

Commentary on candidate evidence

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

Candidate 3

Section 2 – Question 5

Choose a novel or short story in which a character could be viewed as flawed and/or vulnerable.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain the nature of the flaws and/or vulnerability and discuss how this contributes to your appreciation of the text as a whole.

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

The candidate has chosen to write about *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger and focuses on the character of Holden Caulfield who can be viewed as vulnerable due to his isolation. The candidate chooses to discuss characterisation, symbolism and key incidents in Holden's 'physical, emotional and spiritual journey to New York City where he reaches his breaking point'.

In terms of knowledge and understanding of the text, the candidate views Holden's isolation as the means by which Salinger explores his flawed nature. There is a clear focus on the question throughout. The first key incident considered is the opening event when Holden is standing apart from the rest of his classmates on Thomson Hill during the football game. Holden's lack of support from his classmates when he was struggling leads to the sense that 'he is a very troubled teenager'. This has caused him to be isolated from those around him, leading to disrespect towards his peers and a constant struggle to communicate socially. The candidate moves on to symbolism in the form of the ducks which for Holden represent 'his fear of change' which 'links back to the death of Allie where his life was changed forever, and he had no control over it'. This allows the candidate to give a clear statement of Holden's terror over the transition to adulthood. To illustrate the significance of key incidents, the candidate then discusses Holden's interaction with a sex worker, whom he hires to have a 'real conversation' in an attempt to communicate with someone. His lack of interest in having sex with her suggests, the candidate further argues, a desire to maintain his innocence. A further key incident chosen is Holden's encounter with Mr Antolini. The candidate uses this incident to show that Holden views events differently to other people 'which might be the route of his flaws'. It is, however, his inability to receive the help and guidance which he needs which causes Holden to have 'a distorted perception of events compared to the average person'. Finally, the candidate, as a fellow teenager, identifies with Holden's struggles and concedes that Holden may be permanently changed by his experiences.

In terms of analysis and evaluation, there is clear analysis of characterisation, symbolism and key incidents. These techniques are used to show the ways in which Holden is presented as a flawed character. The candidate recognises the importance of Holden as a first-person narrator and the difficulties which he faces on his journey to New York. The candidate never loses sight of Holden as a flawed character, and there is a tendency to link the flaw predominantly to his isolation. Throughout the essay the candidate selects appropriate incidents to develop the discussion of Holden's flaws. There is a clear analysis, occasionally bordering on secure, of Holden's problems with change, coping with grief at his brother's death and his view of the adult world, which he regards as corrupt.

There is a clear evaluative stance with respect to the text and the task as the candidate recognises the reasons for Holden's flaws.

Overall, this essay shows clear knowledge and understanding of the novel. Analysis and evaluation is clear, and in places the analysis is more detailed. This piece is placed in the 15-13 mark category and sits at the top end. It is awarded 15 marks.