

# Commentary on candidate evidence

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

## Candidate 1

### Question 4

**Choose a novel or short story or work of non-fiction in which there is a memorable character. By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the writer makes this character memorable.**

The candidate was awarded **11 marks**.

#### Summary

The candidate has chosen to answer question 4 from the prose section, using 'At the Bar', by William McIlvanney for their response. In a brief introductory paragraph, the candidate states that the story contains 'a memorable character.' In the paragraph that follows, the candidate expands a little by saying that the story 'starts with an unusual man walking into the bar where he wasn't recognised.' For the remainder of the essay, the candidate focuses their response on this character, giving an account that is mostly relevant to the question but overall the essay is heavily narrative based.

#### Understanding/relevance

The candidate has shown some familiarity with the text as a whole. There is some understanding of the central concerns of the text, with references to the big man and 'suspicions' that he is a 'mysterious man ... maybe fresh out of jail' (pages 1-2 of the

candidate response). The candidate observes that the big man 'actually is quite calm' until the end when he 'turned for the worst' (page 1).

To conclude the essay the candidate sums up their understanding with the comment:

'I think the big man is a really memorable character as he was very calm and eased at the start but showed his true colours towards the man in denim'.

Throughout the essay the candidate maintains a line of thought which is mostly relevant to the task of explaining why the main character is memorable.

### **Analysis/evaluation**

There is an awareness of the more obvious techniques, mostly characterisation and plot. The candidate describes the main character as looking 'rather intimidating and pale,' quoting an appropriate reference from the text:

"his pallor suggested he was kept out of light" (page 1 of the candidate response).

Further explanation of characterisation is made when the candidate refers to the barman's perceptions of the 'big man':

'the bar man has the suspicions that this mysterious man is maybe fresh out of jail. Although the barman felt slightly intimidated he served the man' (page 2 of the candidate response).

An awareness of setting and plot is shown in the candidate's comment that:

'This is a reference to an old western films where there would be a stand of scene before the battle' (page 3).

There is some commentary of what has been gained from the text, supported by some appropriate references. For example, on page 2 of the response, the candidate refers to 'a character you just feel sorry for' and, on page 2, they mention the new character of the man in denim, 'a very annoying one'. On page 4 of the candidate's response, the candidate comments on the reader's perception of the 'big man' at this point in the story: 'This makes you really think about how judged the big man was'.

### **Structure/accuracy**

The candidate uses language to communicate a line of thought. Overall, the piece is sufficiently technically accurate.

### **Overall**

The candidate displays some familiarity with the text as a whole, showing some understanding of the central concerns: it is a story about a man who 'was very calm and eased at the start but showed his true colours' (page 5). Analysis is not a strength of the piece: there is some awareness of the more obvious techniques (plot and characterisation) but it is more description than explanation. There is some commentary of what has been gained from the text.

Because of the limited nature and scope of the candidate's analysis, this piece has been judged to sit in the lower half of the 13-10 mark range and has been awarded **11 marks**. It is lifted above 10 marks by the reasonable level of engagement present in the response.

## Candidate 2

### Question 4

**Choose a novel or short story or work of non-fiction in which there is a memorable character. By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the writer makes this character memorable.**

The candidate was awarded **14 marks**.

#### Summary

The candidate has chosen to answer question 4 from the prose section, using 'The Pedestrian' by Ray Bradbury for their response. The candidate focuses on Leonard Mead as a memorable character.

#### Understanding/relevance

The candidate has shown familiarity with the text as a whole. The candidate begins by offering an overview of how the story's futuristic, technological setting impacts on the character of Mead. Repeated reference is made to the 'silence' of the city (page 1) and how Mead seems 'different and strange' (page 2). The candidate demonstrates good understanding of the central concerns through comments such as 'Bradburys dark dystopian future' (page 1).

The candidate maintains a relevant line of thought showing understanding of Mead's isolation and how 'we feel sympathy for him' as he is lonely (page 2).

Midway through the essay, the candidate makes reference to Mead's encounter with the police car. The candidate shows good understanding of central concerns in the comment:

'he (Mead) is in danger of losing his humanity too in the hands of state authority' (page 3).

In the conclusion of the response the candidate again shows relevant understanding of the character of Mead: 'how he stands out and is very different to others' (page 5), and of Mead's importance to the central concerns of the text: '(Mead) has not been pulled into the dangers of technology as everyone else has ...' (page 5).

