

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate 5

The evidence for this candidate has achieved the following marks for each section of this course assessment component. The candidate was awarded **11 marks**.

Genre: Creative – drama

Title: Corruption

The scene is established and protagonist (Joe Westwick) introduced, and the introductory directions introduce two major juxtapositions: the chaotic is juxtaposed with the trappings of success, and Joe's past is juxtaposed with Joe's present. Joe's demeanour suggest some concern about some issue.

Joe is nostalgic as he thinks back to school and his desire to be a businessman and his entrepreneurial flair in selling chewing gum to his classmates for profit. Importantly, he states that he was "sussed out" by the end of term, indicating that his entrepreneurial enterprise had limited success before failure – a motif throughout the play.

Joe takes some pride in telling his mother he wanted to be a businessman and recalls her smile, and one that would disappear over time, as his mother went "downhill", and the shift to young Joe outlines the fact that he discovered his mother unconscious, an event which instigated his move into working in "Connor Preedy's dad's place". Joe then explains that he was PA to his "best pal's dad" and that he eventually went to study "business management and finance".

Joe's own PA in the present, Lisa, enters with a letter which causes some consternation and this is mirrored by the 17-year-old Joe hunting for paperwork. Adult Joe sweeps the papers from his desk and launches into self-recrimination about taking on the business believing he could "keep it afloat", acknowledging that he lied to employees, and acknowledging that Lisa has been covering for him in some way from dealing with unnamed people trying to meet with him.

Joe goes on to become emotional and explain that he needed money "Just so she [his mother] wouldn't leave me", and that he hadn't been ready for the responsibilities the business generated and that he had let his mother and the business down. Joe infers that he had taken money from the business (hence 'corruption') and was pulled into transporting drugs to replace the money he had taken from the business. Again, fond reminiscence of his mother comes to the fore and young and adult Joe both engage with the idea simultaneously – adult Joe looking at the photo, and young Joe polishing it, smiling at it, and caressing it. Joe talks about how he was pulled into criminality and how his paymasters

would not let him go. Lisa arrives and states “they’re back” and is worried as she is “twisting one of her rings”.

Some unnamed visitors have arrived and Lisa asks if she should send them off, trying to protect Joe, but Joe decides to face the “beautiful music”. He puts his cufflinks on, and jacket, and seems at peace with himself in some way, as the visitors head towards him.

Content

The play begins with the initial directions: the juxtaposed trappings of success “iphone [...] large set of keys [...] top of the range laptop” and the chaos “keys fallen from pockets [...] bank statements scattered carelessly” points to some sense of upheaval in the protagonist’s life.

Joe considers that his mother may well have been proud of him in his current situation, but in fact he feels he is a failure. This idea of failure continues when he is a PA “frantically, searching for information” which he has probably misplaced, and he finds it; and later in the play he admits that he is “crap son and an even worse business man”. The idea of corruption is fully realised and explained, and Joe’s final acknowledgement that he must face the reality of the situation occurs, where he seems to be – in some way – at peace in that he is about to do the right thing. In many ways, the structural strengths of the piece contribute to the engagement of the central thematic concerns of aspiration and failure and the corruption involved to ‘mend’ this character’s notable flaw.

The treatment of the central thematic concerns of the play are dealt with some thoughtfulness throughout, and can be fully placed within the 9-7 band range and touch the next band range of 12-10.

Structure

There is an overarching structure of the past (looking to his childhood), and then shifting to the present situation in his business and how the situation is resolved. One of the structural strengths of the piece is the consistently juxtaposed elements on stage of adult Joe and young Joe which emphasise the aspiration/failure trait which seems to have dogged Joe’s life: the whistling and humming; the coin; the sandwich; his mother’s issues; and the paperwork.

The cufflinks at the beginning of the play “unfastening the silver cufflinks [...] stuffing them into his tight trouser pockets” and then at the end “Slowly and with care he unrolls his sleeves and fishes the cuff links from his pockets, refastening them”, structurally offers the audience a sense that he is going to face up to his responsibilities and the possible and probable grim realities which now face him.

The structure is a strength in this piece and contributes to impact of the piece and is well placed within the 12-10 band range.

Tone/mood

The voice is relatively one-dimensional throughout yet there are hints of the vernacular which suggest that he is a poor-boy-made-good with “They two were never destined to stay here ... No way.”; “I’d scrounge”; “sussed me out”; “Saved

ma life!", "I kent it was somewhere, look!"; "My grandma used tae tell me", and there is a touch of poignancy to the section where he discusses his mother's illness worsening and his desperation which pushed him towards 'corruption': "the drink I couldn't tear from her hands", "Just so she wouldn't leave me", "so I took it, I took it all" and in the line, "Cherish it. Cherish every second" as he whispers "in the boy's direction". As such, the tone is generally sustained and, at times, the voice is distinctive, and is therefore placed within the 12-10 band range.

Expression

The establishing directions at the start of the play uses lighting: "lights come up"/ "lights change to single spotlight"; and the lighting is employed throughout in terms of the spotlight, but also the final "black out" which concludes this short play and leaves the audience with an open ending as the audience now considers what the final outcome may well have been for Joe. Also, from the start of the play the stage is set with two distinct on-stage contexts – adult and childhood – and the use of music is also of note in terms of both structure and expression with the young boy "humming quietly to himself – out of tune" linking then to adult Joe whistling "the same sorrowful song" in order to establish the connection between young Joe and adult Joe; a structural motif which is maintained throughout.

The stage directions are used with confidence as they contribute towards the mood and characterisation "(Laughing spitefully at himself)", "I always wanted to be a businessman. (His smile fades slowly and he gazes down at the suit he is wearing, shaking his head)", "(with an explanatory gesture towards the cluttered desk and sarcastic yet playful tone)", "(Staring out into the audience, tears filling his eyes as he speaks and his hands down by his side)", and in relation to Lisa, "(glancing at the mess, her mouth falling open before snapping her attention back to Joe [...])" and, as previously mentioned, the integration of the vernacular at specific moments to offer a bridge back to the past is also an effective technique which is used with some confidence.

All of these elements contribute towards this play having a degree of originality in terms of the style and technique used, and is placed within the 12-10 band range.

This piece may well be quite deceptive in that the structure and craft is what drives the play along, whereas the voice and general language does not match it. It is placed in the middle of the 12-10 band range and is awarded 11 marks as this piece does not fully meet the standard described.

Mark: 11