

Candidate 4

Death of a Naturalist

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

The candidate was awarded **14 marks** for this Critical Essay.

Question 12

Choose a poem which is written in a particular poetic form or which has a particularly effective structure.

Discuss how the poet's use of form or structure contributes to the impact of the poem's central concern(s).

The candidate has selected the text 'Death of a Naturalist' by Seamus Heaney and has chosen to write in response to Question 12. This is an apt choice of text for this question. Of the options within the task part of the question – 'use of form or structure' – the candidate makes evident from the start of this essay that it is the structure of Heaney's poem which is going to be discussed, and the central concerns are identified as the themes of 'childhood and nature'. Clear knowledge and understanding of the poem are demonstrated from the start and there is a clear focus on the demands of the question.

In the second paragraph the candidate correctly states that Heaney's division of the poem into two stanzas gives a 'before and after format. The use of positive and pleasant imagery in the first stanza for the young boy's enjoyment of the 'flax-dam' is introduced to demonstrate the way in which Heaney has captured the speaker's childhood joy in nature in the first half of the poem. Here the candidate is providing clear textual evidence to support the discussion of how Heaney's use of structure has contributed to the impact of the poem's central concerns.

The third paragraph opens with the eighth line of the poem – 'best of all was the warm thick slobber' – to support the candidate's analysis of the boy's adoration of nature. His delight in and affection for the 'slimey creatures' is conveyed, the candidate notes, by using the terms 'mammy' and 'daddy'. The candidate displays a clear evaluative stance in comments such as 'he is anything but disgusted' and 'However, his admiration doesn't last forever'. Structure is again mentioned as key to the central concerns, building to the transitional point where the discussion turns to the second section of the poem.

In order to show the importance of the poem's structure, the candidate spends paragraph 3 focusing on Heaney's use of 'a linking sentence to bridge together the contrasting attitudes held by the boy'. By means of the clear analysis of the sentence involving frogs and foretelling the weather, the candidate is able to discuss the poem's structure as reflecting the boy's change in feeling towards nature from love to hatred. The word choice of 'sun' and 'yellow' in the first half of

the sentence is shown by the candidate to convey positive feelings, while the words 'brown' and 'rain' in the second half of the sentence 'generate opposing emotions'. Again, the candidate adopts a clear evaluative stance by recognising the success of this transition in helping the reader to understand the change in the boy's attitude.

In paragraph 4 the candidate discusses the boy's new-found disgust by analysing the 'negative and sinister' use of military imagery in the words 'Poised like mud grenades'. Clear evidence of the boy's change of heart is provided in the discussion of the distress caused by the 'potential threat' of the frogs, which now create fear in the boy, as they seem likely to launch an explosion. The candidate continues to meet the demands of the question by returning to the before and after format, commenting on how this structure has illustrated childhood moving to adulthood.

The concluding paragraph simply sums up the candidate's evaluation of Heaney's success in structuring his poem to allow the reader to 'identify the change clearly'. Throughout this essay the candidate has displayed a clear knowledge and understanding of the text. To meet the demands of the question the candidate has provided clear textual evidence to support a clearly structured and expressed line of thought. An occasional minor spelling lapse does not detract from the overall impression of this essay. It is placed in the 15-13 range in the middle and is awarded **14 marks**.