

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate 3

The evidence for this candidate has achieved the following marks for each section of this course assessment component. The candidate was awarded **16 marks**.

Section B – Explaining Death to the Dog

Question: Discuss the effectiveness of the ways in which Susan Perabo presents the mother's grief in this story.

Understanding

This candidate demonstrates an increasingly **secure understanding of the central concerns** of this short story. They set up the response effectively by establishing how grief is being explored: “obsession with the dog ... contrast ... husband ... crisis of identity.” They outline how they are going to tackle the text and the question. In the introduction, they are able to indicate an understanding of the central concerns.

The candidate sees the dog as a “proxy” and uses evidence to exemplify this line of argument. They demonstrate an understanding of the mother's emotions, how her grief is manifested; they understand the disconnection between mother and father. The candidate understands that the pain Todd is feeling is “also inaccessible to her.” “... the outpouring of grief onto the dog ...” is less effective in terms of demonstrating understanding.

Analysis

This candidate analyses **a range of literary techniques** to support their line of argument. The candidate recognises how the story's structure reflects the central character's struggle and analyses its impact. “mother's attempts to teach the dog about death have not been triumphant” show how they are analysing the impact of structure. Additionally, the candidate recognises and analyses tone: “desperate plea.” The candidate identifies that there is a contrast between how the mother and the father experience their grief and analyses the impact of their dialogue. The candidate analyses the use and impact of pathetic fallacy the repetition of the words, “death” and “silence” offering thoughtful analysis, leading to evaluative comment. The candidate analyses the emergence of theme.

Evaluation

The **evaluative comment** in this response is **clearly identifiable**. The candidate comments that “The mother is clearly lost” and recognises how the relationship between husband and wife has been impacted by the death of the baby and how

this emerges in the story. There is another relevant evaluative judgement made: “The mother feels that the world has betrayed her.” The candidate offers the evaluative comment in the form of a rhetorical question: “Can you be a mother if there is no child?” They recognise that this is a question that is being explored and use it as a way to introduce identity as a central concern. The candidate comments that “Perabo’s story is the account of a woman in crisis, questioning her very being ... how the loss of one life can destroy the meaning of another ...” and then seeing that the central character is “struggling to redefine herself.” This is a thoughtful approach to this text and its central concerns.

Overall, this is a secure response, which demonstrates that the candidate just meets the standard described in the range 16-18. There is enough **security of understanding, relevant analysis of task appropriate literary techniques** and **a clearly identifiable evaluative stance** to achieve a mark of 16.