

Commentary on candidate evidence

The evidence for this candidate has achieved the following marks for each question of the question paper.

Candidate 1

Section 2 – Question 3

Choose a novel or short story or work of non-fiction in which there is a character for whom you feel sympathy.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the writer creates sympathy for this character.

The candidate was awarded **13 marks** for this essay.

Summary

The candidate has chosen to answer question 3 from the prose section, using *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson for their response.

In the introductory paragraph, the candidate identifies the character – Tessie Hutchison – that they will focus on, stating that ‘the character chosen for the brutal murder is Tessie Hutchison the character for whom I feel sympathy for’. The candidate explains the context for Tessie’s selection: ‘Each year in the town the lottery is held in tradition, the tradition of the lottery ends in one person being selected to be stoned to death.’ The candidate’s choice of character here is therefore appropriate for the question.

Understanding/relevance

The candidate has shown familiarity with the text as a whole. The candidate begins by offering an overview of the story, explaining the mechanism of the lottery itself, which ‘takes place in a nameless American town’. The candidate gives further details of the central plot event of the lottery throughout the response, for example:

‘The slips of paper are drawn and the Hutchison family are the ones chosen to be the family that has to draw again...’

There is some understanding of the central concerns of the text, but this is seen mostly towards the end of the response. The candidate refers to Tessie’s ‘tragic fate,’ and lists themes of ‘tradition and Human nature/evil’, but these are not explained; therefore ‘some understanding of the central concerns’ would be a valid judgement here, rather than a ‘good understanding of the central concerns.’

The candidate’s line of thought is relevant to the task throughout, but, at times, it could be said to be ‘mostly relevant to the task’ because the candidate does rely quite heavily on a re-telling of the plot, for example: ‘When Tessie arrives to the lottery she greets the other ladys...’ and ‘The slips of paper are drawn’. However,

there is constant reference to the question, and the candidate sticks mostly to the focus of the question: why they have sympathy for Tessie.

Analysis/evaluation

There is an awareness of the writer's techniques, with the focus here mainly on characterisation. For example, on page 1 of the response, the candidate states that Tessie 'shows a disregard for the lottery from the very start of the short story' and that she 'dislikes the tradition and does not want to take part'. On page 2 of the response, the candidate develops their analysis of Tessie by stating she is 'oblivious of the horrific fate that lies ahead of her' adding the evaluative statement that 'I feel sympathy for Tessie here.'

More evaluation is shown after further analysis of Tessie's character and her 'realisation' that she could be the chosen one on page 2, when the candidate offers some commentary on what they have taken from the text:

'I feel sympathy for Tessie here as her desperate attempt to save herself was so sad it makes me feel sorry for her' (page 3).

There is awareness of irony on page 3 of the response where the candidate comments on Tessie's children being complicit in the ritual and that 'the children she brought to life are the ones helping to take hers'. This awareness is shown more implicitly on page 4 where the candidate observes that Tessie 'had no objections to the ritual until she was the chosen one.'

The candidate makes a reasonably developed commentary of what has been gained from the text. At the top of page 2, the candidate reflects on what might have happened had 'Tessie never rushed to the town square for the ritual to begin'. The candidate offers the thought: 'would she still be alive?'

Structure/accuracy

The candidate uses language to communicate a line of thought at first reading. Spelling, grammar, sentence structure and punctuation are sufficiently accurate, and the essay is structured in an appropriate way.

Overall

Considering the response as a whole, the candidate demonstrates familiarity with the text as a whole (17-14 mark range), but only some understanding of the central concerns (13-10 mark range). The candidate shows an awareness of the writer's techniques (mostly characterisation and plot), again from the 13-10 mark range. Within this aspect, there is an explanation of stylistic devices (character and plot, as above), rather than a 'detailed explanation of stylistic devices.' Similarly, there is some commentary of what has been gained from the text and some appropriate references to the text (once again from the 13-10 mark range). As the response can be described mostly by the 13-10 mark range, but there are some indications of the 17-14 mark range, it is placed at the top of the 13-10 range and is awarded **13 marks**.

Candidate 2

Section 2 – Question 8

Choose a film or TV drama which contains a memorable character.

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

The candidate was awarded **16 marks** for this essay.

Summary

The candidate has chosen to answer question 8 using the film *Gladiator*, directed by Ridley Scott. The candidate begins the essay by stating that the focus of the response will be on ‘the protagonist, Maximus, on his journey to free Rome as Emperor Marcus Aurelius asked him, and at the same time get revenge on the Antagonist, Commodus, for killing his family.’ This opening statement is relevant to the question, and this relevance is sustained throughout. In terms of analysis, the response covers the techniques of iconography, camera angles, dialogue, symbolism, music and sound.

Understanding/relevance

The candidate has shown familiarity with the text as a whole and demonstrates a good understanding of the central concerns of the text. For example, on page 1 of the response, the candidate considers the final scene where:

‘Maximus is shown in the crucifix position ...Commodus, who is wearing off white, stabs Maximus in the side and kisses his cheek. This clip echoes the crucifixion story in the bible and compares Maximus to Christ and Commodus to the antichrist.’

The candidate comments that ‘this helps to make Maximus a memorable character as most people know the story of Christ, and are interested to see how else he parallel’s Christs story ...’ (page 1). Here, a good understanding of central concerns is shown.

The candidate continues the essay with a line of thought that is relevant to the task. For example, on page 2 of the response, the candidate discusses the opening scene of the film and highlights the positive relationships that Maximus has which make him memorable:

‘(Maximus is seen) walking through his men as they all bow to him out of respect, this shows us how well known and respected Maximus is as a soldier and general.’

