

Candidate 1

The Great Gatsby

The evidence for this candidate has achieved the following marks for this Course Assessment component.

The candidate was awarded **12 marks** for this Critical Essay.

Question 5

Choose a novel or short story in which there is a moment of significance for one of the characters.

Explain briefly what the significant moment is and discuss, with reference to appropriate techniques, its significance to the text as a whole.

The candidate has chosen 'The Great Gatsby' by F. Scott Fitzgerald, an appropriate text for this question, and has selected the characters' trip to the Plaza Hotel, specifically the confrontation between Tom and Gatsby over Daisy and the significance of this moment for Gatsby as the end of his dream. Adequate knowledge and understanding of this moment are shown from the outset.

Paragraph 1 is a general introduction in which setting, key characters and themes are identified: 'the American Dream, Old Money Vs New Money and Carelessness of the rich'. Paragraph 2 pinpoints the moment of significance and Paragraph 3 begins to describe and comment on this incident, the conflict between Tom and Gatsby, highlighting Tom's attempts to 'tear him down bit by bit'. The erosion of Gatsby is accurately described and linked to the 'Old Money V New Money' theme, Tom representing 'old' money - 'he thinks he deserves the privileges he has because he inherited his money' whereas Gatsby 'will always be separate'. The candidate makes adequate use of textual evidence: a series of quotations of Tom insulting and humiliating Gatsby, each one with a comment relating to the 'old money/new money' theme. This approach of breaking down the incident methodically, of quoting and then explaining each quotation, proceeds throughout the essay in what is a full treatment of the 'significant moment' but which could deal slightly more clearly with the second part of the question, 'discuss... its significance to the text as a whole'. However, through this method, the essay provides adequate textual evidence to support the line of thought, namely that 'The dream Gatsby is fighting for slowly goes away...' under Tom's onslaught.

The candidate identifies the 'turning point' in the conversation, Daisy's inability to 'tell Tom she never loved him' and the focus of the essay shifts to the relationship between Gatsby and Daisy, specifically Gatsby's aim, not just to win her back, but to, in effect, change the past so 'that what happened the last 5 years with Tom did not occur. The candidate accurately identifies Daisy's role, embodying the theme of 'carelessness of the rich' and develops the idea of her unworthiness

to be the object of Gatsby's dream: she 'just floats around...not thinking of her future'; 'not willing to give up her social status and stability for Gatsby'; her awareness of Tom's infidelity 'still isn't enough to get her to leave him' as she 'carelessly strings Gatsby along'. This build-up of textual evidence supports the line of argument that 'Daisy and Gatsby could never be together' and the various evaluative comments on Daisy, Tom and Gatsby reveal an adequate stance with respect to the text and task.

The candidate shows some sensitivity in comments such as 'Gatsby has set himself up for sadness' and awareness that 'the dream...is too great for anybody to become able to achieve it', with the impossibility of this dream implied in 'everything would go back to the way it was before Tom'. The candidate refers to other relevant moments in the novel, for example Gatsby's reaction to Tom and Daisy's child – and there is an attempt here to show the significance of the confrontation in terms of the text as a whole, although the links could be made more clearly. However, again the candidate shows understanding and evaluates the situation accurately in a neat summing up: Gatsby's wealth and glamour 'will never be enough' to make Daisy leave Tom: it 'only makes her regret not waiting' and in the judgement that 'the dream was doomed the minute it began'.

The concluding paragraph presents Gatsby as a positive example of someone who 'tries to keep his dream alive', which slightly moves away from the point of the essay. However, it is an adequate attempt by the candidate to make an evaluative comment.

In conclusion, this is an adequate essay which is very close to clear in terms of knowledge and understanding, textual evidence and (in places) evaluative stance. The focus on the demands of the question is adequate, with a methodical rather than effectively selective treatment of the 'significant moment' and with the 'significance to the text as a whole' not always clear. This aspect keeps the essay in Band 12-10 and it is awarded **12 marks**.