

Commentary on candidate evidence

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

Candidate 1

Section 2 – Question 5

Choose a novel or short story in which one of the main characters does not always fit in with their society and/or surroundings.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain the character's situation and discuss how it contributes to your appreciation of the text as a whole.

The candidate was awarded **14 marks** for this essay.

The candidate has chosen to write about *1984* by George Orwell and focuses on how Winston Smith does not fit in with his society. The essay explores how Smith's challenge of the totalitarian government and its leader, Big Brother, leaves him isolated.

In terms of knowledge and understanding, the candidate displays clear knowledge of the text. The essay focuses on the theme of power and develops a clear line of thought, beginning with the physical control exerted by the Party which 'keep their population weak' and 'easier to manipulate'. The candidate then discusses the 'constant surveillance' used to 'spout propaganda' and control Oceania. Winston rebels by writing his thoughts in a journal, therefore alienating him from those who conform. The second area discussed is 'the intellectual control of the Party' through manipulation of facts and the use of Newspeak. Winston does not conform as he remembers the past which gives him 'the dangerous knowledge to rebel', further isolating him. Finally, the candidate focuses on the use of emotional control through the '2 Minutes Hate' used to brainwash citizens into 'believing Big Brother protects' and is their 'saviour.' Once again, Winston rebels against this by his lack of condemnation of the criminals. His relationship with Julia is presented as an act of rebellion and the exposure of this alienates him further, presenting the bleak message that 'no one can escape a totalitarian government'. There is clear focus on the demands of the question throughout: Winston's alienation from the society around him.

In terms of analysis and evaluation, the candidate demonstrates clear analysis and there is a clear evaluative stance throughout. The candidate discusses the setting, linked to the theme of power and control used by the Party to subdue its citizens, describing the poor living conditions and the challenge faced by Winston to rebel, through writing his journal in a 'blindspot' of his apartment. The linguistic impact of Newspeak is discussed as 'All children will grow up learning a language

which stops them from having an original thought': Winston's rebellion through thoughtcrime further distances him from society. Finally, the candidate explores the idea that Winston's relationship with Julia is a 'political act' against the Party's attempt to control whom he should love: 'by loving each other Winston and Julia actively fight society'. The essay concludes with an evaluation of the novel's bleak message.

In summary, this essay is clear in all aspects. The candidate demonstrates clear knowledge and understanding of the novel and supports this with a line of thought which is clearly structured and expressed. Analysis is clear and the candidate makes clear evaluative comments linked to the Party's power and control, Winston's attempted rebellion and the novel's bleak ending.

The essay is firmly placed in the middle of the 15-13 mark range and is awarded 14 marks.

Candidate 2

Section 2 – Question 5

Choose a novel or short story in which one of the main characters does not always fit in with their society and/or surroundings.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain the character's situation and discuss how it contributes to your appreciation of the text as a whole.

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

The candidate has chosen to write about the short story *Smeddum* by Lewis Grassic Gibbon and focuses on how the main character, the 'unconventional' Meg Menzies, does not fit in with the society around her. The essay explores how Meg 'challenges the norms of an early 20th century Aberdeenshire farming community', both through her roles as farmer and parent, and in her relationship with her partner, Will.

In terms of knowledge and understanding, the candidate displays clear knowledge of the text throughout. The candidate begins by referring to the difficulties faced by Meg, noting her 'feckless husband' and 'nine children, most of whom need to be brought into line,' before going on to expand on the difficulties she faces in her working life. Meg's ability to cope with harsh weather and the hard physical work of the farm are said to set her apart from others as, at that time, women were 'portrayed as weaker and more sensitive.' The candidate notes that this aspect of Meg's character is used by Grassic Gibbon to establish her possession of 'Smeddum – the strength of spirit of an individual.' The essay then considers other ways in which Meg sets herself apart from the society she lives in. These include her decision to confront the teacher following Jeannie's 'leathering'; her insistence on determining her children's paths for her own reasons rather than for reasons of conformity; and the final revelation that she has never married Will despite having nine children by him. These examples are all provided as clear evidence to support the view that she is a character who 'goes against the accepted practices of her community.'

In terms of analysis and evaluation, the candidate demonstrates a clear understanding of Grassic Gibbon's use of the literary techniques such as setting, characterisation and plot. In some parts of the essay, the analysis is detailed, for example the consideration of Meg's attitude to Kath and marriage. The candidate explains that 'Meg didn't deem marriage as essential for those who can get by without the stability that it brings' and 'Kath had the courage to take responsibility for her actions and was fit to be free.' Engagement with the text is clear throughout the essay and can be seen in evaluative comments such as those in the section dealing with Meg's confrontation with the 'Dominie': 'To question their method would have been scandalous... Meg demonstrates a vast amount of Smeddum...' The candidate also clearly evaluates the extent to which Meg accepts the conventions of the society in which she lives.

