

Candidate 8

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

Let Me Count the Ways

The candidate has chosen to write an imaginative piece, a prose monologue in Scots, spoken by a mysterious figure whose identity become clearer as the piece progresses. The title is taken from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's sonnet, 'How do I love thee? Let me count the ways', which is referenced in the final paragraph. This piece displays strong attention to purpose and strong creative qualities with skilful command of the monologue form: there is a vivid sense of the speaker's personality as he engages the reader in his experiences: rueful yearning combines with genuine awe at the immensity of the universe, punctuated with moments of wry humour. Thematic concerns such as isolation, the transitory nature of life and the importance of love are developed in an understated and effective way. The writer has used Scots to create a sense of immediacy and a quality of 'everyman' in the speaker, which contrasts effectively with his role as wonderer though the stars, a mystical 'man in the moon', gazing down on earth.

The piece opens with a direct address to the reader, 'How many birds in a flock? Mair than ye kin count!' The speaker then teases the reader, drawing us into the mystery of his role and identity: ' .never wance huv Ah caught a single fish...When Ah fish, Ah fish tae catch the stars...'

There follows the memories of the speaker's enjoyment of the world in the past: the candidate uses language skilfully to create an atmosphere of life, energy and youth. Examples include the build-up of short sentences: 'Aw the sounds o'creation. It wis marvellous'; repetition: 'Ah remember...Ah could hear...Ah wid dance...' building up to the climax of 'Ah wis marvellous! and vibrant expression such as 'tastin' the lightning and spittin' oot aw the thunder'. This is contrasted with the speaker's current state of age and infirmity: 'constant creakin' noise every time Ah move', 'ma creased eyes' and 'the remains of whit used tae be ma nicest suit'. The rueful acceptance of his own frailty leads on to the assertion that, nonetheless, he will 'be aroon fir the solemn day whaur' the world 'jist ceases tae exist'. The combination of humour and seriousness recurs throughout the piece and is one of its strengths.

The reference to 'this braw shield ae light' (paragraph 5) and 'ma crescent perch' (paragraph 7) reveal that the speaker is on, or represents the moon and there follows a particularly lyrical exhortation to the reader to embrace and appreciate the immensity of the universe around us, for example 'how the blackness ae night transforms ...intae the most mesmerising blue' and 'how silver wind swirls itself aroon' the vast amount ae space'. The speaker presents the metaphysical conceit of night as both safety and danger: 'ye cin wrap yerself up intae a cocoon ae night's embrace...ye will never be mair exposed tae anything then when draped ain its dark blanket'.

This is followed by the anti-climactic, humorous account of the Apollo moon landing, with blunt description, for example 'stuck a pole' and 'Numpties' providing a marked contrast with the earlier, 'poetic' use of language. The candidate returns to a more serious style with the summary of the speaker's condition in a simple and effective 'rule of three': 'Solitary, sad and lonely' and in the celebration of the 'glorious imperfections' which he shares with the moon: 'Ah wis tarnished, craters and holes blemished ma already crumpled skin'.

The speaker describes finding love when he encountered the sun: when describing the transforming impact she had on him, his language is characterised by images of colour, brightness and joy: 'the mother of light wis illuminating her warmth an' embracing all in it', '...she wis radiant!', 'ma heart burst intae fiery red flames', 'sublime orange blaze', 'Sunlight poured from her veins'. However, the poignant and transitory nature of this happiness, as she cannot stay with him for long, is emphasised through the speaker's grief and hope, effectively conveyed in simple, powerful language: 'Some days Ah almost gave up...' yet 'Ah wid never feel the darkness ae night again. No' in the same way'.

The final paragraphs return to the task of fishing for stars, mentioned in the opening, and the speaker reveals the purpose of this: it is a pledge, with his loved one, to transform the night sky with light, to "make the face o' night so fine, that aw the world will fa' in love wae it". We learn that this "covenant" is what now gives the speaker's existence hope and meaning, counteracting any features of aging, alluded to earlier. There is a final contrast between the despair of the moon who "still cries" and the stars "who forget tae shine sae bright" with the speaker's patient optimism as he waits for their reunion "where your world will gaze in wonder at our harmonious eclipse". The speaker ends with a reference to loving "Fir all eternity...", an effective climax which leaves the reader pondering on the nature of time, isolation and love.

In conclusion, this piece demonstrates strong creative qualities and skilful command of the monologue genre throughout, with the creation of a persona whose character, thoughts and emotions are conveyed vividly to the reader through confident and varied expression. The use of Scots is effective in enhancing the realism of the speaker as a personality and it is used to lyrical and comical effect. The structure enhances meaning: the piece begins by intriguing the reader, there is the development of the persona and the turning point when he finds love; and we return to the 'fishing' idea at the end. Thematic content is developed subtly and thoughtfully. This monologue achieves the criteria for Band 15-13 and is awarded **15 marks**.