

# Commentary on candidate evidence

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

## Candidate 1

The candidate was awarded **6 marks**.

### Part A – Poetry: *Sticklebacks*

**Question: Discuss how Burnside uses aspects of the natural world to engage your interest in the central thematic concerns of this poem.**

#### Understanding

**The candidate shows a limited understanding of the central concerns of the text** such as on page 1 where they state that Burnside describes the sticklebacks ‘colourfully’; on page 2 that ‘the poem begins on a bright positive note’ or that ‘time is fleeting as the days grow old’ (page 3) – these are valid enough comments but, at best, **limited** in terms of their range and depth of understanding of the poem.

Furthermore, **the candidate has a limited approach to the question**. For example, by focussing upon the ideas of ‘time and distance’ (page 1) the candidate may have a point to make with ‘time’, but ‘distance’ is not an obvious line of enquiry and shows **limitations** in their understanding of the poem as a whole. The candidate also asserts that ‘time’ is a central thematic concern but fails to go beyond the ideas of ‘summer’ and ‘dusk’ (pages 2-3). With ‘distance’ there is **very little** understanding of the poem where this idea is concerned, with their approach seemingly revolving around the idea of ‘distant’ in line 22 of the poem, but this is not taken much further.

The candidate also uses **limited textual evidence to support the demands of the question** in terms of the number of references – seven – and their relevance to the question and their chosen approach. For example, on pages 4 and 5, the candidate uses two quotations to deal with the thematic idea of ‘distance’ – “When they slithered through our fingers” and “distant, nameless lives that paled to nothing” – and this exemplifies the **limitations** in this candidate’s use of textual evidence to support their approach to the poem and associated question but could also be seen to be on the cusp of having **very little** textual evidence to deal with their approach to the question.

## Analysis

**The candidate makes a limited analysis of literary techniques**, and at times, **very little analysis** of certain techniques which can be seen throughout the textual analysis. For example, although the candidate initially states that ‘Burnside describes the sticklebacks using enjambment’ (page 1), they never analyse how this technique ‘engages the reader’s interest’; they assert that ‘word choice and long sentencing’ are used (page 2), but never offer a specific analysis as to how these techniques create ‘curiosity in the reader’ (page 2); also on page 2, the candidate’s attempt of an analysis of “summers were always for hunting” is mere paraphrase when they state that this is ‘showing that it is the beginning of summer and hunting season’; on page 3, the candidate comments in a **limited** way on the short statement “dusk is on the way” as ‘emphasis[ing] that we are moving with time, and that it is out of our control’ and they also point to ‘the word choice of ‘singling’ as suggesting ‘that the writer feels isolated’ – a valid but **limited** comment; finally, the candidate finishes their analysis of the poem by looking at the ‘sharp imagery’ of “When they slithered through our fingers” on page 4 – where this is not actually imagery – with the comment that it emphasises ‘the idea of fleeting time, as the fish are gone forever.’ Like the candidate’s understanding of the poem, their analysis moves in and out of the two bottom band ranges where the analysis is defined as ‘limited’ and ‘very little’.

## Evaluation

In terms of evaluation, the candidate is assertive about Burnside’s ability to ‘romanticise the natural world’ (page 2) and although this is a possible evaluative comment with some merit, in this case the candidate does not have the evidence to support this. On the same page they offer a **limited** evaluative comment when they state that curiosity in the reader ‘allows them to further consider the deeper meaning of the poem’ without detailing what that deeper meaning of the poem might be. Likewise, when they state on page 3 that the poet takes us ‘through a summer’s day/season, watching the sticklebacks as they grow and change with time’, they once again have no evidence to support such an evaluative comment. It can therefore be said that this textual analysis **has a limited evaluation with respect to the poem provided and/or lacks relevance to the question and/or evidence**.

## Range

This textual analysis fully meets the standard described in the 0-5 range, but there are aspects that just meet the standard of the 9-6 range, so holistically, the textual analysis just meets the standard described in the 9-6 range and is awarded the lowest mark from the range.

## Candidate 2

The candidate was awarded **15 marks**.

### Part C – Prose Non-Fiction: *Minor Venetians*

**Question: Discuss some of the ways by which the writer makes their attitude towards these ‘Minor Venetians’, and towards Venice itself, clear to the reader.**

#### Understanding

This textual analysis, although relatively concise, can be said to show a **broad understanding of the central concerns of the text** which is shown through their **relevant and thoughtful approach to the question**.

Much of the response focuses on an examination of Morris’s treatment of Venetian children and cats, with one of the strengths of the textual analysis being the consistent synthesis of both well observed key ideas and apt selection of **textual evidence which is relevant to the demands of the question**.

It could be that candidates would normally begin the analysis of how children are presented with a line-by-line explication of Venetian fathers’ ‘unashamed delight’, the ‘sickly intensity’ (both in the opening paragraph of the extract) with which Venetian children are loved and so on but this candidate begins by setting the scene of the ‘upbringing’ of these children in what is described as ‘an “inescapably urban” city’ (page 6), and how this description ‘establishes a sympathetic stance’ towards them, which sets the scene for Morris’s portrayal of these children as ‘sympathetic’, sometimes ‘humorous’, and ‘endearing’ (page 7). This is a quietly confident opening which might have been developed in more detail, but which nevertheless shows, from the beginning, the candidate’s understanding of the passage.

