

# Candidate evidence

## Candidate A

To what extent that a woman's perception in a Chinese relationship have changed throughout the years?

Women have been treated unfairly comparing to men throughout different centuries and countries, in all different cultures. Especially in a Chinese relationship where the male dominates and makes most of the decisions, this social phenomenon is worsened by the Chinese tradition where parents value the son over the daughter. But in the past 10 years, women are standing up for themselves and start fighting for equality. I will be using a novel called "月滿西樓" which is set in the 1960s and a movie called "有一個地方只有我們知道" which is set in the 2010s, to discuss if the role of a woman in a Chinese relationship has changed much in the past 50 years time.

The man in the relationship used to manage and supervise most of the family business, while the woman only listened. In the novel Mei Heng was given a job as a "secretary" but actually, she was hired to be Shi Lei's lover. When Mei Heng said "石峰! 他以為他是什麼? 我的主人?"<sup>1</sup>, it shows how Mei Heng is indignant that Shi Feng does whatever to her as he pleases. Their relationship at the start of the novel is a reflection of what relationships were like back in the 1960s, with the man in charge and making most of the decisions. The dynamic in most of the relationships was- the man speaks and the woman just follows what he said. Just as a classic Chinese four characters idiom states- "夫唱婦隨", which literally translates to "the husband sings the wife follows". In a marriage, the husband gets most of the rights to decide what happens in the family. A great example is the foot binding ritual which only ended in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it immobilizes women, preventing them to work or even go anywhere. Yet, it was considered to be a measurement of beauty in a woman for a man when he was looking for a potential wife. Men also didn't treat women with respect or equally. They have been looking down on women and seeing them to be below themselves. "那男人上上下下的打量我...他的眼睛裏有着嘲弄的笑意"<sup>2</sup>, from what Mei Heng described we could see Shi Feng was judging and mocking her. He didn't see Mei Heng

as someone who was on the same level as him, which we see it again when Mei Heng said “他眼底閃過一絲笑意，又是那帶點嘲弄性的”<sup>3</sup>.

Nowadays women are getting more brave, more independent. They are encouraged to speak their own minds. In “有一個地方只有我們知道”, the heroine- Jin Tian- was just out of a relationship, heartbroken and with no one to depend on, she went to Prague all alone and started a new life by herself. Without anyone’s help. Showing that women in the modern society are getting more independent, they no longer need to rely on men. Women are no longer below men, some made it to the top to become CEOs and government officials, which shows with hard work, some can surpass men. Unlike before where no opportunities are given. So compared to how the relationship worked before, women are getting less afraid to speak out their thoughts and being more involved in the relationship. Instead of a one-way relationship in the previous decades, both parties are communicating more and the woman has more authority than before.

More women used to be rather reliant on men in relationships. It was either hard to find jobs as a woman, or she was not allowed to work because her husband doesn’t allow it. Which led to her only occupation could only be a housewife, and her entire income depends on her husband. And the aim of a Chinese relationship is to get married, which was hinted when Meiheng’s aunt was talking to her at the start and she picked up the undertone and thought to herself “嬌嬌不歡迎我在她家繼續住下去，我也不是傻瓜，當然聽得出來”<sup>4</sup>. Previously, women get married as soon as they can after they have turned twenty, which is the legal age to get married since 1950. We could also see women’s dependence on men in the novel, especially from Xiao Fan. “我好想做的一切都只是為你！只是為你！包括我的呼吸，我的生存，我的一切的一切的一切！都只是為了你啊”<sup>5</sup> despite her obsession with Shi Lei was due to her having no friends from a young age, it still shows how love and relationship is above everything for her, to an extent Xiao Fan said her life is owned by Shi Lei. And in the movie, when Ze Yang- the leading male role- first broke up with Jin Tian, she said “走了你別再來煩我了”，which could be because she was angry and confused at that time, but it shows her first thought about it is: I don't need him. Even though she was upset

by the fact that their relationship has come to an end, and she still reminisces the time when they were together. But she didn't chase after him and has made up her mind to go back to China, “我也該回家了”. In the end Ze Yang was the one that asked her to stay. The underlining here shows Jin Tian is used to being independent and doesn't think she always need a man by her side.

