

Candidate A – Annotated evidence

In response to SQA 2021 critical reading assessment, question 4:

Choose a novel or short story or work of non-fiction which deals with an important human issue.

By referring to important techniques, explain how the writer explores this important human issue.

John Steinbeck's novella "Of Mice and Men" based in California during the 1930s. The story follows two migrant workers called Lennie Small and George Milton on their journey starting work on a Ranch in Soledad. The story shows what it is like for the ranch workers during the great depression. In this essay I will be exploring the theme of loneliness through characterisation, setting and key incident. I will do this through the characters Crooks, Candy, Curly's wife, and George.

Candidate states intention of 'exploring theme of loneliness.' This is relevant to key words of the question 'an important human issue.' Candidate sticks to this stated intention throughout essay.

Steinbeck uses the theme of loneliness through setting. When Crooks says "I ain't wanted in the bunk house and you ain't wanted in my room," Steinbeck uses setting to show how isolated Crooks is, because Crooks is black he is not allowed in the main bunk house and is left on his own room away from everyone else. When Lennie enters Crooks' room straight away he is confused on why he is in his room but later on in the same conversation Crooks starts to pick on Lennie because he can get to him because Lennie is mentally incompetent.

An awareness of writer's techniques (13-10) shown in this paragraph on setting. Doesn't go beyond an awareness.

Steinbeck explores the theme of loneliness using characterisation. George and Lennie are the only two main characters in the novella to have a genuine meaningful relationship. This is shown when George says, "guys like us that work on ranches are the loneliest guys in the world...they don't belong no place, with us it ain't like that." This shows the true friendship Lennie and George have "with us it ain't like that" shows that they aren't like all the other ranch workers who only have themselves because they have each other to look out for. This helps show just how lonely the other characters in the novella are.

Some understanding of central concerns (13-10) shown in this paragraph.

Some appropriate quotation (13-10) here. Some explanation.

John Steinbeck uses key incident in "Of Mice and Men" when Curly's wife says to Lennie "I never get to talk to nobody, I get awfully lonely" Curly's wife says this to Lennie when they are in the barn together talking and Curly's wife begins to flirt with Lennie. This is the only way Curly's wife feels she can get attention by flirting and making herself look beautiful but the men will not bat an eye because they are scared of Curly so they ignore Curly's wife and call her names like "tart, slag and slut." Curly's wife takes advantage of the fact Lennie is mentally incompetent and she flirts and can get some attention out of Lennie so she tests the boundaries and this eventually leads to Lennie killing her. When he is stroking her hair he is so unaware of his strength that when she asks him to stop he grips tighter then resulting in her neck snapping, this foreshadows the incident in the last place George and Lennie worked in and had to run away from when Lennie grabbed a woman's soft silky dress and never let go and when the lady panicked he held tighter. This resulted in him having to flee because the woman said he raped her.

Some appropriate quotation (13-10). Awareness of characterisation in discussion of Curly's wife.

An awareness of writer's techniques (13-10) in this comment on foreshadowing (albeit the candidate places the incidents in the wrong order).

In conclusion John Steinbeck's novella "Of Mice and Men" explores the theme of loneliness through the features of characterisation, setting and key incident. I think as readers we can relate to the characters in the novel. I do agree that some of the issues still are around to this day.

Brief commentary of what has been gained from the text (9-5).

Candidate B – Annotated evidence

In response to SQA 2021 critical reading assessment, question 3:

Choose a novel or short story or work of non-fiction which contains a memorable character.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain why this character is memorable.

“Lord of the Flies” by William Golding is a novel which is about a group of boys who plane crashed on an island and needs to survive.

Unfortunately some of the boys don't get along. Jack targets Piggy the majority of the time because of his appearance. Piggy is treated like an outsider and it makes you feel bad for him. Golding makes it very clear that Piggy's different from the rest.

Good understanding of the central concerns of the text (17-14).

