

Commentary on candidate evidence

The candidate evidence has achieved the following marks for each this course assessment component.

Candidate 1

The candidate was awarded **30 marks**.

Topic

An analysis of the narrative techniques employed by Laurie Lee and Lorna Sage to explore the theme of childhood in their novels *Cider with Rosie* and *Bad Blood* respectively.

Task

The candidate has chosen to write a dissertation on two memoirs: *Cider with Rosie* and *Bad Blood*. These are appropriate selections for this level of study and their chosen task. The task aims to explore the authors' childhood experiences through (first person) narration.

Knowledge and understanding

The candidate has a **comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the texts**. The eloquent writing style of this candidate allows them to demonstrate their understanding of the texts. The candidate begins with Lee's fond early childhood memories of family and friends. Similarly, the candidate goes on to explore Sage's recollections of her 'isolating' childhood on page 4, from her early life in a "Council House" to her relationship with her father and grandfather on page 5; both texts ending with the loss of childhood innocence and a 'sexual awakening' on page 7. The candidate highlights Lee's 'poetic' (page 2) first person narrative in contrast to Sage's 'analytical and direct' (page 3) narration, but notes that both do occasionally digress from this style with Sage '[evoking] the feelings of childhood in a more imaginative way' (page 4) and Lee 'not always [using] the poetic language and child's eye view' (page 4).

The candidate **demonstrates a full and relevant exploration** of the texts with a **sustained consideration of the implication of the task** as they propose 'the author's experiences inform their differing narrative styles, and these narrative styles illuminate their contrasting childhoods' on page 2. This exploration of narration is continued throughout the dissertation and concludes with the candidate commenting on the 'richly detailed memoirs' narrated with 'sensitivity, insight and humour' on page 8.

This dissertation has **extensive textual evidence**, and **quotations have been chosen judiciously** by the candidate; these are **clearly focused on the task**, offering a real sense that the candidate knows the texts thoroughly. For example, the candidate exemplifies the imaginative flair in Lee's writing when they

comment 'with his poet's imagination, and its influence on his narrative style, Lee evokes something that is hard to feel, or even remember as adults: the otherworldly quality of our childhood' on page 2. Sage, in contrast, 'succinctly considers the impact of her past childhood upon her present self' from an 'analytical adult perspective' on page 3.

Analysis

In both texts the candidate presents **relevant analysis of a task-appropriate range of literary techniques to strengthen the line of argument/ discussion**, such as analysis of narration, dialogue, imagery, word choice, contrast, sentence length, alliteration, onomatopoeia, humour, capitalisation, tone, setting – all of which are handled **skilfully** and stylishly.

The initial analytical focus is on 'the poetic use of imagery', and Lee's evocation of 'the otherworldly quality of our childhood' on page 2. The candidate discusses the extended imagery of the blades of grass, which 'takes us into the mind of a terrified and bewildered little child' on page 2, and comments that 'as a reader we are there in the grass too, the vivid description bringing the scene to life in a visceral way [...] even as we, as adults, recognise the fact that there was no real threat at all' on pages 2 and 3. This idea is returned to on page 8, where the candidate contrasts Lee's approach with Sage's, as he is 'less interested in the exactness of his description than the emotion involved'. The candidate notices how Lee's description of the grass has changed later on: 'the sharp blades he feared as a toddler are long gone, reflecting his current emotional state, the grass is now lush, wild and fertile' on page 8.

Interwoven into this discussion of the imagery in Lee is analysis of the 'analytical and direct' narrative voice employed by Sage: 'Instead of seeking to immerse the reader into the experience of her childhood by creating poetic images to replicate the emotional landscape of it, Sage succinctly considers the impact of her past childhood upon her current self' on page 3. Sage's 'all-knowing, experienced voice' is used to explore, for example, how 'her parents' devotion to each other deepens Sage's solitude' on pages 3 and 4, and the candidate analyses how Sage employs the 'safer vantage point of adulthood' to explain the 'confusion and terror' felt by the child on page 4. Pages 5 and 6 contain a very detailed commentary on Sage's use of her grandfather's diaries, and the effect this additional narrative voice has on the narrative, mirroring the impact her grandfather had on her. This is also then linked to the use of other voices in Lee's narrative on page 5.

The dissertation discusses Lee's humorous, authentic dialogue compared to the lack of dialogue employed by Sage, which serves to highlight the authors' contrasting childhood experiences. The candidate comments on the argument between Lee's neighbours, "Er's bald as a tater root! Wicked old hump, I'll see her gone", highlighting the harshness created by the words "tater" and "wicked", to reflect their treatment of each other, and how Lee captures their 'fierce, funny arguments' and 'brings them back to life', all on page 5. In contrast, the candidate

explores the lack of dialogue utilised by Sage, noting that 'she gives voice to the people in her childhood by other means', on page 5.

Furthermore, the dissertation explores the differing styles of narrative, with Lee offering 'detail in the form of long sentences' (page 7) and sensory language, to immerse the reader in his idyllic childhood, and comments that Sage, by contrast, adopts precise, 'particular, pertinent details' (page 7) about her grandmother with negative vocabulary, "mice" and "scandals", highlighting Sage's 'continuing disgust of her [grandmother] in adulthood', all on page 7. Comments like this seamlessly interweave the candidate's knowledge and understanding of the texts, insightful analysis, and committed and clear evaluative stance.

The candidate makes use of apposite secondary sources. On page 2 the quotation from a *Guardian* writer confirms the candidate's thinking around the idea of a joyful childhood: "There's no rational reason, but the result is strangely magical ...It's a tiny touch – but the cumulative effect of these flourishes is one of energy, verve, life and sheer delight'.

The candidate observes that 'Lee's adult interpretation of himself and people around him remains good natured and indulgent' on page 7. Contrastingly, the candidate notes of Sage's memoir, 'to accept her unhappy childhood, together with the "bad blood" she has inherited from the grandfather, are driving forces for her own personality' on page 6.

Evaluation

There is a **committed, clear stance with respect to both texts and to the task**. Throughout the dissertation the candidate clearly expresses their thoughts on the task, the narrative voice and the work of the authors. This is particularly evident in the conclusion where they deliver their final evaluations: 'there are echoes of Lee in Sage's narration, and vice versa, in that both utilise an adult perspective to give insight into the theme of childhood whilst revealing the intense emotions and experiences we have as children' on page 9. The candidate's evaluations are **skilfully based on precise evidence presented within the dissertation**.

Expression

The **candidate makes skilful and considered use of structure** and their writing follows an impressive line of argument. The **candidate's style and language include appropriate critical/ analytical terminology**, which is deployed to **develop an argument with a sustained, precise focus on the task**. Overall, the dissertation's controlled and succinct writing style allows the presentation of sophisticated ideas. A minor example of inelegant linkage '...the use of detail to build a convincing childhood world will now be analysed in the final section of this dissertation' (page 7) does not detract from the overall achievement of the dissertation.

Range

The dissertation fully meets the standard described in 30-27 range and is therefore awarded the highest mark in that band range.