

Candidate 4

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

Lost but not forgotten

The candidate has chosen to write a short story with the title 'Lost but not Forgotten'. This piece has clear creative qualities and attention to purpose and audience. The story focuses on the central character of Jock. We initially see him visiting a World War I cemetery in France searching for the name of a long-lost comrade, Albert Monteith. This leads into the central part of the narrative which takes us back to an incident in WWI when Jock was 'lost in no-man's land'. As he tries to get back to his own lines Jock encounters Albert, a seriously injured fellow soldier. Although Jock attempts to help him back to safety, he eventually has to abandon him, causing Jock to experience great feelings of remorse and guilt. At this point, the story switches back to Jock's visit to the war cemetery and his discovery that Albert's body had been identified and his name placed on the war memorial. This discovery relieves Jock of the burden of guilt which he has carried for so many years.

One of the successful features of this story is the clear structure which enhances its purpose. The candidate chooses an interesting structure whereby the main war story is framed by Jock's visit to the war graves. This shows the candidate's ability to manipulate conventional narrative form with some success.

The opening paragraph focuses on Jock's visit to the war graves in France, something we are told 'he had long dreaded'. As he walks towards the war memorial, the writer clearly describes the scene and adds impact through the extended use of war imagery. The cracks in the monument are described as 'poorly healed battle scars'; the fading lettering as 'continuing their fight together' against erosion. This is successful use of imagery. However, not all of the writing in this paragraph is quite as fluent. For example, the expression 'his wandering eyes frequently became entangled and lost among the maze of lettering' seems less assured. Nonetheless, this is a successful opening paragraph which leads neatly into the central war narrative.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 are set on the battlefield and deal with Jock's attempts to return to his own lines. The writer is clearly attempting to convey both the horror of war and Jock's terror. Much of the description is realistic, quite powerful and clearly engages the reader. For example, in describing the failed advance, the candidate writes 'the air laden with the smell of cordite and the screams of his comrades torn apart by the gunfire and explosions'. The choice of language in paragraph 2 has clear impact in conveying the horrors of war. The candidate is also successful in capturing Jock's terrified state of mind. He does this through a combination of good use of language: 'His heart thumped in his chest, his blood raced through his veins'; imaginative use of imagery: 'he wheezed like an asthmatic child'; and clearly controlled sentence structure: 'He felt like a coward – too scared to move onward, too scared to fight, too scared to die.'

Jock's dilemma is then crystallised when he realises the appalling vulnerability of his situation. Again, there is clear control of structure in the candidate's use of single word sentences: 'If he took a step forward he could be gone forever. Dead. Forgotten.'

In comparison with other sections of the story, Jock's encounter with Albert is less well-handled in places. For example, in paragraph 5, Albert's greeting to Jock: 'Hello Jock . . . am I glad to see you' seems slightly incongruous given the gravity of the situation. Similarly, the description in the sentence beginning 'His thick eyebrows, now obscured in dirt, rose producing large, defined, wrinkles across his filthy forehead. . . ' is less successful.

However, most of the writing in this section as a whole demonstrates the writer's clear creative qualities and grasp of genre. There is the use of the alliteration in the middle of paragraph 8, to convey the extent of Albert's suffering: 'this only served to produce desperate wails and whimpering'. There is a clear attempt in paragraph 9 to vividly convey Jock's inner fears about Albert's dire situation: 'He'd never be found; his body would end up as flesh picked over by the circling crows, eradicated from memory'. And there is the successful use of imagery, in paragraph 10, to convey, in a very graphic manner, the hopelessness of the situation for both men: 'dragging him behind like a slaughtered animal's carcass, he made little progress'.

In the penultimate paragraph, the writer brings the WWI section of the story to a successful conclusion by focusing on Jock's feelings of guilt at being forced to abandon Albert to his fate. There is good use of repetition here to convey Jock's despair: 'Albert would be devoured by no-one's land. No body to remember, no body to grieve, no body to bury'. The candidate also uses imagery to stress the depth of his guilt: 'the realisation of his betrayal infected his thoughts' which brings this section neatly to an end and sets up the return to the war cemetery.

In the final paragraph, the story is brought to its resolution as Jock is released from his burden of guilt. The candidate conveys this release through Jock's recognition and relief that Albert had not died as an unknown soldier. The moment of his release from his guilt is well expressed through the impact of the final two short sentences: 'Albert had been found. He had been remembered.'

In conclusion, this piece demonstrates clear creative qualities and is placed in band 12-10. By using a framing device to add depth and meaning to the main story, the candidate shows a clear awareness of structure used to enhance purpose and meaning. The writer uses language in an interesting way to capture both Jock's inner turmoil, and to develop the theme of the destructive horrors of war. The writer shows a clear grasp of the genre, meets the criteria for band 12-10 very fully and is therefore awarded the **mark of 12** out of 15.