Piggy may be stranger looking to the boys but he's quite realistic and intelligent. To try and get rescued Ralph has asked Jack to keep a fire going, conch burnt out as Jack and the hunters tried to kill a pig. Ralph help a meeting when they returned to explain what happened, Piggy kept trying to give ideas to help keep the fire going but nobody listened. When everybody had the feast after the meeting Ralph realised Piggy may be useful. “Pigy, is no chief, but Piggy for all his ludicrous body has brains.” Piggy remains of this idea that he thinks and plans ahead, buy no-one ever listens because people thinks he's stupid because of his looks. Piggy often gets left out, and his one chance to speak is through the conch, during an assembly mass hysteria broke out and nobody was listening, to calm things down Piggy tries to talk about the next plans and his opinions. Jack, like usual, made Piggy the brunt of his jokes and started laughing and bullying him. Piggy's safety net is the conch, where he believes the conch is the only thing protecting him and making others realise he's there. “I got the conch, let me speak!” This reinforces the idea that Piggy feels safe, and he holds on to it, because if he doesn't, he fears of the disasters that could come. Piggy wants fairness, and democracy, unlike Jack who wants to rule and have fun.

Appropriate references to text (17-14).

Detailed explanation of characterisation supported by appropriate references (17-14).

Right away, Piggy knows he's an outsider, he knows he'll get picked on, because it's happened to him before. During the very first time Ralph and Piggy meet Piggy asks Ralph to call him what he used to be called. Ralph finds out his old name and laughs, calling him it. Piggy feels ashamed and upset that already he's being bullied again. “As long as you don't call me what you what I used to be called.... Piggy”

Appropriate references/quotation (17-14).

Unfortunately, Piggy has to listen to everyone calling him this, as nobody cares what his real name is, the boys don't care about him they're happy they have someone to laugh at and mock. Piggy knows he's different, he knows who can hurt him, which is why the first encounter with Jack, Piggy was like a sheep and backed away from him. He know exactly what type of person Jack would be. "Piggy was scared of this uniformed superiority. He shrank to the other side of Jack." Just like today, people fear others that look intimidating. Piggy represents these people, people who've been bullied. He doesn't want Jack to even notice him, because he is positive he will be judged and hurt because of his physical appearance.

Throughout, Piggy is left, cut out, an outsider, and is unwanted, the only thing that protected him and felt safe with it was the conch. Eventually Jack separates from everyone, and the boys that wanted fun, not rules followed him, the rest stayed with Ralph. Ralph and Piggy goes to the other side of the island to Jack's tribe to try and steal Piggy's specs back to light a fire. Ralph was carrying the conch there but Piggy Wanted it, to show Jack they have safety and that they have democracy. "Give me the conch Ralph, I'll show him one thing he doesn't have." This brings out the naivety of Piggy, as he thinks Jack cares for the conch but he doesn't, he doesn't care about rules or democracy, he wanted dictatorship, but Piggy never knew when Jack sees Ralph and Piggy he's set a deadly trap. Jack was so obsessed with killing he set up a bolder target to fall and kill Piggy. He commanded Roger to pull the stick from below, as Piggy didn't know, it was his last day alive. With a grazing blow from chin to knee; the conch shattered into thousands of white and ceased to exist." Piggy and the conch both destroyed, resembling no more democracy. Piggy and everything he believed in and made him feel safe, both were gone, leaving nothing but Piggy's lifeless banged up body behind. This also shows that bullies don't care as long as they've had their fun.

Golding really develops the reader's sympathy for Piggy, where the only emotion towards him is sympathy. Piggy resembles many things hope, democracy, logic and bully victims, but also shows that in today's society, people care and judge from the outside appearance, not the inside. Golding made this character seem real, and emotionally attached because of his techniques.

Detailed explanation of Piggy's character (17-14).

Good understanding of the central concerns of the text (17-14).

Sense of candidate's involvement with text is clear here in a reasonably developed commentary of what has been gained from the text (17-14).

Good understanding of central concerns of text (17-14).

Line of thought relevant to task throughout essay (17-14).

Candidate C – Annotated evidence

In response to SQA 2021 critical reading assessment, question 4:

Choose a novel or short story or work of non-fiction which deals with an important human issue.

By referring to important techniques, explain how the writer explores this important human issue.

“The Solution” by Donna Baker is a short story that tells us about a married couple with a horrible husband that treats his wife like trash, this story goes on to talk about important human issues of abuse and problems in a relationship and how she isn’t treated like a normal person. As the story goes on we find out how cruel and controlling the husband, Brian, is to his wife, Peggy.

