

Commentary on candidate evidence

The candidate evidence has achieved the following marks for each question of the Critical Reading (section 2 – critical essay) assessment.

Candidate A

Drama: Choose a play in which a character has a weakness or flaw.

2. By referring to appropriate techniques, explain the importance of this weakness or flaw and discuss how it contributes to your appreciation of the play as a whole. (SQA, 2018 question paper)

The candidate was awarded **9 marks** for this piece.

The essay demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the text: Blanche's tendency to deceive and to look down on her sister, her past life and her pretence about alcohol. In places, the understanding shown is limited rather than adequate.

Examples of textual evidence are used to support the line of thought. Although the comments on individual examples are adequate in places, overall, the textual evidence is limited. The essay follows the basic structure of introduction, examples to illustrate the line of thought, followed by a very short conclusion. Expression is limited in a number of places.

The essay sticks firmly to discussion of Blanche's character, showing adequate focus on the demands of the question. This is a strength of the essay.

There is analysis of Williams' use of symbolism: the streetcar ride and light. Although the comments in themselves are, for the most part, adequate, there is a lack of clarity in places which suggests a limited grasp.

The candidate demonstrates evidence of an evaluative stance. The comments, though accurate, tend to be stated simply and the evaluative stance is therefore limited rather than adequate.

Overall, this is an essay which demonstrates some adequate and some limited qualities covering the mark ranges of 12-10 and 9-6. The individual comments and evidence showing knowledge and understanding are, for the most part, accurate, but the overall impression is of a grasp which slips into limited rather than adequate. Focus on the question is adequate. There is some accurate analysis of character and symbolism, though again, the overall sense is limited rather than adequate. The evaluative stance is limited.

The essay is placed at the top end of 9-6 and awarded 9 marks.

Candidate B

Drama: Choose a play in which a character has a weakness or flaw.

2. By referring to appropriate techniques, explain the importance of this weakness or flaw and discuss how it contributes to your appreciation of the play as a whole (SQA, 2018 question paper)

The candidate was awarded **11 marks** for this piece.

The candidate demonstrates adequate knowledge and understanding of the text: Blanche's key flaw of denial of truth is identified and explored throughout the essay. Her pretence regarding alcohol and her attempt to recapture her lost youth with her husband are appropriate examples. The essay mentions her situation, living with her sister and brother-in-law and her interaction with Mitch. We see that the essay is sitting comfortably in the 12-10 mark range.

Adequate textual evidence is used throughout to support the candidate's line of thought. The candidate explores Blanche's avoidance of bright light and her preference of fantasy over reality and makes a number of relevant references to the text, using quotations appropriately. The essay is adequately structured and expressed, beginning with an adequate introduction, then moving in a straightforward way from one example of her deceit to another, and ending in a brief conclusion.

The candidate focuses on the demands of the question throughout: this is a strength of the essay.

There is adequate analysis of Williams' use of light to symbolise truth and Blanche's consequent dislike of, for example, a light bulb. The candidate shows awareness of characterisation, for example in comments on Blanche's many relationships with men in an attempt to find meaning.

The essay demonstrates adequate awareness of an evaluative stance. The candidate initially makes the simple observation that the audience is not taken in by Blanches' attempts at deception. This is developed, later in the essay, into a more sensitive comment regarding her need for validation.

Overall, this essay is firmly in 12-10. There is adequate knowledge and understanding, textual evidence and analysis of the effect of technique. The structure is straightforward and the piece demonstrates adequate evidence of an evaluative stance.

As the essay sits comfortably in 12-10 throughout, it is awarded 11 marks.

Candidate C

Film and TV Drama: Choose a film or television drama in which a sequence effectively conveys conflict or tension.

13. With reference to appropriate techniques, discuss how the film or programme makers engage the audience's interest in this conflict or tension. (SQA, 2021 question paper)

The candidate was awarded **15 marks** for this piece.

The candidate shows clear knowledge and understanding of the text: the description of the lead up to the murder and the murder itself. The candidate clearly understands Marion's vulnerable situation and comments on her role and that of her killer.

The essay provides clear textual evidence throughout: the candidate concentrates on the tension created by the conversation which precedes the murder and the brutality and shock of the killing. The essay is structured clearly, with an introduction, followed by exploration of three key techniques, rounding up with a clear conclusion. The expression is clear throughout.

There is analysis of the key techniques of mis-en-scène, sound and camera work. In parts of the essay, the analysis is detailed, for example in the comments on sound and camera angles during the actual stabbing. The candidate comments in detail about the effect of such techniques on the audience. In places the analysis is clear, for example the comments on mise-en-scène in the build up to the murder.

The candidate expresses a clear evaluative stance throughout, edging towards engaged in places, when the candidate shows appreciation of the skill used in the creation of tension.

Overall, the piece is placed in 15-13, with some of the analysis and the evaluative stance at times edging into 18-16 mark range. It sits at the top of the 15-13 range and was awarded 15 marks.