

Candidate 3

A Hanging

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

The candidate was awarded **17 marks** for this Critical Essay.

Question 9

Choose a non-fiction text which made you consider your views about a social or political or ethical issue.

Explain what the issue is and how the writer uses language effectively to engage you.

The candidate has chosen, as a non-fiction text, the essay 'A Hanging' by George Orwell. This is an appropriate selection for Question 9, which focuses on a 'text which made you consider your views about a social or political or ethical issue'.

The candidate's engaged evaluative stance is made clear from the opening paragraph. This is a crisp introduction which mentions the text's setting and content, and identifies what Orwell calls the 'unspeakable wrongness' of capital punishment as the ethical issue which engages the reader.

From Paragraph 2 onwards, the essay proceeds through the stages of the text: the living conditions of the prisoners, description of the prisoner to be hanged, journey to the gallows, including the 'dog' and 'puddle' incidents and the execution itself. Throughout, the candidate shows secure knowledge and understanding of the text with detailed textual evidence used to support a coherent line of thought.

In Paragraph 2, the candidate uses the description of the prisoners' inhumane living conditions, 'like small animal cages ... ten feet by ten...' to illustrate the lack of respect shown them. The connotations of 'caged' are commented on, along with the sense of their impending fate: 'soon to be exactly where the man being executed is today'.

Paragraph 3 concentrates on the prisoner. The argument develops coherently, linking with the previous paragraph: his 'shocking image...' is the 'outcome of the conditions the men have to live in'. The candidate highlights the contrast between the guards' brutality – 'lashed his arms' and the man's helplessness – 'hanging limply'. Orwell's use of language is discussed, for example, 'a puny wisp of a man' – not the kind of 'strong and powerful' image we might expect of a 'man'. The candidate's sympathy – evidence of an engaged evaluative stance – is shown in 'the prisoner is described as not resisting... the guards actions seem unnecessary and violent'.

Paragraph 4 focuses on the episode of the dog, which the candidate correctly identifies as being important in terms of the ethical issue of the death penalty. The dog 'represents life and happiness', incongruous in the execution scene. We see again the secure focus on the question which characterises the response, in the contrast established between the dog's energy and lack of fear with the apathy of the prisoner: 'his lack of care towards what is happening'.

In Paragraph 5 the 'turning point' of the puddle is examined, with the candidate emphasising that this moment illuminates our understanding of 'why this is wrong and Orwell's views on hanging' and effectively highlighting the meaning of the death, through appropriate quotation: 'One mind less. One world less'. The candidate's engaged stance on the 'ethical issue' are shown in the comment on the reader's involvement: 'to think about...whether they believe this loss of life can ever be justified'.

Paragraph 6 beginning, 'When the execution party finally...' has two main elements, both of which involve use of detailed textual evidence. First there is the description of the 'wasteground' execution site: the candidate accurately highlights the powerful vocabulary such as 'tall prickly weeds', continuing the idea of 'lack of respect' towards the prisoners who will die there. There is detailed analysis of the man's death, for example the impact his shouting has on the dog and the guards: the dog retreating 'timorously' into a corner and the bayonets 'wavering'. The candidate points out that Orwell's use of language here effectively engages the sympathy of the reader.

The concluding paragraph concisely sums up the main point of this response and ends on a final comment which again reveals genuine engagement: 'has shown the reader that taking a life can never be justified'.

Overall, this piece shows secure knowledge and understanding of the text, with many examples of textual evidence and analysis of language used to support the coherently structured and expressed line of thought. There is an engaged evaluative stance and a secure focus on the demands of the question. The essay comfortably achieves the criteria of Band 18-16 and is therefore placed in the middle of this Band and awarded **17 marks**.