

# Commentary on candidate evidence

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

## Candidate 1

**Discuss the ways in which the themes of loneliness and/or despair are explored in two novels or three short stories.**

The candidate was awarded **12 marks**.

Texts: *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte and *Rebecca* by Daphne Du Maurier.

### Knowledge and understanding

This response demonstrates the candidate's knowledge and understanding of both texts and they begin their response by articulating a relevant approach to the question. They state that *Jane Eyre* explores how Jane overcomes 'her isolation through the challenges of societal expectations and gender class differences.' (page 1) and we are then told how the unnamed narrator in *Rebecca* experiences 'loneliness caused by prominent male figures and the influence of those higher in society' (page 1).

The candidate establishes the reasons for each of the female protagonist's loneliness, offering scenarios from their childhoods as context. Jane's 'orphan status immediately lowers her social class' (page 1) is a relevant observation and the idea of segregation is developed further in the candidate's description of the conflict between Jane and John Reed on page 2 of the response. The response then moves to a similar examination of the narrator in *Rebecca* where she is described as 'lonely and isolated' (page 2) at Manderley. The 'malevolent ivy' (page 3) which climbs the walls at Manderley is seen to correlate with 'Rebecca's looming prescence [sic]' (page 3) which, the candidate offers, undermines the relationship between the narrator and Maxim. The candidate articulates that Rebecca is a 'constant barrier to complete love and trust' (page 3) and concludes that this is what causes her to 'be extremely lonely in her relationship' (page 3) which is a relevant approach to the question.

Throughout the response the candidate uses textual evidence to address the demands of the question and this evidence is a mix of direct quotation [*Jane Eyre*: pages 2, 5, 6, and 7; *Rebecca*: pages 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8] and some reference to events, for example on page 4 of the response when the candidate discusses 'Maxim and the narrator [...] driving around Monte Carlo' and on page 6 where the candidate refers to Jane 'leav[ing] Thornfield as she believes it would be morally wrong to stay'.

## Analysis

Throughout this response there is analysis of a range of literary techniques, including symbolism, contrast, turning point, characterisation and imagery.

The 'padlock and chain on the gate' at Manderley on page 3 of the response is seen as 'separating the narrator from those inhibiting [sic] Manderley' whilst the red room in *Jane Eyre* is seen to be a 'symbol of her (Jane's) anger and fury that is not accepted of a lady within society at the time' (page 2). The candidate articulates that the combination of plants in the garden at Manderley is described as an 'alien marriage' (page 3) and offers the suggestion that this refers to the narrator's relationship with Maxim, concluding, on page 3, that this 'makes it infinitely harder for the couple to be open and honest with each other, leaving the unnamed narrator to be extremely lonely in her relationship.'

The treatment of Bertha on pages 4 and 5 of the response demonstrates both knowledge and engagement with the text but it is not relevant to the question as it does not directly contribute to Jane's loneliness. On page 5 the candidate discusses the influence of Rochester upon Jane and explains that Bertha functions as a 'warning that she should confine herself and control her emotions so that she does not become like Bertha' which is interesting, but the candidate does not explicitly link this back to the question. This is also seen in the treatment of the narrator's response to Maxim's disclosure that he had murdered Rebecca, also on page 5. The candidate states that the narrator 'does not care that Maxim is a murderer, she only fixates on the fact that he did not care for his late wife' (page 6). They go on to conclude that 'this surely would mean that the couple would have a deeper connection however the narrator still expresses feeling of loneliness and despair' which although tenuously links to the question, does so at the expense of logic.

The turning point of *Jane Eyre* finds Jane in a 'very isolated and lonely place' (page 6) when she realises she must move on after discovering the truth about Bertha. The candidate uses this to highlight Jane's personal development, stating that on her return to Rochester she is now free and has 'progressed to independence without being lonely' (page 7).

The structure of this response is well crafted. The candidate offers broad points and then explains how each of the female protagonists embody and explain these ideas. For example, the candidate, on page 7, offers the idea that 'there is a stark contrast in the resolutions of each novel, on surface level; both couples are married and in love.' It is then suggested that whilst Jane might have found her happy ending the candidate states, 'it is still clear that she has succumbed to society's expectation of a woman'. The narrator in *Rebecca*, despite her newly found confidence, is said to find 'her identity within her husband and takes on his name without revealing her own' (page 8) and that this suggests the narrator is 'confining [sic] to societal standards' and concludes that the 'circular narrative reflects on how her and Maxim are still very separated in their marriage' but fails to explain how.

## **Evaluation**

There is an evaluative stance with respect to the texts and question but may demonstrate some weakness in relevance. The candidate demonstrates engagement with both female protagonists and there is a real sense of the candidate's engagement with the characters. For example, Jane regards Bertha in a 'violent, disgusting manner' (page 4) and Rebecca's narrator is 'fickle' (page 5), however they tend to demonstrate a more sympathetic engagement with Jane as she 'holds strong to her beliefs' (page 7) whilst the narrator in Rebecca is said to 'accept murder for the chance of affection from her husband' (page 7).

The concluding paragraph on pages 8 and 9, after an engaging argument through the main body of the response, is rather mechanical, however it does adequately sum up the line of argument taken throughout the response without adding any further evaluative comment of note.

## **Technical accuracy:**

This response meets the minimum competence for technical accuracy which includes few errors in the use of structure, style, language and/or literary terminology.

## **Range**

This response fully meets the standard described in the 12–10 range, so the highest mark from the range is awarded and the response is given 12 marks.