The candidate continues to show their ability to synthesise evidence from across the text in supporting further points. On page 7, for example, evidence from the opening paragraphs, but also from when Morris later ‘repeatedly relat[es] back to their own children’, is used to support the comment about how Venetian parents are described ‘as both “exquisite” and “ludicrous” in their attentiveness to their children.

At times, the response demonstrates a **secure consideration of the implications of the question** – particularly in how the writer’s attitude towards Venice is made clear through their discussion of the city’s cats. The paragraph on page 10 which examines ‘the example of Nini’ offers comment on the description of how the cat was “skilfully exploited by his owner” to attract visitors ...adds to [Morris’s] commercialised, urban depiction of the city itself.’ This line of analysis is continued in the consideration of the reaction, at the time and since, to the death in 1894 of this famous cat. Reference is made both to the ‘absurd sentimentality of the city’s response’ – the candidate lists the ‘laments, tributes, sculptures, “a

gloomy funeral” and music’ here – but also to the contemporary response to all of this, in the form of the “distant flicker of amusement” (pages 10-11) in the eye of the barman who is custodian of Nini’s visitors’ book. The candidate uses this reaction to support their comment on how they see what Morris describes as “dead-pan satirism” as being ‘a definitive trait of the city’ (page 10).

Yet, some of the more overt references to how Morris describes the city – the depiction of ‘the environment and culture in which Venetian children are raised ... [and] Venetian’s love for ...cats’ (page 6), and in more detail how ‘the beauty of a “soothing” Venetian garden... conflicts [sic] their previous description of Venice as “inescapably urban”’ (page 11) – are more assertive and less developed, so holistically, the understanding shown is judged to be **broad** rather than **secure**.

## Analysis

There is a **relevant analysis of a range of literary techniques which supports the approach adopted by the candidate**. The candidate in their opening paragraph lists a number of techniques used ‘to convey [Morris’s] sympathetic stance’, and these are indeed all used (in addition to some others) in paragraphs which frequently gather references from throughout the text in order to develop a coherent and consistent response to it, which – at times – displays both the candidate’s **broad understanding** and **discernible evaluative stance**.

The analysis begins by discussing the word choice of Morris’s description of the “inescapably urban” city, this being so marked that a trip to a park is described as being seen as “indulgent” (page 7). The use of ‘a lighthearted tone’ (page 7) and humour is then discussed, with comment on the first example (“instant cardiac crisis”) being used to support the light-hearted tone and how this is one of several examples of alliteration which ‘emphasizes the lighthearted tone and grabs the reader’s attention’. All these elements, we are next told, ‘[work] together to effectively support Morris’ description of Venetian parents’, with the paragraph finishing with a reference to how Morris ‘gives their descriptions a sense of realism’ (page 7) by referring to their own children, ‘making [them] believable’. None of the individual points of analysis here could be described as **strengthening their approach**, but how the candidate draws their points together is effective, engaging and **supports the approach adopted by the candidate**.

The candidate then follows Morris’s lead in juxtaposing the upbringings of the more upper-class Venetian children with those from poorer backgrounds. Again, a number of techniques are used to help develop the description of these latter children. Morris’s ‘fond tone’ (page 8) is referred to and supported by two ‘vivid’ references of how they are ‘more liberated’ than their richer peers, which leads to the writer explicitly stating their ‘affection’ for them. We are then told that Morris ‘goes on to justify this affinity for the wilder children in the lower classes’ through the references to the behaviour of their own: this ‘personal relation’, we are told, ‘endears the reader, both to the children in Venice and to the writer themselves’ (page 8). It can clearly be seen here how the analysis offered is **supportive** of the **discernible and relevant evaluative stance** offered by the candidate and is **based on evidence discussed within the response**.

The same successful, integrative approach continues into the candidate's analysis of how the city's cats are described. The candidate refers in the space of one page (page 9) to Morris's use of historical anecdote, listing, repetition, sentence structure and humour in commenting on the 'sympathy' and indeed in one case 'devotion' Venetians direct towards their cats, and the candidate's comment on the 'short sentence: "It is a metropolis of cats"' adding emphasis as to the 'quantity of cats living there' (page 9) also supports their approach towards this topic. The passage describing the Venetian garden on page 11 then refers to Morris's use of contrast (though this is named 'conflict'), parallel structure (though this is not overtly identified as such) and alliteration, though the comments on the effects of these devices are less polished than elsewhere as shown by the comment on the alliterative effect of "'polished pans", "buzz of boats"' as highlighting Venice's 'flaws'. Again, when dealt with in a holistic manner, the analysis can be judged as **supporting the approach adopted by the candidate**.

### Evaluation

As stated previously, **a discernible and relevant evaluative stance with respect to the text** is offered, **based on evidence discussed within the response**. This is evident in the examples already discussed but can also be seen on pages 6 ('the writer uses vivid imagery ...'), 7 ('a sense of realism ...making it more believable'), 8 ('endears the reader'), 9 ('this somewhat effectively ...is expressed effectively'), and 11 ('engaging the reader easily').

### Range

Overall, the response can be said to fully meet the standard described in the 15-13 mark range and is therefore awarded the highest available mark from the range.