

Candidate 8

A Streetcar Named Desire

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

14 marks

Question 2

Choose a play in which there is a scene involving a moment of conflict or of resolution to conflict.

By referring to details of the scene, explain how the dramatist presents this moment and discuss how this contributes to your appreciation of the play as a whole.

The candidate had selected the text 'A Streetcar Named Desire' by Tennessee Williams and has chosen to write in response to Question 2. Both are appropriate selections. In the introductory paragraph, the candidate provides clear contextualisation in order to give a sense of why conflict has arisen between the central characters of Blanche and Stanley. Scene 10, in which Stanley rapes Blanche, is clearly identified as the scene involving conflict.

The candidate helps the reader to understand the reason for the conflict by giving a clear sense of the differences in Stanley's and Blanche's personalities and outlook. Stanley's 'animal joy in his being', which later emerges as part of Williams' theme of reality is set against Blanche's fantasy in her feigned purity and 'soft southern antiquity'. The clash of these two opposing concepts (fantasy and reality) is supported by the candidate's clear textual reference to Stanley's outburst of temper in Scene 10: 'there ain't a goddamn thing but imagination'. In a clear evaluative stance the candidate recognises that the conflict between these two personalities 'adds texture and emotion to the plot'.

The details of Scene 10 are examined more closely from Paragraph 3. The candidate firstly focuses on the 'lurid reflections' which appear on the wall. There is a clear explanation of how these reflections, which 'are only visible to the audience and Blanche', foreshadow Blanche's psychological breakdown and draw us as spectators into her nightmare. Comment on the 'extremely stressful' effect on Blanche is neatly counterbalanced by the candidate's analysis of Stanley's reaction – treating Blanche's instability as though it were a game, meaning that he is emboldened to assault her.

The candidate demonstrates a clear appreciation of the effect of Stanley's behaviour on Blanche. There is an acknowledgement that the conflict moves from Blanche's 'anxiousness' in the previous moments to her 'fear' as Stanley makes the situation more dangerous for her. The candidate provides clear textual evidence from Scene 6 (where Blanche tells Mitch about the death of her husband) to link Williams's motif of the Varsouviana music, associated initially with Blanche's husband's death, to the music's symbolising of Blanche's 'declining mental state' in Scene 10.

The discussion of Williams' use of the blue piano is indicative of the candidate's clear analysis as the piano's 'hectic breakdown' mirrors, in its intensity, what is happening to Blanche's mental state 'as a consequence of Stanley's brutish nature'. The candidate shows a clear awareness of this text as drama in which the conflict does not just affect the fate of the characters on stage but also the emotions of those in the audience.

In the final paragraph the candidate neatly sums up Williams' skill in his use of 'foreshadowing and constant reinforcement' of the conflict between the central characters whose personalities represent the opposing ideas of fantasy and reality. We see here a clear evaluative stance with respect to the text and task.

This is a clearly structured and expressed essay which reveals the candidate's clear knowledge and understanding of the chosen text. The focus has been clearly on the chosen scene – Scene 10 – and on the demands of the question: discussion of the conflict between characters and how this contributes to the candidate's appreciation of the play as a whole. This essay is placed in the 15-13 range and is awarded **14 marks**.