

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate A

Portfolio-writing: A Millionaire's Dream

The candidate was awarded **7 marks** for this broadly creative piece of writing.

Summary

This is a personal/imaginative piece of writing in which the candidate imagines what it would be like to spend one million pounds. In this piece the candidate offers a mixture of personal material with 'what if?' imaginative explorations.

Content

Attention to purpose is reasonably well sustained in that the candidate selects and deals with different things that the money could be spent on.

There is a sense of involvement, which is often apparent in bald, fairly limited, statements such as 'it would be amazing and special' (paragraph 2), and 'I love the darts' (paragraph 6). A sense of involvement comes across a little more strongly in observations about family, eg 'family means a lot to me and to see the smile on my mum and dads faces...' (paragraph 4), and about football: 'the atmosphere at those games are amazing and if you're there then you're proud to be a Celtic fan' (paragraph 2).

A similar level of involvement can be seen in comments on the darts player Gary Anderson: 'I would love to see him win and I could say I was there' (paragraph 6).

Some creativity is shown, but again it is limited: 'Also, I would buy a Ferrari to go with my house....I would want a really fancy car so I could just go where I wanted to go' (paragraph 3).

Style

Although there are some lapses in sentence construction, the piece is sufficiently accurate, and meaning is clear on first reading.

At times, the language is effective in the main with, for example, the use of superlatives: 'the biggest sporting events in the world' (paragraph 6), and 'the best childhood a kid could ask for' (paragraph 7). However, on other occasions, the language lacks variety (which is indicative of the 6-4 mark range): in paragraph 2 the candidate uses the word 'amazing' on four occasions; in paragraph 3 the phrase 'I would buy' is used five times.

The structure of the piece is appropriate to purpose in that each paragraph deals with a different subject: football, house/car, family, tennis. There is evidence of basic linkage between paragraphs: 'The first thing,' 'Another thing,' 'After I had

done these things,’ etc. There is also an attempt to introduce and to conclude the piece. These features are deployed with a degree of success (from the 9-7 mark range), but come close to the 6-4 category description of ‘there is an attempt to deploy the features of the chosen genre.’

Overall

When making a holistic judgement on this piece, attention to purpose was reasonably well sustained, there was a sense of involvement and the structure was appropriate to purpose. These aspects were not strong, but were just enough to place it in the 9-7 category. But due to the limited nature of some of the ideas, and the lack of variety in language, it was awarded **7 marks**.

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Candidate B

Portfolio-writing: Goal line technology: Good or Bad?

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

Summary

This response is a broadly discursive piece which deals with the pros and cons of goal line technology.

Content

The attention to purpose and audience is reasonably well sustained and the piece maintains an appropriately argumentative tone throughout, with the candidate making relevant points both for and against goal line technology.

The evidence provided by the candidate shows that some research has been carried out. In paragraphs 2 and 4 there are examples cited of games that have been affected by wrong decisions. In paragraph 3 the candidate paraphrases an opinion from Sepp Blatter (ex-FIFA president), and in paragraph 5 costs are explored. This evidence is presented in a clear sequence.

The candidate offers a balanced treatment of the topic and puts forward relevant arguments both for and against, covering ideas of fairness, finance, and long term consequences.

The candidate's point of view is conveyed towards the end of the piece. In paragraph five, the candidate states: 'I think FIFA should give them the money,' and in the concluding paragraph the candidate writes: 'I think it will be a step in the right direction for football.'

Style

Features of the genre are deployed with a degree of success. The candidate tries to build a case for and against the topic by signposting new points: 'The first argument is...', 'Another good thing is...', 'Another bad thing...'

Language is effective in the main. Although, at times the language is limited to the basic level of 'good' or 'bad,' there are times when the expression is better: 'a derby is significant' (paragraph 2), 'momentum switched' (paragraph 3), 'could prove vital' (paragraph 4). The candidate also makes some relevant assertions, eg 'Goal line technology will do a lot for football' (paragraph 1), and raises questions, eg 'FIFA has got the money so why should they not give them the money' (paragraph 5).

The structure is appropriate to the purpose of the piece. There is an introduction, points for and against, and a conclusion.

There are occasional infelicities in language, but overall the piece is sufficiently accurate for meaning to be clear at the first reading.

Overall

In terms of content and style, the piece is described fully by the statements in the 9-7 mark range. As such it was placed in the middle of the range and was awarded **8 marks**.

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate C

Portfolio-writing: I have seen how disabilities affect the people I love

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

Summary

This is a piece of personal writing which deals with the negative and positive impacts of disability on members of the candidate's family.

