

Commentary on candidate evidence

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

Candidate 1

Section 2 – Question 3

Choose a play involving persuasion or betrayal or delusion.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how this persuasion or betrayal or delusion is presented and discuss how this contributes to your appreciation of the play as a whole.

The candidate was awarded **14 out of 20 marks** for this essay.

The candidate has chosen to write about *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller, with a focus on the play's protagonist, Willy Loman, a character who is suffering from delusion brought about by his pursuit of the American Dream.

In terms of knowledge and understanding of the text, the candidate begins by identifying delusion as Willy Loman's 'weakest flaw' – a flaw which is a consequence of Willy's pursuit of the American Dream and which 'feeds his ... insanity'. The candidate begins by considering how the audience's first impression of Willy as a successful man is quickly overturned. To support this point, the candidate refers to the opening scene where we see Willy's claim that he is successful and "vital in New England" contrasted with his, almost simultaneous, complaint about the difficulty he faces in paying off his mortgage. The candidate then goes on to deal with Linda's role in Willy's downfall, arguing that she is a 'catalyst for his belief in a false reality'. The candidate shows a clear knowledge and engagement with the text noting that, although the audience can feel sympathy for Linda as she 'faces the brunt of Willy's ill temper', her constant reassurance contributes to Willy's 'spiral' of delusion.

In the next section of the essay, the candidate explains clearly how Willy's idolisation of his brother's success in Alaska has driven him into believing that the achievement of success and wealth is the most important thing in life. There is clear discussion of how Willy's ongoing yearning for the opportunities taken by Ben in the past is a source of conflict within the family, affecting his relationship with his sons, Biff and Happy, as he tries to pass on his delusional dreams to them. The candidate uses textual evidence clearly to support the points made about Willy and Biff's fractured relationship, pointing out Willy's contradictory statements about Biff being lazy and his insistence that Biff should get a job as a salesman despite Biff's strong objections. The fact that Willy continues to retain a delusional faith in the American Dream even when this leads to conflict with Biff is offered as evidence that Willy's delusion has led to him trying to 'live vicariously through his eldest son'. Biff is noted as being a stronger character as, unlike his

father and Happy, he 'does not crumble at the feet of the American Dream.' The candidate then sets Biff's 'insight' and 'redemption' against Happy's acceptance of Willy's beliefs, noting that Willy has left a 'legacy' of delusion which emphasises the detrimental effect of the American Dream.

In terms of analysis and evaluation, there is clear analysis of characterisation and conflict, with the candidate discussing the reasons for Willy's delusion and its effect on Linda, Biff, and Happy. There is a discussion of the opening scene of the play and the immediate presentation of Willy as a deluded character who is dissatisfied with his lot in life. The candidate discusses Linda and Willy's relationship, and her inadvertent reinforcement of his self-delusion and pursuit of the American Dream. In considering Willy's admiration for Ben and his yearning for the perceived missed opportunities of the past, the candidate demonstrates a clear understanding of how Willy's outlook on life has been shaped by his delusions and disappointment.

There is a clear evaluative stance with respect to the text and the task as the candidate recognises Willy Loman as a flawed character who is trapped by his delusional view of the world around him. The candidate demonstrates clear knowledge and understanding of the play and supports this with a line of thought which is clearly structured and expressed. At the beginning of the essay, the candidate sets out to deal with how delusion is conveyed by the main character and how the playwright uses this to explore the central concern of the American Dream. The candidate maintains a clear focus on this throughout the essay.

Overall, this piece is firmly placed in the middle of the 15-13 category and is awarded 14 marks.