

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate 1

Portfolio–writing: My Childhood

The candidate was awarded **8 marks** for this broadly creative piece of writing.

Summary

This is a personal piece in which the candidate explores their experiences and thoughts on growing up.

Content

Attention to purpose and audience is reasonably well sustained. In the opening paragraph, the candidate states that they plan to write about 'growing up and what it's like' (paragraph 1). They then go on to select some aspects of their own experience of growing up, for example: spending time 'with people I love' (paragraph 3), and 'Learning from your mistakes is one of the best life skills you will learn while growing up' (paragraph 4).

The candidate explores their feelings of what they regard as important aspects of growing up with a sense of involvement, which is characteristic of the 9-7 range. For example: 'Once you start to mature you see that the stuff that used to bother you before doesn't really matter once you get older' (paragraph 2); 'you will get through it and it will make you a stronger person and you will learn to deal with it as it's all part of growing up' (paragraph 3). Further descriptions of feelings and reactions are less well developed, for example: 'My personal experience of growing up was sometimes good but sometimes bad.' (paragraph 3).

The candidate's comments on their personal experiences of childhood, such as the breakdown of their parents' relationship and spending time with friends, are brief and are explored with a sense of involvement: 'Some of the bad ones revolve around my parents splitting up which ending up with me having to stay with my gran for nearly a year' (paragraph 3).

Style

Features of the genre are deployed with a degree of success. The piece contains reflective writing, which is delivered with a degree of success, for example: 'Don't get me wrong I've made some mistakes when growing up but I've learnt not to do it again because the guilt you get when you make a mistake is sickening and you feel like it's never gonna get better but it does' (paragraph 4). Similarly: 'I've learned that things that seem scary and also seem impossible aren't as scary as you thought they would be and everything works out in the end' (paragraph 5).

The candidate uses language which is effective in the main: 'while growing up things were tough' (paragraph 5), 'growing up is a bumpy roller coaster'

(paragraph 6). There are, however, some less successful examples: 'they become un-relevant' (paragraph 2), 'your gonna make mistakes' (paragraph 3).

The structure of the piece is appropriate to purpose. There is a clear introductory paragraph, points are organised in appropriate paragraphs, and there is a relevant conclusion. However, there is some unnecessary repetition evident throughout the piece where the candidate makes similar points about learning from mistakes with no real development of ideas.

Although there are some errors, paragraphing, sentence structure, spelling and punctuation are sufficiently accurate for meaning to be clear at first reading.

Overall

All indicators suggest that this piece is described in entirety by the 9-7 range of marks. There is nothing to suggest the 6-4 range and no indication of the 12-10 range; therefore, a mark of 8 is awarded.

Candidate 2

Portfolio–writing: Are fireworks worth it

The candidate was awarded **9 marks** for this broadly discursive piece of writing.

Summary

This is a broadly discursive piece in which the candidate explores the value of fireworks.

Content

In this piece attention to purpose and audience is consistent in the main. The introduction outlines the topic and gives an indication of what is to come. The candidate explores a range of issues relating to fireworks: the dangers of chemicals to the environment (paragraph 2), dangers to health (paragraph 3) and the impact on animals (paragraph 4). Paragraph 5 deals with how they can 'make people happy'.

The piece shows evidence of some research (for example, 'There are over 30,000 fireworks set alight per year in America alone') and is presented in a clear sequence, which supports the line of thought presented by the candidate. In this way, although not quite sustained throughout, the piece has indications of the 12-10 mark range. For example, paragraphs 3 and 4 that deal with the health consequences and the impact of fireworks on animal welfare have a degree of persuasive force. However, other sections are more characteristic of the 9-7 mark range. This can be seen most clearly in the final paragraph, which deals with Guy Fawkes and New Years' celebrations by simply stating well-known facts.

Style

The features of the chosen genre are deployed with a degree of success. The candidate uses a range of persuasive techniques, and these are sometimes employed successfully to create effect. For example, the use of the exclamation mark in paragraph 2 conveys a strength of conviction: 'These chemicals don't only affect the environment they also affect us!' This has a degree of persuasive force that creates a link into the next paragraph. Also, the use of rhetorical questions in paragraphs 3 and 4 prompts the reader to consider the candidate's point of view. The choice of short sentences in paragraph 5 ('They make people happy. That's it.') is effective in making clear the candidate's views. However, not all of the language employed is as successful as this, for example 'it would not only benefit us but the earth needs to be benefited too' (paragraph 5), and 'Animals when pregnant can have early labour from stress levels being too high' (paragraph 4).

