

Candidate 11

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

The candidate was awarded **20 marks**.

Part B – South Riding

Question. Discuss the ways in which you find the opening to this novel effective in establishing setting and character.

Understanding

A comprehensive understanding of the central concerns is offered here. Immediately the candidate refers to 'the setting ...symbolic of both their broken present and their glorious past.' The 'vulnerable daughter' and 'destructive nature of the father's relationship with his wife' is highlighted. The negative description of Midge is detailed together with the father 'incapable of loving his daughter' and seeking 'a replica of the wife'. Midge's 'outbursts' are linked to the lack of love from her father. The link between setting – father sitting 'surrounded by his ancestors' and his neglect of his daughter is established. A connection is drawn between the house and its effect on the characters: 'the nostalgia that consumes the characters who inhabit it.' There is a further link between the traditions of the farming gentlemen and Robert Carne. There is an explanation of the writer's use of 'They' in terms of Midge's reliance on the supernatural. Midge's denial of her father's 'failing' is explained. Later there is a description of the decaying nature of the mother's room and how it has created a 'curse' on Midge. Finally the climax of the father 'trapped in the past as he hands his hysterical daughter but sees only "his wife, in 1918, frenzied"' is clearly shown. There is in this response a comprehensive understanding of the central concerns of the text, a full and relevant exploration with sustained consideration of the implications of the question and extensive use of textual evidence to support an argument clearly focused on the demands of the question.

Analysis

The candidate offers a number of precise analytical comments. The setting is 'symbolic of ...broken present and glorious past.' The use of omniscient narrator allows for Midge's perspective to be accurately presented. This effect of the narrative voice is analysed to exemplify Midge's troubled life. We are also told, interestingly, that 'the characterisation of Robert becomes indirect' allowing the reader 'a unique perspective of the daughter's perception of her father'. We are told how 'Holtby uses setting to demonstrate the father's unnatural obsession with his past', the so-called 'halcyon days'. There is also clever reference to the 'oximoronic (sic) description' of 'lovely terrifying'. Effective comment is made on the 'blunt short sentence'. The personification of the house is linked to the 'crushing effect that the mother's illness had ...'. The house is symbolic of the 'nostalgia that consumes the characters who inhabit it.' There is reference to the description of the room with its allusions of fadedness and decay, linked to Robert Carne. The use of capitalised 'They' is linked to Midge's belief in supernatural power. Mother's room is analysed as 'a symbol for the sickness of

the mother and the sickness that she has left behind in the house.’ There is clever explanation of climax: ‘father is left trapped in past’. All in all, this is a relevant analysis of a task-appropriate range of literary techniques which skilfully strengthens the candidate’s approach.

Evaluation

There is clear evidence of a committed, clear evaluative stance skilfully based on precise evidence discussed within the response. This is seen in comments such as: ‘the act of him sitting ...is symbolic of his desire to reach back into the halcyon days before the “agricultural crisis”’; ‘Midge both greatly admires her mother and fears her as a result of the devastating influence she has had on her father’; ‘crushing effect ...on Midge and her father’s world’; Midge’s ‘complete lack of faith that anything good might happen’; ‘she employs her superstitious practice in order to delay the inevitable disappointment ...’; It’s not just Midge who is ‘struggling ...her father has also been reduced to a shadow of his former self.’ And finally ‘father is left trapped in the past as he handles his hysterical daughter but sees only “his wife, in 1918, frenzied”’, which is a very succinct way of summing up the enigmatic last part of the extract. In conclusion the candidate writes, ‘Holtby makes continual use of the broken house to symbolise the broken lives that the characters live.’ This is a very clear, succinct, fully realised evaluation.

Overall, this response is placed within the 20-19 mark range and as it fully meets the standard described, a mark of 20 is awarded.

Mark: 20