In summary, this essay displays clear knowledge and understanding of the text in considering the various ways in which Meg's character stands out. In places, analysis, for example of characterisation, is detailed rather than clear.

The essay sits in the 15-13 'clear' category, edging towards 'secure/detailed'. It is placed at the top of the 15-13 category with a mark of 15.

Candidate 3

Section 2 – Question 5

Choose a novel or short story in which one of the main characters does not always fit in with their society and/or surroundings.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain the character's situation and discuss how it contributes to your appreciation of the text as a whole.

The candidate was awarded **16 marks** for this essay.

The candidate has chosen to write about J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and focuses on Holden Caulfield's alienation from his society and surroundings. The essay explores the character and some experiences of Holden, whom the candidate describes as 'an extremely isolated character by chance and also by choice.'

In terms of knowledge and understanding of the text, the candidate displays a secure knowledge of the text and selects appropriate material for their focus on Holden's isolation. This is established at the start of the essay where he does not attend the football game, preferring to watch his peers playing, from the top of a hill. This incident illustrates his literal and metaphorical isolation: 'Holden chooses to keep people at an arm's length as he has a carefully constructed view of reality...' The candidate continues to select incidents which further highlight Holden's isolation: his remark to the cab driver about the ducks is cited as an example, '...once again Holden is left feeling out of touch with his surroundings and misunderstood by society.' The essay comments on Holden's fascination with the museum, where things never change, and ends with his 'epiphany' at the carousel ride 'the only time in the book Holden has said to be anything other than depressed.' The line of thought is coherently structured and expressed and there is secure focus on the question throughout.

In terms of analysis and evaluation, the candidate chooses to focus on symbolism, for example the significance of the red hunting hat, called by Holden his 'people shooting hat' in which 'he spends all of his energy denigrating those around him.' Other symbols are considered, such as the ducks, the never-changing 'eskimo' display in the museum and the carousel, where his sister rides around and he sits watching in the rain. The candidate accurately identifies Holden's unrealistic desire to be a 'protector of innocence' and explains how the ending finds him 'finally allowing himself to live in reality.' The analysis of Holden's reaction to the 'eskimo' display: 'he can judge it with the separation of the glass between them while the eskimo cannot judge him' is reasonably detailed. However, at many points the analysis is clear rather than detailed, taking the essay slightly towards the 'clear' category. There is an engaged evaluative stance throughout.

In summary, this essay displays secure knowledge and understanding of the text and a secure focus on the demands of the question: Holden's isolation from those around him. The analysis is at times clear rather than detailed, for example comments on the ducks and the carousel ride in the rain.

The essay sits in the 18-16 'secure' category, edging towards 'clear' in some aspects of analysis. It is placed at the bottom of the 18-16 category with a mark of 16.

Candidate 4

Section 2 – Question 12

Choose a poem which explores an issue of personal or social or moral importance.

With reference to appropriate techniques, discuss how the poet's presentation of this issue enhance your appreciation of the poem as a whole.

The candidate was awarded **17 marks** for this essay.

The candidate has chosen to write about the poem *Exposure* by Wilfred Owen and focuses on an issue of significant moral importance – 'the futility of warfare.'

In terms of knowledge and understanding, the candidate displays secure knowledge of the text throughout. In the essay, there is a discussion of the plight of the soldiers and their meaningless deaths, and detailed textual evidence is provided to highlight the morally unjust nature of war. The struggles which the 'soldiers face in icy, muddy trenches' is conveyed securely by means of a discussion of the cruelty of nature, the endless waiting with nothing happening and the lack of any answer to the repeated question 'What are we doing here?' The candidate never loses sight of Owen's emphasis on the pointlessness of war. There is a concise summary of the day-to-day reality of war as 'boring, draining and deeply stressful.' The candidate makes clear that the traditional view of war as fighting for king, country and God is challenged by the reality of hypothermia and gangrene. These examples demonstrate a secure understanding of the chosen moral issue, 'the futility of warfare.'

In terms of analysis and evaluation, the candidate discusses in detail Owen's use of personification in relation to the weather, with particular reference to the wind which is described as an 'unfeeling, antagonistic and violent force' and the snowflakes that "come feeling" for the soldiers' faces. The candidate discusses the fact that Owen presents the enemy as the second combatant, 'after the weather' to highlight his view on 'the pointlessness of war.' There is also a detailed analysis of Owen's use of metaphors and sibilance mimicking the whizzing of bullets: "sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence." There is an effective discussion, and recognition, of the structural effect of the repeated question: "What are we doing here?" This leads to the candidate's engaged evaluative stance which proposes that, as readers, we should think deeper each time the line appears and consider the morally unjust loss of lives.

In summary, this essay displays secure knowledge and understanding of the text and a secure focus on the demands of the question. The moral importance of war's futility is supported by detailed evidence and detailed analysis of language features.