The final paragraph is less effective as a conclusion, and its use of language ('the fail of Guy Fawkes wanting to burn down parliament') is weaker. It also seems to introduce new ideas which are not fully developed and appears to be unfinished.

Making a judgement on the piece of writing as a whole, the language can be described as being effective in the main. The piece is satisfactory in terms of

technical accuracy: paragraphing, sentence construction, spelling and punctuation are sufficiently accurate for meaning to be clear at first reading.

Overall

This piece demonstrates a few elements of the 12-10 range: ideas have some persuasive force and language is at times used to effect. However, the piece, as a whole, is more convincingly described in terms typical of the 9-7 range.

Attention to purpose and audience is reasonably well sustained, ideas are deployed to persuade, and language is effective in the main. As the piece contains elements of both the 12-10 range and the 9-7 range, it is placed at the top of the 9-7 range and awarded 9 marks.

Candidate 3

Portfolio–writing: Ballet: Behind the Curtains

The candidate was awarded **11 marks** for this broadly creative piece of writing.

Summary

This is a personal piece in which the candidate explores their feelings about dance, in particular ballet.

Content

Attention to purpose is consistent in the main, exploring the candidate's thoughts and feelings about learning to dance. In paragraph 1, the candidate expresses, with a good degree of self-awareness, that 'it's a lot harder than I ever thought it could be,' summing up the experience as 'my failed success'.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 concentrate on what inspired the candidate to start dancing. There is a good degree of involvement in the excitement felt by the candidate when accepted by 'the dance school of my dreams' (paragraph 3).

In paragraph 4, the candidate's feelings of worry and uncertainty during the first lesson are explored with a good degree of insight: 'It bothered me and made me feel embarrassed ...'

Sensitivity is shown when the candidate explores feelings of shock at not being chosen to sit the next grade (paragraphs 8 and 9), wondering: 'How on earth was I not doing it', going on to describe, with a good degree of self-awareness, the need to: 'put on a brave face'.

In the section beginning: 'Fast forward ...' (paragraph 12) the candidate reflects, with a good degree of insight, that failure has led to greater commitment, and that 'I was let down for a reason'. A widening involvement in different styles of dance and the feelings these elicited is then explored by the candidate, who concludes, in the final paragraph, again with a good degree of self-awareness, that involvement in dance has been a 'journey', and that: 'I can't wait for what is to come for my dance career in the future'.

Style

Features of personal writing are deployed, mostly successfully, in many instances of reflective writing, for example: 'I did appreciate the help but I felt that I was being babied.' (paragraph 4); 'Ballet was going well and my ego was high.' and 'It was hard for me to be disappointed but it needed to happen and now I'm happy.' (final paragraph).

Language is apposite and used at times to create an effect, for example: 'not just the gorgeously free side everyone can see' (paragraph 1); 'Excited but also sick to my stomach' (paragraph 4); 'free flowing movements,' 'fun and upbeat' and 'vibrant' (paragraph 11).

The structure of the piece supports the purpose, with paragraphing clearly delineating different stages of the candidate's 'journey'. Sufficient technical accuracy has been achieved.

Overall

The candidate's attention to purpose is consistent in the main and feelings are expressed with a good degree of insight. Language is apposite and used at times to create an effect, and the structure of the piece supports the purpose. In all respects, this piece of writing is described exactly by the statements from the 12-10 mark range. There is nothing to suggest the 9-7 range and no indication of the 15-13 range; therefore, the piece is given 11 marks.

Candidate 4

Portfolio–writing: Ebbing Away

The candidate was awarded **14 marks** for this broadly creative piece of writing.

Summary

In this broadly creative piece, the candidate writes reflectively on the importance of their grandmother in their life and on the impact of her illness and death.

Content

This piece displays very good creativity. The candidate's feelings are expressed with a very good degree of insight and sensitivity, for example: 'It was this that brought our family together, laughing and joking round tables laden with enticing food' (paragraph 2), and: 'It pained me to see her clarity and awareness of her condition' (paragraph 6).