A portion of women think that they have to get married in their life. Daughters were encouraged to get married at a young age, as parents in the past value sons over daughter because of the physique difference. The purpose of the daughters was often just for having babies and branching out the family tree, some mothers even see their daughter as doorways to a wealthier life and family. In the novel, Shi Feng's marriage revealed his relationship with his ex-wife “他愛上了一個女孩子，認為她是完美的化身，崇高，不凡，神聖。...卻發現她是個虛偽而又虛榮，談不上絲毫內在和修養的女人。”<sup>6</sup> This lead to women marrying men that perhaps they don't have feelings for, turning themselves into someone who blindly follows materialism. Although we didn't meet Shi Feng's wife in the novel, but we know she only married him for his wealth, which we heard about her from Shi Lei: “嫂嫂呢？她用哥哥的錢，去買自己的快樂。”<sup>7</sup>. This often happens in the olden days, or even until now, when women are encouraged to marry someone they don't love for their family background. Even in the movie, Ze Yang's his mother was unwilling to have a divorce and rather swallow sleeping pills to end her own life. Women who have had a divorce were looked down upon as currently the society shames women who are not married after twenty-seven years old, calling them “剩女”, which literally means the leftover girls. But now the younger generation of girls see marriage and relationships differently as women's independence are more encouraged. There are also more open minded in the older generation, like Jin Tian's grandmother as she said “愛情是盆開水，終會涼下來的。” which would suggest she doesn't believe a relationship will last forever, she is being realistic, not blinded by love. Comparing to back when women believe they have to be married in their lives, they have become more rational and realistic with their thinking as they are more independent.

In conclusion, all through the years women have been more in charge in the relationship, standing up and speaking up for themselves. We have come a long way compared to back then, as we fight for gender equality throughout decades, a woman's perception in a relationship has been ever-changing. From previously the man being in charge of the relationship and telling the woman what to do, to women being more confident and not afraid to say and act however they want. A portion of women are also thinking more realistically nowadays, instead of believing in their need to have a man to rely on in life, they are more than comfortable to be self-reliant. All these changes lead back to the fact that women are getting more independent and courageous. Therefore, in my opinion, a woman's image in a Chinese relationship in the modern days has changed in comparison to a few decades ago.

Word count: 1475

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### **Secondary source**

“有一個地方只有我們知道” 2015

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## Candidate B

How successfully does the author use other characters to portray the personality of the father in 『傳家的兒女們』?

『傳家的兒女們』 is a novel written by 於梨華. It details the story of a family of six siblings on a flight from America back to Taiwan for a family reunion. During the flight, the author delves into the individual background stories of each sibling, which allows the reader to learn that the reason they were all in America was due to their father's intention for all his children to settle there. Despite being the main focus of the story, the character of the father is not present on the plane and so does not appear until late into the novel. However, through the author's effective use of descriptions, inner thoughts, and dialogue of other characters, the readers are able to successfully gain a strong sense of the father's impact and personality throughout the novel.

The father is initially mentioned in a discussion when the mother says to her eldest son, 「他要你出國深造, 他早已把那筆錢放在一邊了」。Through this, the readers gain a sense of the father's care for his children, as the words 「早已」 suggest that he has planned ahead and has already been saving the money for him to go abroad. This clearly highlights his role as a father, as he seems to be the provider for his sons. However, there is a hint of the father's controlling nature, as the words 「他要你」 is a demand, rather than a suggestion. Through this conversation between mother and son, the author effectively gives a glimpse of the father's feeling of pressure to go abroad.

The push for his son to study abroad is once again mentioned when the father says 「我替你打的算盤」。The flashback of this conversation is extremely effective as it clearly shows the father's domineering character. The words 「我替你」 are absolute. This reveals that there is no room for discussion, and that the sons have no say and no input. This is effective as the father seems more like a teacher rather than a fatherly figure, as he is telling the sons to go abroad without consulting them for their own opinions first. This may also suggest that the father lacks understanding, as the plans he has made for his sons do not seem to be what they desire to do, however he still expects the son to follow. 「算盤」 is a smart use of metaphor, as it compares the father's plan for his son to an abacus, or a chessboard. Just as an abacus is very definite, so too are the father's future plans for his sons, with no tolerance for anything out with the plan. By using the son's flashback, the author successfully shows that matters are non-negotiable except for what the dad has organised for them.

The father's controlling personality is once again shown through the son's inner thought when he is on the phone. 「下令他立時與“那個女人”斷絕關係」。The word choice of 「下令」 is very abrupt and commanding, which emphasises the father's idea that he is in power and controls the lives of his sons. Also, the use of the word 「那個女人」 shows his complete disregard towards the woman, no matter who she is or what she is like. This implies that he has an obvious disapproval of the woman and is not going to tolerate her either. Through this, the author effectively conveys to the audience that he will not abide matters he does not support, and that there is no way to get through to him.

「父親在氣頭上什麼都做得出來」。This description of the father is used to portray how the father is when he is angry. The words 「什麼都做得出來」 emphasise the extent to which the father will go when he is angered, as if he is out of control and untamed. This gives an impression that in regards to the operation in the household, things will go either the father's way, or no way at all. For the father, he shows his disapproval by going beyond his anger, becoming ballistic. There

seems to be no discussion or communication. Instead, he immediately flies to a rage. The author effectively uses this description to present to the readers how things are dealt with in the family, and how the father deals with situations within the family, according to the son.

