

Introduction

The materials in this document have been prepared to exemplify the marking of candidate work in the Advanced Higher English Literary Study question paper. The questions are based on an early version of the specimen question paper which is no longer available on our website.

The work of seven candidates has been marked and explanations of how marks have been awarded have been provided. These are presented in the form of an extended commentary on each essay.

Some essays have been typed by candidates. Responses have not been corrected or edited in any way.

Commentary on candidate evidence

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

Candidate 1

Discuss some of the ways by which poetry explores aspects of change. In your answer you should refer to three poems.

The candidate was awarded **20/20 marks** for this response.

In the introduction, the candidate deals with the question straight away and then takes us through each chosen text, identifying the central concerns and how this relates to the theme of change. The candidate demonstrates an understanding of the implications of the question. With their initial discussion of Personal Helicon, we can see confusion between poet and persona.

The candidate has taken a horizontal approach to structuring their response, allowing for thematic and stylistic comparisons to be made. In their initial discussion of Death of a Naturalist (DOAN), they identify a range of appropriate techniques and the impact of techniques, which skilfully strengthen the line of argument. The candidate's evaluation is embedded and committed. They use words like 'masterfully', and 'expertly', for instance. As they move on to Blackberry Picking, they show an understanding of the creation of poetic voice, identify central ideas and are able to quote appropriate evidence to support their line of argument. They are able to draw stylistic comparisons with DOAN. We see that this candidate has a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the texts. In their discussion of Personal Helicon they start logically, by explaining the title and how it guides a reader to the poem's meaning. Again, there is some confusion between persona and poet, but the candidate quickly readjusts and thereafter, discusses the constructed voice. The use of quotation and analysis in this section is apposite, the discussion thoughtful and insightful, giving a full and relevant exploration of the ideas.

As the candidate moves on to develop their response, we see that they have a sharp focus on the way in which Heaney develops his ideas within these poems and how this supports the idea of change. Their analysis of the image of the 'tadpoles' for instance, skilfully strengthens the line of argument. In Blackberry Picking, they return to address the development of religious symbolism. In their further development of Personal Helicon they take an unusual approach to the analysis by focusing on the pronoun, 'You', but they argue their case convincingly by outlining the contrast between urban wells and rural wells, and the way in which the persona sees reflections.

In the final section of the essay, the candidate comes securely to 'change' and looks at the evidence that suggests that change has taken place. This demonstrates a sharp focus on the demands of the question. In their discussion of DOAN they focus on shame and are able to make links within the text to prove this notion of 'change'. They do the same with Blackberry Picking, although the assertion that 'no change' takes place in the poem is debatable. In their discussion of Personal Helicon they draw their argument to an interesting evaluative stance, demonstrating a sustained consideration of the implications of the question.

In the conclusion, the candidate sums up change in the three poems, but does not develop this to conclude in a more satisfying way. Given the length of the response and the time constraints, we should accept that this was written very quickly.

Knowledge and understanding

Seen holistically, this candidate demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the texts, although their understanding of Personal Helicon is not as fully conveyed. We have to remember that marks are accumulated for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding: they are not deducted from a maximum on the basis of errors or omissions. This is a full and relevant exploration with sustained consideration of the implications of the question. 'Change' remains firmly at the centre of this response. This candidate utilises extensive textual evidence to support their argument; the selection of material is focused upon the demands of the question.

Analysis

This candidate demonstrates an ability to analyse a task-appropriate range of literary techniques to strengthen their line of argument.

Evaluation

This candidate demonstrates a committed, clear evaluative stance and is able to draw conclusions from selected evidence.

Technical accuracy

There are technical glitches in this response, but they do not impede understanding. The candidate is able to communicate ideas clearly on first reading. As they meet the minimum competency, no penalty should be ascribed for technical errors.

This is an example of very good work at this level and so this candidate has been awarded 20 marks out of 20 to acknowledge that the evidence given fully meets the standard described in the marking criteria.