Some understanding of the central concerns of the text (13-10).

We first see an example of Brian being a controlling husband when Peggy is telling him what they are going to be having for dinner, she gives him a whole list of things that would be in the food but Brian isn’t having it and he starts off with telling Peggy that he is “not a big fan of herbs, you know” hinting that she should take out the herbs from the meals and making it to his liking. This isn’t just it, he also tells Peggy that he doesn’t like the cabbage and that she should take it out of the meal, by this point Brian has changed the meal so that it is suiting him best. Although how subtle the changes were to the meal we still see that sign of him being controlling since he never thought about if Peggy would want it removed or that if that was fine with here removing, he also didn’t even let her contest the choice that he had made.

Appropriate quotation (13-10).

An awareness of the writer’s techniques – characterisation (13-10).

Another time we see the theme of Brian being controlling is when Peggy is standing outside a window browsing, Peggy peers into the window and sees an amazing dress that she would love to wear because she thinks it would look nice on her. Even being on her own Brian has plagued her free will to buy or do what she want because she starts to think to herself that “Brian wouldn’t like that”. This is referring how Brian has moulded her into thinking about him before she thinks for herself, this is a bad thing for Peggy because it not only afflicts her freewill but it also shows to us that Brian must have said something to her before because she wouldn’t worry about what she’s wearing if Brian wouldn’t have commented on what she was wearing and maybe told her to wear something that he liked and that might have never changed between them. This was a big point that shows us how bad Peggy has got it between Brian and how she is struggling to have her own choices in life.

Some understanding of the central concerns of the text (13-10).

Good understanding of the central concerns of the text (17-14). Stronger understanding shown here, along with a sound awareness of characterisation (17-14). Unfortunately, not sustained throughout essay.

Some commentary of what has been gained from the text (13-10).

Next we see the complete cruelty that Brian serves to Peggy and how she isn’t allowed a choice. At the point in the story when Peggy meets her old friend Di we see how good Di’s life is, they go to pick up Di’s kids and she asks Peggy if she has any kids, this moment is a key to Peggy working up the hate for Brian because it tells us that she doesn’t have any but in her head she thinks “Brian had never said why he didn’t want a family”.

We find this to be cruel because they are a married couple, Peggy has her right to protest about wanting kids but Brian just shoots her down by not even telling her why he does not want kids and just denying her from even opposing the idea of a family. This is one of the cruellest things Brian does in the story, as a married couple both people should have equal choices of what they want to do and have the middle ground to argue why they want to do what they want but as we see Brian doesn't care, he ignores her and refuses to give her reason why he doesn't want to have a family.

Some commentary of what has been gained from the text (13-10).

Detailed explanation of Brian's character (17-14).

The last Cruel thing we see Brian do in the story before Peggy gets her revenge is when Di and Peggy are at her house and is dawns on Peggy what time it is, she starts to freak out that she is going to miss the phone call that Brian has with her every time she is at work. Di starts to worry that Peggy is having problems at home with Brian but Peggy stutters to Di saying that "Its fine." But it isn't fine. She knows if she misses that phone call from Brian he's going to be mad that she missed it. The problem with that is that couples should be like this Peggy doesn't have to Answer to every move that Brian wants too she should have he own liberty to talk to her friends or hang out with friends without needing to be checked up on by Brian, This concludes with Peggy missing the phone call and Brian bringing it up, She explains top him that she was out with the old friend Di but Brian shrugs that off and implies that Di is a bad influence on Peggy and it stops her from getting her duties done in time for him.

A narrative description rather than precise analysis.

In conclusion Brian has been portrayed as a very cruel and controlling person and we should see this is an issue because Peggy being married to Brian she is bound to having this abuse daily, no one should ever take on the manipulations that Brian expressed on doing because it's not right, the suffering that Peggy went through will most likely take a toll on her mental health and make her still feel anxious about her free will even though Brian died. Peggy should not have been treated as if she was an animal under Brian's drive for being dominant.

A line of thought that is relevant to the task (17-14).

Some familiarity with the text as a whole (13-10).