As the story continues, the readers discover that the relationship between the son and the father lacks closeness. 「先同你說一下,你便中對父親說一聲」. Here, the son is seen asking his mother to pass on his words to his father. This creates an impression that there is distance between the father and the son. There seems to be a barrier between them, although it is not specified whether this is a language barrier or an age barrier. Through this effective use of dialogue, the readers are forced to think for themselves, as it is clear that the son confides in his mother more than his father, giving the impression that the father is unapproachable to the son, or does not understand him like his mother does.

The generation gap between the father and his children is presented through a flashback, when he says, 「我的兒子要做博士 我的女兒要嫁博士」. Through this, it is made clear why the father persistently pushes for his sons and daughter to go abroad. However, this dialogue between the father and his daughter displays his old perspective, as his words imply that he thinks men are the head of the household, and a woman's role is to be the home keeper, submissive to the husband. This suggests to the readers that the father is still stuck with the old generation perception. This dialogue also reveals the father's plans; his sons shall gain a doctorate in America, whilst the daughter should look for potential partners who have doctorates to settle with. To the father, having a doctorate or marrying a doctor defines ultimate success. It shows his idea that achieving a PHD is the dream and the ideal, and the future paths of his children will be paved with gold once a PHD is achieved. This flashback is used by the author to portray the father as someone who has not kept up with the changing times and perspectives.

Although the impression of the father is someone who is very strict, controlling, and easily angered, as a reader I can see that the father is only doing this for the benefit of his children. For many generations, the role of a father is to provide for their own sons and daughter so that they can exceed him. Therefore, he is pushing them to America in attempt to give them the best opportunity for their own future, even if some sibling's lives in America were not as rosy or fulfilled as the father had planned. To the father, his idea of a fatherly figure may be someone who can provide and support the family. However, to the children, they seem to desire freedom and understanding. Also, they seek someone who can support their individuality and dreams. For that reason, there may be a divide between the views of the father and his children, therefore giving the impression that the relationship between them is distant.

In conclusion, the father's personality and his relationship with the children are very successfully presented through the author's use of various techniques such as dialogue, flashbacks, and the children's thoughts. Through the children's response and approach to their father, it is clear that the father is a very influential and highly positioned character within all their lives.

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# Commentary on candidate evidence

The candidate evidence contained in this pack has achieved the following marks for the coursework assessment task.

## Candidate A

The candidate was awarded **12 marks**.

### Content

The title chosen is not entirely clear, although the initial 'to what extent' should give some scope for analysis and evaluation. The candidate has used a wide range of resources and the two main ones are appropriate for the task. She has difficulty going beyond an informative approach, giving a lot of background information without direct reference to the two main sources. Indeed, some of this information is not relevant to the focus of the essay, for example the mention of the foot binding ritual in paragraph 2.

### Style

The candidate has presented some evidence from both sources, including a number of direct quotations. However, the register is not always appropriate – *a movie, a great example, we didn't meet, in the olden days, etc* - and there are many instances of poor English expression, syntax and punctuation which at times make the meaning unclear, particularly with relation to the word order and verb tenses. There is very little critical terminology.

### Organisation

The candidate writes without a clear structure and this does impact on communication. The writing lacks coherence in places, something which is not helped by the poor English. Although the candidate has managed to draw a fairly basic conclusion which does relate back to the title, the arguments presented are largely based on societal issues rather than the specific sources chosen.

## Candidate B

The candidate was awarded **18 marks**.

### Content

The candidate has chosen a title which does outline the focus of the analysis but which could have been much more straightforward. By choosing to focus on how the father's personality is portrayed *through other characters* the candidate has over-complicated any potential analysis. The sources chosen are appropriate and the candidate shows some features of an analytical approach, attempting to present arguments and analysis. Unfortunately, this does not always relate directly to the focus of the analysis as stated in the title, with much of the essay describing the character of the father without direct reference to other characters.

### Style

The candidate presents evidence from sources and includes quotations which are largely accurate. The register is mostly appropriate with occasional lapses – *a smart use of metaphor, becoming ballistic, as a reader I can see* - and the candidate does use some critical terminology – *this clearly highlights, flashback...extremely effective, use of metaphor, the author successfully shows, this implies etc.*, but poor English expression and punctuation does detract from the overall impression – *an obvious disapproval the woman, highly positioned character, he will not abide matters he does not support, going beyond his anger, flies to a rage, the old generation perception etc.*

### Organisation

The candidate does write with some sense of structure and has organised the work into a series of paragraphs. Unfortunately, these do not always link together well and do not always relate directly to the focus of the analysis but instead recount a series of episodes within the novel. The writing is largely coherent although there are instances of lack of clarity and the main focus of the analysis (*use of other characters* to portray the personality of the father) is not fully explored. Indeed the conclusion makes little reference to this main focus, concentrating instead on the author's use of various techniques to convey the relationship between the father and his children.