Content

In the opening paragraph it is clear that the candidate's feelings and reactions are expressed with a good degree of involvement and sensitivity:

'I have seen them break down when people mock them, but on the other hand, I have seen them filled with elation when they overcome the hurdles caused by their disability.'

Further insight is shown in paragraph 3 when the candidate indicates a desire to change 'the way that I deal with the problems I face' following reflection on his relatives' difficulties. This is followed in paragraph 4 with a concrete example from the candidate's own life.

The candidate concludes the piece with a good degree of wide reflection, and manages to achieve something of an uplifting tone:

'Even when there is a physical boundary stopping someone doing something, like James' Spina Bifida or Catherine's Down Syndrome, if a person is truly determined, our resilience, courage and effort will allow us to break down these barriers and develop into a stronger person.'

Throughout the piece, feelings are explored with a good degree of self-awareness.

Style

The language used by the candidate is appropriate to the purpose and is used at times to create an effect. The word choice of 'mock' and 'elation' in paragraph 1 carries the ideas of negative and positive emotions effectively. Word choice which fits the purpose of reflection is evident throughout: 'nigh on impossible' (paragraph 5), 'resonated with me' (paragraph 5), 'fundamental to my development' (paragraph 6).

A question – 'What about my Auntie Catherine?' – is used effectively in paragraph 2 to involve the reader. Sentences are varied and, again, are used at

times to create an effect. A good example is the concluding sentence of the piece (quoted above).

The structure supports the purpose of the piece. The opening paragraph engages the reader, and the paragraphs which follow give reflection on personal feelings and reactions. The conclusion offers wider reflection.

Overall

This piece shows a good degree of insight and self-awareness. Language is apposite, and is used at times to create effects. It is comfortably described by the statements from the 12-10 range, and is therefore awarded **11 marks**.

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate D

Portfolio-writing: Should There Be Dedicated Parking Spaces For The Elderly

The candidate was awarded **10 marks** for this broadly discursive piece of writing.

Summary

This response is a broadly discursive piece on parking issues affecting the elderly.

Content

In this piece, attention to purpose is consistent in the main as the candidate discusses the implementation of, and reasons for the use of, parking badges for older people. The candidate begins in paragraph 1 by outlining some of the issues faced by elderly people: ‘from isolation to bereavement of spouses.’ There is mention of ‘arthritis that will inhibit you to walk distances.’ The candidate believes that ‘walking considerable distance’ in a supermarket car park is not necessary, and proposes a solution: ‘introduce a brown badge system for Older Adults.’ Purpose is clearly established here, and is adhered to in the main throughout the piece.

Purpose is maintained in paragraph 2 with ‘I understand the need for disabled spaces.’ There is evidence of relevant research: ‘1 in 3 Adults over 50 die within 12 months of fracturing a hip.’

In paragraph 3 the candidate tends to make a statement of points rather than developing an argument. This has the effect of informing the reader of the candidate’s point of view, but there is a lack of objectivity. This can be seen when the candidate states that ‘Older Adults who have suffered a fall...have a fear of going anywhere in case they fall again.’ However, the candidate recovers slightly with the final sentence of paragraph 3, which is more insightful and persuasive: ‘Growing old shouldn’t be a disability, however we should make it easier for the person.’

In paragraph 5 there is evidence of relevant research, which is presented in a clear sequence: ‘...the British Parking Association citing over 7000 users of the scheme.’ However, in paragraph 6 the candidate attempts to introduce some personal experience into the argument, and this is perhaps less successful.

The piece is concluded with a brief summary assertion of opinion.

Style

The structure of the piece is appropriate, and in places supports the purpose. For example, the first paragraph sets up the main focus of the piece effectively. The simple conclusion has some impact.

Language is effective in the main, and at times is apposite: eg the use of questions, the sense of persuasive involvement created by the use of 'I understand...I know that...' etc. However, there are less successful uses of language – 'I have been unable to find of any similar system north of the border' (paragraph 5) – which detract from the persuasive force of the argument.

Overall

Attention to purpose in this piece is consistent in the main. The candidate puts forward a number of ideas in support of parking badges. Some carry persuasive force ('...it begs the question, "Why hasn't this been implemented nationwide?"), but others have less detail and development ('Most of our Older Adults...have a fear of going anywhere in case they fall again').

The structure of the piece supports the purpose, and language, though effective in the main, is used at times to create an effect. In summary, statements from the 12-10 mark range, in terms of both content and style, outweigh those from the 9-7 range. As such, it was awarded **10 marks**.