Skill is shown in conveying the importance of the grandmother to the candidate, for example '...I would proudly present to Granny, avidly seeking her approval' (paragraph 2). The candidate also displays insight and sensitivity when describing the impact of the illness on the grandmother herself, for example: 'saying goodbye to the community she was part of was painful but the greatest loss was leaving her life of independence' (paragraph 4).

Further sensitivity is shown in the candidate's description of the grandmother's predicament: 'The incidents increased with frequency and humiliation; getting lost in the empty darkness with her dog, Bertie, or driving five hours for what should have been a twenty minute journey to a friend's house' (paragraph 4).

Self-awareness and sensitivity are features of the content, but the conclusion is perhaps a little less considered and well realised: 'She believed that time should be spent doing what you enjoy, too short to spend it otherwise' (paragraph 7).

Style

The piece is stylish, with language often used to create particular effects. The description of comforting times spent at Granny's (paragraph 2) and her growing confusion (paragraphs 3 and 4) are evocative, as is the candidate's description of her last days. The description of the fire, with its 'dying embers ...still glowing, radiating heat on this dusky, biting evening' (paragraph 6) is typical of the quality of this candidate's description.

There are, however, places in the piece where language features are deployed a little less successfully and with less effect, for example the opening, where the grandmother's life is described: 'Granny had been a mum of four children, owned her own ...business, and then looked after Grandpa and us' (paragraph 1). Similarly in paragraph 2: '...the enticing aroma of her cooking that never failed to make my mouth water.'

Overall

This piece is described exactly by the bullet points of the 13-15 mark range. It consistently displays very good creativity, language is used to create particular effects, and the structure is used to enhance the meaning. There are, however, some aspects of the language choice which are a little less successful and these are enough to keep the piece in the middle of the mark range at 14 marks.

Candidate 5

Portfolio-writing: The British Empire – Benevolent or Brutal?

The candidate was awarded **15 marks** for this discursive piece of writing.

Summary

This is a broadly discursive piece in which the candidate critically explores the effects of British rule in India.

Content

Attention to purpose and audience is consistent as the candidate takes us through aspects of Indian life before and after colonisation in a way which is detailed, clear and presented in ways to maximise impact, for example: 'India was not some poverty-stricken backwater before the authoritarian British rule, but a culturally and economically glorious civilisation' (paragraph 2).

The piece is thoroughly researched, and key points are made clear through the step-by-step sequence which covers such aspects as famine, political decisions, religion, and India's involvement in World War 1, for example: '1.3 million Indian soldiers fought while 54,000 died in a war their country was not responsible for' (paragraph 4).

The candidate's own understanding of this topic is demonstrated throughout, which is a strength of this piece, for example: 'Some people boldly claim that the Indian economy flourished under the regime, which is absolutely not true. Poverty, starvation, malnourishment, physical abuse, discrimination and death of around 35 million people is too generous of a price to pay for any made-up thriving economy anyway' (paragraph 2).

There is evidence throughout of depth and insight through a clearly persuasive line of thought: 'The Empire was built on deception since the very beginning' (paragraph 4).

Style

Features of this discursive, almost journalistic, style are deployed effectively, and both language and structure are used effectively to build a strong argument. There is effective use of rhetorical questions, for example 'Were the famines inevitable or strategically ignored?' (paragraph 3).

There is use of carefully selected, powerful evidence: 'Indian goods were forcibly sold 15-20% less than the actual cost' (paragraph 2), and 'Before the British set foot, India contributed a total of 35% to the world's economy, which was brutally reduced to a mere 2% in 1947' (paragraph 2).

Effective word choice is employed throughout, such as 'self-declared' (paragraph 3) and 'supposed' (paragraph 4) to convey disagreement, and 'Allegedly' and 'Unbelievable' to suggest disbelief.

The structure builds to a powerful conclusion: 'The British Empire in India was marked by violence, oppression, discrimination and suffering' (paragraph 6).

Overall

This is a powerful and highly effective piece of writing at National 5 level. All aspects of this piece indicate the top end of the 15-13 range, and it is awarded 15 marks.