

# Commentary on candidate evidence

The candidate evidence has achieved the following marks for each question of the critical reading question paper.

## Candidate 1

### Section 2 – Question 14

**Choose a film or television drama in which there is a particular sequence which is especially memorable or suspenseful or entertaining. By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the film or programme makers create this effect and discuss how it adds to your appreciation of the text as a whole.**

The candidate was awarded **10 out of 20 marks** for this essay.

The candidate has chosen to write about the film 'The Shawshank Redemption', an appropriate selection for question 14. The introduction states that 'the opening scene of the film is particularly suspenseful as we see Andy face a jury to decide if he is guilty of the murders.' The subsequent paragraphs each focus on a different technique: camera angles; sound; lighting and dialogue.

This essay is an example of a borderline piece which just meets the requirements of the 12-10 category.

Knowledge and understanding of the opening scene are adequate overall. The candidate correctly identifies the court sequence as suspenseful and selects details and moments that demonstrate Andy's lack of power in the sequence. There is awareness of the film's key premise and Andy's situation.

The candidate links Andy's position in the court into the wider plot of the film and states that the courtroom scene 'foreshadows Andy having to live under the rules of Warden Norton.' Reference is made to his 'corrupt regime' in the introduction.

The candidate omits specific reference to the flashback elements of the opening sequence except for reference to the 'If I didn't care' soundtrack. However, on balance, enough of the scene is covered to avoid significantly limiting the essay as a whole.

The essay is adequately structured around the analysis of filmic techniques. Following the introduction, there are four paragraphs, each dealing with one technique: camera angles, lighting, sound and dialogue, ending with a short conclusion. Each paragraph sticks to the main idea in the essay, how techniques are used to build up suspense.

Paragraph 2 deals with camera angles. The essay refers to three examples: a high angle shot of Andy 'making him appear helpless and vulnerable'; a low angle shot of the judge 'showing he has power' and a medium shot of Andy 'standing emotionlessly on the stand'. These are identified correctly but the comments are assertive rather than analytical: the candidate states what effects the shots create, but does not explore how this is done, the impact on audience or the contribution to thematic meaning.

Moving on to sound, we see this pattern of correct identification with comments tending towards assertion. For example, 'the sound of the judge using the gavel' is linked adequately to Andy having to spend time in jail where 'we don't know how he will cope'. The candidate attempts to comment evaluatively, for example 'The sound ... reflects upon the mood of this situation' but the comments are generalised, tending towards limited: 'creating a much more suspenseful environment as a whole adding to my appreciation of the text as a whole'.

The candidate demonstrates adequate understanding of the symbolic use of lighting in the scene, with light representing 'good and hope' and darkness representing 'evil and corruption'. Andy is described as being lit up more brightly than the dim courtroom surroundings, suggesting that 'Andy is completely surrounded by evil.' The candidate mentions that light and darkness are used symbolically throughout the film but omits any other references which would have further demonstrated their knowledge.

The penultimate paragraph deals with dialogue: the essay again tends to assert the effect of specific examples, rather than analysing them fully. For example, the candidate comments on the prosecution's summing up: 'there is so much evidence against Andy telling us he does not stand a chance.'

Reference to the question is adequate overall. The candidate focuses on the building of suspense throughout the essay and frequently refers to the words of the question. However, other than a few brief comments, such as identification of 'good versus evil' as a theme running through the text, the film as a whole is rarely addressed.

There is an adequate evaluative stance shown through comments on the character of Andy and a straightforward reaction to his fate: 'We are unaware if Andy will ever make it out of the prison system.'

The candidate demonstrates sufficient understanding and presents enough relevant evidence to meet the minimum criteria for the 12-10 range. Filmic techniques are identified accurately but comments on these tend to be assertive rather than analytical. Overall knowledge of the text is demonstrated mainly by focus on sections of the opening sequence, with few references to the text as a whole. The essay is therefore placed at the lower end of the 12-10 category and is awarded 10 marks.