

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate 2

The evidence for this candidate has achieved the following marks for each section of this course assessment component. The candidate was awarded **20 marks**.

Section A – *The Phantom Horsewoman*

Question: Write a detailed critical response to this poem.

Understanding

This candidate has chosen to approach this question by using an extensive series of developed bullet points in order to deliver a comprehensive and convincing critical response to the poem. This response shows a **comprehensive understanding of the central concerns of the text provided** with the candidate looking at ideas concerning mortality, time, and memory. At the same time, there is a **full and relevant exploration** of the poem and associated themes **with sustained consideration of the implications of the question**. The candidate covers an impressive range of techniques throughout and is successful at building a cohesive and convincing response to the question. The candidate shows obvious evidence of an **extensive use of textual evidence which is clearly focused on the demands of the question**.

Analysis

There is **relevant analysis of a task-appropriate range of literary techniques** dealt with throughout the response. The candidate begins the response by looking at aspects of structure with insightful comments on the rhyming couplets at the end of each stanza “representing the four strong feet of the horse”; the ABCBCBCAA rhyme scheme which could “mimic the noise given to a horse walking and coming to a stop”; the eight lines of each stanza which could also “mimic the washing of the waves coming in and out” following a “pattern the eith [sic] generally being the largest and strongest wave before carrying on the cycle thereafter” (bullet point three); the use of lines in iambic pentameter in the first and last lines encasing those lines in between which are in iambic tetrameter indicating each stanza “has its own significance”; and structural elements are reinforced further on in the response with the candidate looking at enjambment and how it “allows the poem to take on a much more prosaic form as it allows a strong flow from line to line” and the ballad form as indicated by the rhyme scheme and connection to the Shakespearean ballad. The candidate then moves to how the theme of mortality is dealt with when the poet “refers to the girl as something which ‘time has not touched’ reminding the poet “or the reader of their own life, that we have a limit to the amount we can live”. The candidate deals with word choice (explicitly and implicitly) throughout the response with

comments on the contrasting nature of “moveless” and “careworn craze” which imply worry, with the more welcoming words, “warm”, “real” and “keen”. The candidate insightfully comments on memory and the nature of the “phantom of his own figuring” by suggesting that the persona is “looking back at his own youth, and his own memories” and that the image of the girl is able to be “re-seen or brought back up again by himself in a multitude of different places” and then develops this when they comment on “withers daily” and “time touches her not” to finish with the idea that “Time is unable to effect a memory in the physical sense” [sic]. The critical discourse remains consistent when dealing with the ambiguity of “queer ways”; the possessive pronoun – “his”; and the use of ellipsis to allow the reader to be “drawn out” to then be “pulled back by the question engaging the reader once more”. As the candidate moves towards the latter part of their response, they come towards an understanding of the fact that albeit the persona is “withered and toiled”, that his memory of the girl is “rapt” and “although he may have changed physically, he can still remember this” as “thoughts don’t age” (bullet eighteen). The candidate comes to a close by touching upon their repeated understanding of the importance of the sea with “singing [sic] to the swing of the tide” as a refrain dealing with the “push/pull swaying motion of the waves” and the idea that “phantom” and “ghost” “suggests a negative aspect to the memory” and doubt is placed in the persona’s mind as to whether the girl is “going out to sea or going off the shoreline”. Albeit the response may seem fragmented at times, ultimately the recognition of technique, the use of extensive quotation, precise analysis and the consistent focus upon the central thematic concerns means that this analytical work builds momentum as the response progresses and can be seen to **skilfully strengthen the approach adopted by the candidate**.

Evaluation

The candidate has a **committed, clear evaluative stance with respect to the text provided and the question** in that they deal with memory, ageing, mortality and the candidate arrives at this evaluation through a cumulative effect and this stance can undoubtedly be said to be **skilfully based on precise evidence discussed** throughout the response.

The candidate is awarded 20 marks.