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate E

Portfolio-writing: Pablo Escobar and the Illegal Drugs trade in Colombia A biographical Account

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

Summary

This is a broadly discursive piece which documents the life of Pablo Escobar.

Content

The candidate presents information in the form of a biographical report with the addition of some general comments and conclusions, for example:

'Columbia has a major impact on drug trafficking in Latin America. It is known for producing the most cocaine out of any country in the world...' (paragraph 1).

Information is presented in a clear sequence. The candidate follows Escobar's path through various forms of crime, and ends with his death and legacy.

Ideas have a good degree of depth, for example 'This is what led Pablo to later deal with authority by bribing or murdering them' (paragraph 4), and '...from an outsider's view he could easily pass as a noble public figure' (paragraph 9).

Relevant research has clearly been carried out by the candidate, and this research is integrated effectively in the body of the essay:

'In Escobar's feud with the government his attacks, aimed at anti-narcotic police, became more severe and were responsible for more than 250 bomb attacks and dozens of massacres resulting in 1,142 dead civilians' (paragraph 10).

A clear, neutral stance is maintained by the candidate throughout.

Style

Language is appropriate to genre and purpose, and is used at times to create an effect, for example this use of metaphor: 'Escobar was reeling in a considerable amount of money at this point...' (paragraph 7). There is also good use of the word 'stumbles' here:

'Occasionally someone still stumbles across it accidentally. Many go out looking for it but few have ever actually found it' (paragraph 7).

Structure supports meaning. Brief paragraphs separate significant points of chronological information. There is evidence of successful attempts at linking

paragraphs, for example ‘As time went on...’ (paragraph 6), and ‘Aside from Escobar’s involvement’ (paragraph 8). A concise concluding sentence sums up the candidate’s findings:

‘Even after his death Pablo Escobar’s influence is still felt and has changed drug trafficking around the world forever’ (paragraph 12).

Overall

Looking at this piece holistically, the information presented shows evidence of relevant research, which is presented in a clear sequence. Ideas and information have a good degree of depth, and language is used at times to create an effect. This piece is described exactly by statements in the 12-10 mark range, neither going beyond this, nor falling short. As such it was awarded **11 marks**.

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate F

Portfolio-writing: The Light Side to Dark Humour

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

Summary

This broadly discursive piece attempts to persuade the reader that there is a place for dark humour in our lives.

Content

Attention to purpose and audience is consistent as the candidate attempts to persuade the reader that dark humour is necessary in our lives. The ideas used to argue and to persuade have a very good degree of depth and insight, for example:

‘...dark humour can be used as an extremely effective method of managing long-term stress. It is both our defence and our saviour’ (paragraph 2).

And again in paragraph 3:

‘Dark humour can deliver a message. It can be subtle, brutal and thought provoking, yet powerful in its honesty – forcing us to consider the taboo subjects, that we would rather shun than embrace.’

Careful research is used both to support points made and to maximise impact, for example:

‘On average, it is said, a person will laugh seven times in a ten-minute conversation. Humour is the rope that binds us together...’ (paragraph 2).

The piece builds towards a very effective persuasive conclusion:

‘To pacify the darkness in our life perhaps we need to embrace some of it, because if we can acknowledge it, we can strip it of its power’ (paragraph 5).

Style

Features of the persuasive genre are deployed effectively throughout. The wry, conversational tone adopted is hard to achieve, but is handled well:

‘I would hate to dissect the anatomy of a joke like he did (taking all the fun out of it!)...’ (paragraph 2).

Language is varied and is often used to create particular effects, as in this effective metaphor:

‘...humour is not only a necessary coping mechanism but also a valuable weapon in life’s arsenal...’ (paragraph 2).

The structure of the piece enhances purpose and meaning. The candidate begins with a reference to the ancient world in a quotation from Socrates, before moving on to discuss the place of dark humour in the modern age. The candidate then examines the reasons why we rely on dark humour. The conclusion is used to make a strong statement about the positive role of dark humour. The candidate ends with the emphatic statement:

‘Don’t let dark humour hide in the shadows, let it come into the light’ (paragraph 5).

Overall

The content and the style of this piece combine to create very effective persuasive writing. Because of the strength of the writing it was placed at the top end of the 15-13 mark range and awarded **15 marks**. A piece does not have to be perfect to achieve 15 marks, and there are examples of less successful writing here: for example the second sentence of paragraph 1 is over-worked and has lost meaning as a result. But, overall, this is very good writing at National 5 level.

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate G

Portfolio-writing: Chapter One: Jane Doe

The candidate was awarded **13 marks** for this broadly creative piece of writing.