The candidate makes the relevant observation that ‘This helps to make Maximus a memorable character as we see how loved and respected Maximus is’ (page 2).

On page 3 of the response, the candidate comments on the physical connection that Maximus has with the land and the symbolic importance of 'washing' himself with dirt before battle:

'...he picks up dirt and rubs it through his hands in a washing motion, which symbolises how he is cleansing himself before he spills blood.'

On page 4 of the response the candidate states that '...Maximus has a special song called Elysium, which symbolises his family and home.' This comment conveys a good understanding of both the text and its central concerns.

Analysis/evaluation

There is sound awareness of techniques with the candidate referring to several film and media techniques. The candidate begins by referring to 'iconography' with comments (noted above) comparing the portrayal of Maximus with that of Christ. The candidate then goes on to deal with 'camera angles,' with a detailed explanation of a 'point of view shot' which 'helps to make Maximus a memorable character as we see how loved and respected Maximus is' (page 2).

The candidate then deals with dialogue, quoting Maximus responding to a suggestion that he should 'give up': "Would you, would I?" (page 2). The candidate explains: 'This shows how determined Maximus is to win and how he is devoted and unwilling to give up' (page 2).

Throughout the response, the candidate makes good use of critical terminology which is supported by appropriate references and/or quotation. This is seen, for example, on page 4 of the response where the candidate discusses the use of 'music/sound.' The candidate observes that the 'special song Elysium ...is played every time Maximus is thinking of his home.'

There is a reasonably developed commentary of what has been gained from the text, for example the candidate states:

'This makes us admire Maximus and makes him a memorable character to us due to how much we come to admire his strong will' (pages 2 and 3).

Structure/accuracy

The candidate communicates a clear line of thought at first reading and uses spelling, grammar and punctuation which is mainly accurate.

Overall

The candidate displays familiarity with the text as a whole. There is a good understanding of the central concerns of the text, and the line of thought is relevant throughout. The candidate makes good use of critical terminology, and there is detailed explanation of some appropriate techniques. The response can be described by all of the statements in the 17-14 mark range, and this would place it in the middle of range. Because of the strength of its relevance, it is placed in the upper half of the marks available in this range and awarded **16 marks**.

Candidate 3

Section 2 – Question 1

Choose a play which explores a theme that interests you.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the theme is explored.

The candidate was awarded **20 marks** for this essay.

Summary

The candidate has chosen to answer this question using *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, focusing on the use of stage directions, prose inserts, symbolism and characterisation to explore the theme of reputation.

Understanding/relevance

The candidate has shown a high degree of familiarity with the text and a very good understanding of the central concerns of the text. Key scenes are selected to highlight the theme of reputation, for example, the dialogue between Proctor and Abigail at Betty's bedside, which reveals his inner turmoil at leaving Abigail (on page 3 of the response).

The candidate's discussion of Act 2 (on page 4 of the response) explores the impact of the affair on Proctor's relationship with his wife, Elizabeth. The candidate correctly identifies tension ('The question Proctor asks his wife creates a tense and uncomfortable tone for the rest of their conversation') and observes that this 'foreshadows the actual judgement he will face later in the play' (page 5 of the response).

The candidate goes on to discuss how Act 3 contains a key moment for Proctor in terms of reputation:

'Proctor is aware that by going to court he is risking his reputation as Abigail may expose their affair' (page 6).

The candidate goes on to show a very good understanding of the central concerns of the text by adding:

'The fact that he will still go suggests a certain nobility of character in him, which is important in considering him as a tragic hero' (page 6).

Further very good understanding of central concerns is demonstrated on page 8:

"The Crucible" continues to warn people of the dangers of allowing paranoia and prejudice to corrupt our communities' (page 8).

Analysis/evaluation

The candidate demonstrates a thorough awareness of techniques, through very detailed explication of stylistic devices such as stage directions, symbolism, hyperbole and characterisation.

The candidate has provided a well-developed commentary of what has been gained from the text, supported by a range of well-chosen references to its features, such as the analysis of the prose insert and its impact on the characterisation of John Proctor ‘before he walks on stage for the first time’ (page 2):

‘Immediately, Proctor’s characterisation is implied and imperatively his inner conflict. Proctor is a man like many others in the play; he takes great pride in his reputation and wants it to highlight him as an upstanding and ethical Christian. Despite this, we soon find that he has behaved adversely against his beliefs ...’

The analysis of the dialogue on page 3 – on Proctor’s pledge to “cut off my hand” – effectively explores word choice, hyperbole and characterisation.

The candidate focuses successfully on well-chosen references from the text. For example, at the foot of page 5 and on to page 6 the candidate refers to Proctor’s reaction to the arrest of Elizabeth:

“You will tell the court what you know ...we will slide together into our pit...” (page 6)

The candidate examines this speech closely, noting that ‘they are damning themselves by going to court; “pits” has connotations of Hell, darkness and pain’ (page 6 of the response).

The candidate later goes on to offer a thoughtful analysis of stage directions:

‘The stage directions connote his violence, suggesting that his affection for Abigail has turned to hatred’ (page 6).

Structure/accuracy

The candidate’s line of thought is communicated very clearly. The structure employed effectively enhances meaning and purpose, for example: the first paragraph deals with Proctor’s pride in his reputation and his guilt at going against his morality; paragraph two discusses his shame about his affair with Abigail; and paragraph three deals with his relationship with Elizabeth. Paragraphing is accurate and effective.

Overall

This is a thorough, well-constructed and consistently relevant response which clearly satisfies all aspects of the 20-18 mark range. It is awarded **20 marks**.