The essay sits in the 18-16 'secure' category. It is placed in the middle of the 18-16 category and awarded 17 marks.

Candidate 5

Section 2 – Question 14

Choose a film or television drama in which one sequence is effective in creating a particular mood or atmosphere.

With reference to appropriate techniques, explain how this particular mood or atmosphere is created and discuss how this mood or atmosphere adds to your appreciation of the film or television drama as a whole.

The candidate was awarded **13 marks** for this essay.

The candidate has chosen to write about the film *Dunkirk* directed by Christopher Nolan and selects the scene where the ship is torpedoed where tension helps to create a mood of futility.

In terms of knowledge and understanding, the candidate displays clear knowledge of the chosen scene and its importance in the film, and provides, mostly, clear textual evidence throughout. The essay begins prior to this scene to show how tension is built via the use of filmic techniques such as: camera angles, music and 'small details.' There is a clear understanding of the helplessness of the men's situation, as well as foreshadowing of the next sequence. The candidate clearly references the 'Shepherd tone' explaining that the soundtrack is a key element in building tension in the scene. Focussing on 'small details,' the candidate discusses the blood red jam as symbolising bloodshed, and tea representing home.

In terms of analysis and evaluation, the essay then shifts to the scene itself with the metallic grating sound of the torpedo creating discomfort in the audience. The impact is clearly described in terms of filmic technique: camera shake, underwater filming and voices muffled by water are all clearly referenced while the candidate describes the effect on the audience as replicating a breathless feeling and 'emulating the soldiers' panic.' The character of Gibson is seen as the 'saviour' and is linked to lighting with 'the light streaming and men looking up' adding hope to the tension. Commenting on technique, the essay refers to 'eye level' shots to allow the audience 'to think of the everyman struggle.' In the aftermath, the candidate examines contrast: the initially 'united environment,' is now 'hostile' as the lifeboats struggle to save people. The candidate comments adequately that 'the atmosphere has 'flipped' with a much darker and eerier setting. The candidate ends the analysis of the scene with the sounds becoming more subdued as we, the audience, 'are left floating with the men in a state of shock and relief for surviving.' The candidate ends the paragraph with an evaluation of the director's skill, commenting that Nolan achieves 'the perfect emotion... throughout the whole film.'

In summary, the candidate has a clear focus on the question and mostly expresses a clear evaluative stance, but in places the analysis and evaluation dips into adequate, for example when discussing setting.

The essay is placed in 15-13 'clear' category and sits at the lower end of the category. It is awarded 13 marks.

Candidate 6

Section 2 – Question 14

Choose a film or television drama in which one sequence is effective in creating a particular mood or atmosphere.

With reference to appropriate techniques, explain how this particular mood or atmosphere is created and discuss how this mood or atmosphere adds to your appreciation of the film or television drama as a whole.

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

The candidate has chosen to write about the film *The Godfather* directed by Francis Ford Coppola, selecting a sequence which is effective in creating a particular mood or atmosphere.

In terms of knowledge and understanding of the text, the candidate chooses the hospital sequence as one in which there is a tense mood. The candidate states that, from the beginning of the sequence, the audience feels tension and suspense 'as Michael searches for his father' whilst running through the 'vastly empty halls.' From the opening of this essay, the candidate provides a clear context for the 'modern gangster crime drama genre.' There is clear understanding of Michael Corleone's background and how this sequence shows his transition from 'good happy Michael' at the wedding at the beginning of the film to a darker side, when he tells his father, "I'm with you now." Evidence is then provided in the form of a discussion of Michael's skills to highlight his suitability for 'the mafia life.'

In terms of analysis and evaluation, the candidate discusses numerous cinematic techniques with clarity and can link the technique to aspects of Michael's character and the creation of a tense mood. A long shot, combined with low-key lighting 'creates a dark sinister feel' even before he enters the hospital building. The effect of the contrast of the diegetic sound of Michael's 'echoing footsteps' with the 'silence of the hospital' is recognised. The candidate discusses the mise-en-scène of Michael's costume, a civilian suit, being clearly used to indicate his army days have been left behind as evidence for the creation of tension. Commenting further on tension, the candidate describes how it is also developed by means of the diegetic sound of heavy footsteps and an over the shoulder shot, which reveals a 'black mysterious figure.' There is then reference to tension through the symbolic use of non-diegetic music of 'The Godfather Waltz' which clearly shows Michael 'has fully made his transition into the dark side.'

In summary, the candidate has a clear focus on the demands of the question. There is discussion of a range of filmic techniques relevant to the creation of a tense atmosphere in the chosen sequence. There is a clear evaluative stance throughout which, at times, edges into engaged.

The essay sits in the 15-13 'clear' category, and edges towards the 18-16 range at times in terms of evaluative stance. It is placed at the top of the 15-13 category with a mark of 15.