

Candidate 1

Mark awarded **12**

This response is based on poetry:

Write about a poem, which has an interesting message. Write about the skills used by the poet to convey the message of the poem.

The focus of the response is the poem 'Ar Cànan 's ar Clò by Anna Frater.

The response begins with a statement about the purpose of the essay. The candidate clearly states that the response will focus on the writer's use of rhythm, metaphor and tone.

The candidate's general understanding of both the text and of the central concerns of the text is good. The candidate recognises that the poem is set in a particular locality in the Highlands and that it makes a statement about language and culture. There is recognition that the tweed, which is woven by the old man, is representative of the culture and language of the Highlands. The thick warm tweed woven by the old man used to be central to the needs of the local community. However, circumstances have changed; new lighter cloth has replaced the heavy tweed and the old man's loom is redundant. This is all recognised in the essay. The response, however, is somewhat lacking in structure and in depth of analysis.

The candidate also identifies specific words, which are particularly expressive. There is close reference to the text to support and analyse the points made. Quotations are used and they are reasonably appropriate.

The conclusion of the essay gives a summary of the main points made throughout the essay and the candidate also gives a personal response to the sentiments expressed in the poem.

Overall, the response shows a good understanding of the main features of the text, the candidate gives a generally sound commentary on the principal techniques used by the writer. The response would have been better if it had been more structured and if the arguments had been presented in a clearer manner.

The essay is considered to be at the top end of the 10 – 12 mark band.

Candidate 2

Mark awarded **16**

This candidate's response is based on a short story: Select a short story, which is strengthened by the use of effective writing skills. Illustrate how the author used particular writing techniques to make the short story successful.

The short story selected is 'An Taghadh' by Iain C Mac a' Ghobhainn.

This is a lengthy and comprehensive response. The candidate states clearly at the outset the purpose of the essay. The candidate gives a detailed outline of the central concerns of the short story. The short story is set after the Jacobite rebellion. A Redcoat commander visits a home in the Highlands and demands that one of the three sons in the home needs to be handed over in retribution for the death of his brother at Culloden. The sons' mother, who is widowed, is given the responsibility of deciding which son is to be 'sacrificed'. The situation is described in detail and it is clear that the candidate has good familiarity with the text.

The candidate identifies a number of aspects related to the text that makes this a particularly interesting short story. The situation or context of the short story is considered appropriate: the choice that the mother is presented with makes an immediate impression on the reader. The relationship between all the characters is central to the short story. The strong feelings experienced by all the characters is especially important. These make a big impression on the reader. The candidate feels that the way in which information is gradually revealed throughout the story is extremely appropriate. The candidate also feels that the writer's choice of particular words for effect throughout the short story contributes greatly to the effectiveness of the short story.

The candidate uses good examples to illustrate the points made.

While the essay shows good understanding of the text and relevant techniques are identified in detail, it is however felt that the response is not sufficiently well structured to justify a mark in the highest mark band (19 – 20 marks). The response is not sufficiently concise; there is a tendency to re-tell the story. There is also some repetition, which could have been avoided if the structure of the response was tighter.

Consequently, response is awarded the lowest mark in the 16 – 18 mark band.

Candidate 3

Mark awarded **18**

This is a response to a question on poetry: Write about a poem which has an interesting message to convey. Write about the specific skills used by the poet to convey the message to the reader.

The candidate's response is on the poem 'Cisteachan-laighe' by Ruairidh MacThòmais.

This is a very competent response. The candidate explains clearly at the outset what the 'message' in the poem is: the poet is making a comparison between the death of his grandfather and the decline of the Gaelic language and a particular culture of which his grandfather was a part. The grandfather represented a particular way of life and had a specific skill: making coffins. The poet remembers the fragrant smell of the wood in his grandfather's workshop and visualises his grandfather at work surrounded by his tools. However, the poet did not notice the linguistic and cultural changes which were taking place around him until it was too late.

The candidate encapsulates most of this information clearly and goes on to identify a number of techniques used by the poet to convey the poem's message.

The candidate comments on the structure of the poem: how it is a good example of 'nua-bhàrdachd' and details the specific features which contribute to this poem being a good example of that particular style of Gaelic poetry. The candidate identifies three specific sections in the poem and illustrates the relevance of the poem being divided in that way.

The candidate identifies how the tone of the poem changes as the poem progresses. This demonstrates good understanding of the poem. The commentary is consistently relevant to the task and there is good explanation of the skills used by the poet. The response is well structured. However, it is felt that the candidate could have made more use of quotations from the poem to illustrate some of the points made. This would have strengthened the response.

There was a very strong opening to this essay and there is also a very appropriate conclusion which summarises the candidate's view on the poem.

Overall, this is a very strong response. However, it is not sufficiently comprehensive to be awarded the highest mark band (19 – 20 marks). It is therefore awarded the highest mark in the 16 – 18 mark band.

Candidate 4

Mark awarded **8**

This is a response to a question on the short story: Choose a short story which is strengthened by particularly relevant writing skills. Illustrate how the writer used particular writing skills to make the short story so successful.

The focus of the response is the short story 'Bùrn' by Iain C Mac a' Ghobhainn.

The candidate shows familiarity with many aspects of the text and shows some understanding of the central concerns of the text. The candidate states at the outset the main purpose of the essay: to illustrate how the author uses particular writing techniques to make the short story enjoyable.

A number of writing techniques are identified: simile, metaphor, personification, repetition. These are dealt with in turn. The level of analysis, however, is not deep and it is not particularly detailed. An attempt is made to support the points made by using quotations. Some of these are relevant; however, some of the quotations are written inaccurately.

The structure of the essay is quite good; each area of the response is dealt with sequentially. Unfortunately, the entire essay is somewhat brief and lacking in great detail.