### **Analysis/evaluation**

There is sound awareness of some of the writer's techniques in this essay.

References to the story's setting in the 'dystopian future' are made on pages 1 and 5, and how this is related to characterisation:

'This shows that Mead is clearly the only one not addicted to technology and is the odd one out in this society' (page 1).

There is some detailed explanation of characterisation when the candidate analyses the reference:

'To enter out into the silence that was the city at eight o'clock....to step over grasses seams make your way, hands in pockets that is what Mr Leonard Mead most dearly loved to do.'

As commentary on the above the candidate observes:

'The word choice of "dearly loved" emphasises how it is his decision to do something he is passionate about. The fact that that Mead likes to do his own thing and not talk to anyone is different and strange but we feel sympathy for him... ' (page 2).

Here, detailed explanation of stylistic devices are supported by appropriate quotation.

The candidate identifies the turning point of the story as the encounter with the police car (page 3). Reference is made to the 'moth' image but it is not explored in any detail. The candidate does, however, go on to offer some detailed commentary on Bradbury's use of the phrase 'I guess' (page 4), suggesting that 'Mead is confused and doesn't understand' (page 4).

Throughout the essay, the candidate provides some commentary on what has been gained from the text with repeated mention of the sympathy felt by the reader for a confused and isolated character, for example 'we feel emotion and sympathy for him in this society' (page 4).

### **Structure/accuracy**

The candidate uses language to communicate a line of thought at first reading. However, the language can only be described as sufficiently accurate as there are some spelling errors.

### **Overall**

The essay can be described mostly by the indicators of the 17-14 mark range: a good understanding of the central concerns, familiarity with the text as a whole and detailed explanation of some of the writer's techniques. However, there are some aspects of the essay that are best described by the 13-10 range: at times the analysis is more 'an explanation of stylistic devices,' rather than a 'detailed explanation'; technical accuracy is 'sufficiently accurate' and not 'mainly accurate.' For these reasons the piece was placed at the bottom of the 17-14 range and awarded **14 marks**.

## Candidate 3

### Question 7

**Choose a scene or sequence from a film or TV drama which is funny or powerful or contains suspense. By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how this effect is created.**

The candidate was awarded **17 marks**.

#### Summary

The candidate has chosen to answer question 7 from the Film and TV Drama section, using 'JoJo Rabbit' directed by Taika Waititi, for their response. The candidate focuses on the powerful opening scene, stating that it deals with 'difficult topics such as propaganda and indoctrination whilst still being light-hearted and comedic' (page 1).

#### Understanding/relevance

The candidate has shown familiarity with the chosen scene, noting on page 1 that 'JoJo is getting ready to go to a Hitler Youth camp.' The remainder of the essay follows JoJo's journey to the camp, for example 'JoJo is now on his way to the camp, he's running through the streets, very excited' (page 3).

There is good understanding of the central concerns of the text, for example:

'we are reminded that these boys are running towards a place that will teach them to take the lives of innocent people, as they lose their own innocence due to their susceptibility to indoctrination' (page 5).

In the conclusion of the essay the candidate again shows good understanding of the central concerns of the text with the observation:

‘Personally this has emphasised the danger of propaganda and the power it can have on young minds’ (page 6).

### **Analysis/evaluation:**

There is a sound, and at times a thorough, awareness of the director’s techniques. There is good use of critical terminology, with comments on lighting, camera work, setting, sound and foreshadowing.

On page 2 the candidate analyses the use of lighting, making the point that:

‘The happy atmosphere this lighting sets tells us that JoJo isn’t aware of the hard time in Germany’ (page 2).

Similarly, on page 5, the candidate adds:

‘The lighting during this section is still high key however, we are reminded that these boys are running towards a place that will teach them to take the lives of innocent people, as they lose their own innocence due to their susceptibility to indoctrination’ (page 5).

Here, sound awareness of the writer’s techniques is paired with a good understanding of the central concerns of the text.

The candidate analyses setting on page 3, offering detailed explanation:

‘In the background we can see rundown streets, buildings with chipped paint, that looks as if it were once bright but something’s gone awry’ (page 3).

There is a reasonably developed commentary of what has been gained from the text, for example the psychological view given on page 6:

‘This is a reflection of JoJo not having a father figure and so he creates an imaginary friend that’s both father and fuhrer’ (page 2).

