

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate 9

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

The candidate was awarded **11 marks**.

Section A – *The Phantom Horsewoman*

Question: Write a detailed critical response to this poem.

Understanding

This candidate chooses to respond through a series of three subtitled sections, each section focussing upon a different technique: 'structure/rhyme/ rhythm', 'word choice', and 'imagery', and this is a relevant approach to the question and textual evidence to address the demands of the question.

The candidate shows an understanding of the central concerns of the text, but only on a basic level, through their general summary of each stanza and through further inference at points throughout the essay.

Analysis

The candidate makes an attempt at analysis of a range of literary techniques in the response but is often restricted to self-evident assertions. The candidate, at times, recognises techniques and associated quotation, but does not take the analysis beyond the most basic level and is unable to build a cohesive and focussed critical response. In the opening section of the response, which looks at 'Structure/Rhyme/ Rhythm', the candidate recognises the basic context of the poem and that there is a rhetorical question in stanza 1 which 'intrigues the reader in the last line', a valid yet simplistic comment. The candidate then recognises, with a touch of contradiction, that 'there is not a strict metre' but goes on to recognise the 'iambic pentameter' of the first and last lines with the middle lines of each stanza having '4 or 5 syllables each', and moves on to discuss rhyme with the comment that the rhyme 'creates a steady rhythm – this makes the poem easy and pleasurable to read'. The comment becomes a little stronger when the candidate comments upon the overall structure of the poem and the 'change in tone from pleasant reflection to dull realisation' that the man 'is growing old and weaker'. The candidate then moves on to 'word choice' and 'imagery' and these sections are noticeable for the candidate's recognition and selection of examples of technique, yet they fail to provide anything beyond the most basic analysis and this is not connected to any of the central thematic concerns. For example, "queer" points to the "ways of men" being odd; "careworn craze" points to the man being 'mad or delusional' with the slightly stronger comment on "moveless/stands/gaze" creating the 'aura of stillness' as the man looks at 'something in admiration or wonder'. The final section on imagery, like

previous sections, is weak and the comment on “As if on air” is dealt with by commenting that the ‘image of the phantom horsewoman resonates in his mind wherever he is’. There is an analysis of a range of literary techniques, but the analysis is on a basic level and therefore the analysis is placed at the lower end of the 12-10 band range.

Evaluation

There is an evaluative stance but there are undoubted weaknesses in relevance. The candidate struggles to build any cohesive evaluation beyond the basic understanding of the persona’s ‘pleasure’ at looking at the scene and the fact that the ‘girl stays the same in his vision as he grows weak and old’, and this places the evaluation at the lower end of the 12-10 band range 11 marks are awarded.