Summary

This response is broadly creative writing which comprises the opening chapter of a piece of prose fiction.

Content

This piece of prose fiction opens with the narrator waking in hospital with amnesia following a car crash. The plot continues with the narrator finding out some details of her life, but there is uncertainty over a new visitor.

Attention to purpose and audience is consistent, but there is some inconsistency towards the end of the piece where an attempt at creating suspense through the arrival of a visitor is handled less effectively.

The piece displays very good creativity overall. The candidate effectively creates a consistent voice for the narrator, and a clear sense of her character emerges: 'While it radiates emotion, I lay staring with blank eyes' (paragraph 3). This is sustained throughout the piece: '...building a terrifying contrast between where I am and where I want to be' (paragraph 8).

Style

The features of the chosen genre are deployed effectively, but there are occasional lapses. The candidate makes good use of repetition at the outset: 'White. All I can see is white...' (paragraph 1). 'White. Once again,...' (paragraph 2). Sentence structure is also used effectively here, and sentence variety is employed to good effect across the piece.

Perhaps the most successful use of language, is the construction of an extended sea/water image on page 2:

'There is a storm in its eyes, waves crash against the rocks, as it tries not to spill the ocean' (paragraph 8).

This imaginative use of language evokes the accumulated hurt apparent in the face of the narrator's father. The metaphor is continued later in page 2 with reference to 'dark waters' (paragraph 10), and 'While I swim in my thoughts' (paragraph 11).

At times, however, language is used a little less successfully, and the narrator's voice slips. Examples of this are: 'It then proceeds to stare into my eyes for an uncomfortable amount of time' (paragraph 8), and '...but starting over with someone new is always awkward' (paragraph 11).

Overall

Looking at the piece holistically, it contains very good creativity. There is imaginative use of language, seen in the use of extended metaphor, sentence variety and repetition. This places the piece in the 15-13 mark range. However, there are some places where language and the features of the genre are deployed less successfully. For this reason, the piece was placed at the lower end of the range and was awarded **13 marks**.

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate H

Portfolio-writing: I was within and without

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

Summary

This broadly creative piece is a poem in which a persona reflects on the landscape of Scotland, and feelings of belonging.

Content

This piece displays very good creativity. The poem opens with a sensitive evocation of morning in the highlands of Scotland. In an atmospheric first stanza, the persona talks of being:

'wrapped in a blanket of silence,
Surrounded by the melody that belongs to nothing and yet everything,
Awe permeates every single cell.'

There follows an imaginative, high-vantage point tour of Scotland's mountains, rivers and bridges all evoked in concentrated, descriptive language:

'Centuries old Shetland crofts are fused to the peaty landscape –
Ink-soaked into blotting paper' (stanza 7).

There is reflection on modernity's disconnection from the landscape:

'Those blinded, imprisoned by their glaring glass screens,
Have a distorted view of Mother Nature' (stanza 9).

The time-span of human lives is also addressed in these lines of mature reflection:

'Lives are letters in the glass bottles drifting,
Perpetually, desperately, aimlessly.
Others are momentary footprints on the golden beach,
resonating with the rhythm of all consuming, callous tide' (stanza 10).

Towards the end of the poem, the persona's perspective becomes clearer still: that of someone who has come to Scotland, and has been 'adopted by this wilderness of thistles' (stanza 11). The persona's place of origin is brilliantly evoked by the line 'I am a sister of Conrad, a friend of Wojtek the Bear' (stanza 11).

Style

Several poetic features are deployed effectively throughout the poem. Alliteration draws the reader's attention to significant expressions: 'Calligraphic cliffs' (stanza 2), 'Hazy, haughty highlands stand proudly' (stanza 3).

Rhythm is also used effectively. The construction 'saluting, searching, brooding,' (stanza 2) is echoed later in the poem with 'perpetually, desperately, aimlessly' (stanza 10).

One of the main strengths of the piece is the candidate's use of imagery. Real creativity is shown here, for example:

'Strewn land is stitched together with threads of bridges
passing identity down through time' (stanza 5).

And again in:

'Thurso, Tay, Tummel writhe like veins with the vital water...' (stanza 4).

The structure of the piece enhances meaning. The poem takes the form of a journey, leading to the persona's place of origin and sense of belonging in 'adopted' Scotland.

Overall

This well-constructed, insightful piece displays very good creativity throughout. The features of the chosen genre are deployed effectively, language is varied and is used effectively. It was placed at the top end of the 15-13 mark range and awarded **15 marks**.