In the conclusion, the candidate sums up:

'Through its characterisation of JoJo and insight into Nazi occupied Germany from a point of view not seen before it creates awareness of what happened during the war ...' (page 5-6).

### **Structure/accuracy**

The candidate uses language to communicate a line of thought clearly. Overall, the candidate structures the essay well.

### **Overall**

The candidate displays familiarity with the text as a whole, showing a good understanding of the central concerns. There is sound, and at times a thorough, awareness of the director's techniques (this is a strength), and the candidate makes good use of critical terminology.

The candidate provides a reasonably developed commentary of what has been gained from the text.

The response can be described by all the statements in the 17-14 mark range. There are some indications of the 20-18 range (the candidate's analysis of the director's techniques and use of critical terminology). As such this piece has been placed at the top of the 17-14 mark range and awarded **17 marks**.

# Candidate 4

## Question 2

**Choose a play which explores an important theme or issue. By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the writer explores this theme or issue.**

The candidate was awarded **18 marks**.

### Summary

The candidate has chosen to answer Question 2 on Drama and has responded using 'Macbeth' by William Shakespeare. The candidate focuses on soliloquies, metaphors and language to discuss the important theme of ambition.

### Understanding/relevance

The candidate has shown a very good understanding of both the text and the central concerns. Key scenes are selected to highlight the theme of ambition for example, Macbeth's initial meeting with the witches, where the candidate notes that 'after he hears this his desire to be more is opened.' (page 1).

Following a discussion of Lady Macbeth's persuasive soliloquy in Act 1 Scene 5, the candidate observes that 'Shakespeare explores that the influence of ambition can be dangerous if unchecked' (page 2).

The candidate again shows a very good understanding of central concerns through comments on Malcolm's summary of the damage Macbeth's ambition has caused:

'Shakespeare in the end shows the theme and issue as how it affects other people. Near the ending of the play, Malcolm says "Bleed Bleed, poor country."

This...highlights that Scotland has lost its control after Duncans death' (page 4-5).

The candidate goes on to discuss the consequences of ambition on both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. 'Shakespeare makes it evident that from her ambitions to kill King Duncan for her husband has resided into guilt and unhappiness' (page 3-4). Equally, 'After Duncans murder, Macbeth is paranoid of the servants laughing...' (page 4).

Looking at the response as a whole, while the candidate shows a very good understanding of the central concerns of the text, it couldn't be said that a high degree of familiarity with the text as a whole is demonstrated.

### **Analysis/evaluation**

The candidate demonstrates a thorough awareness of techniques through very detailed explanation of stylistic devices such as soliloquy, metaphor, symbolism and language.

The character of Lady Macbeth is explored through reference to the metaphor, 'Out damned spot! Out I say!' (page 3) The candidate comments on the effective use of punctuation and reflects on the metaphorical use of 'spot' as a:

'metaphor for the blood of the murderous crimes committed and constant reminder of the actions taken' (page 4).

Clear engagement is shown as the candidate goes on to say:

'The audience watch with pity as she desents to madness, caused by her ambitious thoughts' (page 4).

There is thoughtful analysis of Lady Macbeth's character in the candidate's recognition of frustration at being 'trapped in her feminine self' and the constraints 'of the masculine ambition and power of Jacoebean times' (page 2).

The analysis of "Bleed Bleed, poor country" (page 5) explores repetition and symbolism effectively:

'The repetition of "bleed" symbolises the ammount of violence caused by Macbeths ambition, leaving the country in a bad place' (page 5).

The candidate has also 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 candidate's commentary on "Let not light see my dark and deep desires" (page 3):

'The audience can see him becoming more forward and powerful with his ambition, leaving them scared for what's to come' (page 3).

### **Structure/accuracy**

The candidate's line of thought is communicated very clearly. On page 1 the candidate deals with Macbeth at the beginning of the play and the ease with which he can be 'manipulated'.

On page 2 the candidate explores the ambitious desires of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, whilst on page 3, the consequences of these desires are discussed. Pages 4 and 5 further explore the impact of ambition on Scotland. Paragraphing is therefore accurate and effective.

Throughout the piece, spelling and sentence construction are mainly accurate.

### **Overall**

The candidate demonstrates familiarity with the text as a whole, but not a high degree of familiarity. However, a very good understanding of the central concerns of the text is shown and there is thorough and thoughtful analysis. As such it is placed at the lower end of the 20-18 mark range and is awarded **18 marks**.