tragedies.

Knowledge and Understanding

This essay takes on the large task of discussing the role and function of five female characters, two from *Hamlet* and three from *King Lear*. It displays **knowledge and understanding of the texts** and the focus of the question – the way in which the female characters relate and react to the eponymous heroes of the tragedies. The response contrasts Cordelia and her sisters Regan and Goneril; “Cordelia is conveyed...as a Christ like individual” (end of paragraph two, although this is assertion) whereas “Goneril and Regan represent bad” (end of paragraph four). Dealing with *Hamlet*, Gertrude and Ophelia are compared: they are “often on the receiving end of his aggression” (paragraph one); Ophelia is “the helpless female character” (paragraph three) while Gertrude is “submissive” (paragraph five).

The essay is a horizontal one, moving between the two plays rather than taking them one at a time and uses **generally relevant textual reference** throughout to address the demands of the question.

Analysis

There is analysis of a range of dramatic techniques, primarily characterisation throughout in terms of role and function, as outlined above. Some of the claims made are debatable: Cordelia is the “only honest character” in the play; Cordelia “does not attempt to fight” Lear’s aggression and “uncovers Lear’s affectionate nature again”; Gertrude “saves Hamlet’s life, albeit momentarily”.

The candidate also makes some attempt to analyse the language of the play: the effect of Cordelia’s aside (paragraph two) and Hamlet’s parody of his mother’s statement (paragraph five). However, the claim that “Goneril and Regan are largely responsible for the theme of betrayal”, displays a misunderstanding of the concept of theme, apart from ignoring other elements of the play.

Evaluation

There is a **discernible and relevant evaluative stance with respect to the texts and the question, based on evidence discussed within the response**, although there are instances of assertion: Cordelia as a Christ-like figure again and Hamlet being “not entirely dissimilar to Lear” in his misogyny (paragraph five). The candidate explicitly refers to the role of each character, while

discussion of 'function' is more implicit and the difference between the two aspects is not clarified.

Technical Accuracy

The response fully, indeed easily, achieves minimum competence for technical accuracy.

The response shows knowledge and understanding, is relevant and based firmly upon textual reference, and attempts analysis both of character and some other dramatic techniques, which place this response in the mark range 12-10. The somewhat thin treatment of each of the five characters, however, and the debatable nature of some of the analytical statements, place this response at the lower end.

Mark: 10