

# Commentary on candidate evidence

## Candidate 4

The evidence for this candidate has achieved the following marks for each section of this course assessment component. The candidate was awarded **14 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

The candidate follows the instruction of the task by identifying symbolism, comparison and repetition – in the opening paragraph of the response – as being used to present the mother's grief. The candidate recognises that the mother tries "to explain her daughter's death to her dog Stu as a way of explaining it to herself" and that the dog is also used "to show the mother's confusion after the baby's death". The candidate also recognises that the mother's life is empty as a result of her loss and has an "inability to move on from her grief", all of which indicate that the candidate has a **broad understanding of the central concerns of the text**. The candidate has a **relevant and thoughtful approach to the question** and uses **textual evidence which is relevant to the demands of the question**.

#### Analysis

The candidate's opening statement: 'the dog symbolises the mother's mind' is supported by relevant quotation which in turn supports the candidate's approach to the task. At this point in the response, the candidate is more assertive than analytical, but there is improvement in this aspect as the response is developed. The candidate goes on to engage with the symbolism of the dog, where the candidate comments that by explaining the death of the child to the dog, where "the dog simply couldn't understand the language", it makes clear that "the mother's mind has been addled by her grief". Symbolism is further characterised by careful selection of references relating to the empty room and the mother's empty life and the significance of the mother's reflection on their being "no baby" in the park or in her daily routine, and culminates with the candidate's statement "the mother cannot remember a time before the baby" as she considers "what had I done before I got pregnant?". The candidate goes to examine the use of flashback in portraying her grief, before going on, more productively, to begin an analysis of the mother's separation from others through the techniques of repetition and imagery. The analysis of the impact of the word-choice of "good" is not as strong and the candidate moves on to analyse the writer's presentation of

the mother's alienation through her comment that, "people who don't fully share her grief feel awkward to be with her."

The characterisation of Todd is then examined where the quote "spoon went from the cereal bowl to his mouth without being led by anything but habit." is used as evidence of his "suffering" which reinforces the mother's alienation. The candidate uses the following quote: "making little howling noises with his throat" to show "that neither parent has got over their child's death". The candidate goes on to analyse the author's use of pathetic fallacy and the "'ugly' weather reflecting the mother's mood". The candidate further identifies significant word choice of "death" and the absence of names for both mother and baby within the text as effectively presenting the mother's grief. It is clear that the candidate delivers a **relevant analysis of a range of literary techniques which strengthens the approach adopted by the candidate**, but there is an inconsistent level of analysis delivered throughout the response which prevents the response reaching the top end of the 15-13 band range, but the range and quality of comment means that this response can be seen as **more than just meeting the standard described**.

#### Evaluation

The candidate has a **discernible and relevant evaluative stance with respect to the text provided and the question based on evidence discussed within the response** when they articulate that although the mother is alienated, can't move on and "can't be a normal person again; she will always be a mother of the dead baby."

As the candidate does not fully meet the standard described, with the variable quality of analytical comment and the evaluative comment not fully developed for the band range, the candidate is awarded 14 marks.