

# Commentary on candidate evidence

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

## Candidate 2

### Section 2 – Question 10

**Choose a poem which explores loss or injustice or isolation.**

**With reference to appropriate techniques, discuss how the poet's presentation of loss or injustice or isolation enhances your appreciation of the poem as a whole.**

The candidate was awarded **15 out of 20 marks** for this essay.

The candidate has chosen to write about the poem *Death of a Naturalist* by Seamus Heaney with a focus on 'loss of innocence and childhood through the presentation of the boy's transition from joy to disgust'.

In terms of knowledge and understanding of the text, the candidate begins by giving a general overview of the boy's situation and of his initial enthusiasm and curiosity about a flax-dam, especially the presence of tadpoles. This, however, turns to 'terror' when they mature. From the outset the candidate keeps the question clearly in mind, focusing firmly on the innocence of childhood. The boy's delight in the "spotted butterflies" and "dragonflies" helps to establish the naturalist of the title. The description of the early classroom experience with his teacher conveys 'how young and innocent' these children are in the use of the terms "daddy frog" and "mammy frog" and the candidate identifies with this childhood joy. This is followed by a clear discussion of the shift from stanza one to stanza two, when the toads change from "yellow" to "brown" marking the change to come. Structurally, the candidate discusses the great contrast between the first and second stanza. This is highlighted by the poet's use of the words "Then" and "Before". As part of a clear discussion of the loss of childhood innocence, the candidate separates the earlier childhood happiness from the later maturity and ageing.

In terms of analysis and evaluation, the candidate discusses tone, word choice, contrast and symbolism. Individual words such as "delicately" can be seen to symbolise the fragility of childhood, while "gargled" is viewed as foreshadowing the change to come. The candidate discusses the 'childish tone and excitable narrative' of the first stanza to convey the boy's joy in learning about the tadpoles. There is a clear analysis of the change from positive to negative in the second stanza in the use of "rank", "cowdung" and "angry" comparable to the darkening of the boy's demeanour. The candidate compares the ageing of the toads to the growing maturity of the boy, who now views the frogs as a threat. The change in language is also linked to the slower rhythm of the poem and the

lack of excitement which accompany the boy's growing maturity. As a result, there is a clear analysis of the growing terror and loss of childhood innocence which keeps firmly to the question. The conclusion to this essay neatly sums up the much greater significance of the poem than simply a movement from a joy in nature to a perceived threat. The candidate recognises that this transitional period in the boy's life may have involved a loss of innocence, but it has led to a gain in maturity and experience.

Overall, this essay is clear. The candidate stays focused on the question and, on occasion, the response approaches being secure in its knowledge, understanding and detailed in analysis. On balance, it is placed at the top of the 15-13 mark range and is awarded 15 marks.