

# Commentary on candidate evidence

## Candidate 3

The evidence for this candidate has achieved the following marks for this course assessment component. The candidate was awarded **15 marks**.

**Q13. Discuss the thematic significance of symbolism in any two novels or any three short stories.**

### Knowledge and Understanding

This essay shows **broad knowledge and understanding** of both novels and there is a **relevant and thoughtful approach to the question**. The candidate plans to discuss three different examples of symbolism: physical objects to symbolise entrapment, colours to symbolise characteristics and events to foreshadow and symbolise death and proceeds to do so with varying success. Use of **textual evidence is relevant to the demands of the question**, but is not “extensive”.

### Analysis

There is a **relevant analysis of a range of literary techniques which strengthens the line of argument**. The initial analysis of the caged birds as a representation of Tess’s situation is successful (paragraph two), as is, to a lesser extent, the analysis of the killing of the pheasants foreshadowing Tess’s death (paragraph four). Less successful is the analysis of the “object” representing Eustacia; the candidate moves from “hourglass” (representing the passage of time) to “spyglass” (symbolising her desire to leave) to the “heath” which is keeping her imprisoned without explaining the reasons for doing so. More successful is the analysis of colour symbolism in both novels. Paragraph three analyses the shift in Tess’s character, from the May dance where she is innocent and in white, to the pink she wears after she has given birth (analysed as the red of passion mixed with the white of innocence), to the grey she changes into just before she commits murder – and the fact that this then moves her further away from her innocence (white) towards sin (black).

Eustacia is analysed as being associated with the colour black in both dress and outlook (paragraph three). The detail here is good. There is also a reference to the “blackcurrant eyes” of the adder, even if the subsequent link to the characterisation of Eustacia is not wholly convincing.

The analysis of the symbolic foreshadowing of the heroines’ deaths is less successful because it is significantly less detailed. Expression here is also not that helpful, eg “the voodoo destruction of Eustacia” (paragraph four), but the candidate makes some good points (fire and water in *The Return of the Native*).

### Evaluation

There is a **discernible and relevant evaluative stance with respect to the texts and the question, which is based on evidence discussed within the response**. This is particularly true for the evaluation of the analysis of the colour symbolism (pps.7-10), but also the overall evaluation (paragraph five). The evaluation is, however, **discernible** rather than **clear** – the link between the analysis of symbolism and Hardy’s criticism of Victorian society’s treatment of “the fallen woman” is not as secure as it could be.

### Technical Accuracy

This essay shows minimum competence for technical accuracy, which includes few errors in the use of structure, style etc.

Overall, this essay fully meets all of the descriptors in the range 15-13.

Mark: 15