

Commentary on candidate evidence

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

Candidate 1

Analyse the function and impact of setting in two novels.

The candidate was awarded **15 marks**.

Texts: Albert Camus, *The Plague* and Geraldine Brooks, *Year of Wonders*.

Knowledge and understanding

This response offers a **relevant and thoughtful approach to the question** and shows **a broad knowledge and understanding of both texts**. The candidate states their intention in their opening paragraph: 'Eyam and Oran are not just physical locations but metaphors for suffering which shapes characters trajectories and explores individual responses to crisis'. The initial discussion focuses on Eyam as a 'small rural village governed by religious faith and hierarchal structures' (page 1 of the candidate response), and this allows the candidate to link setting to their analyses of characters, for example Anna from *Year of Wonders* on (pages 2, 5 and 6 of the candidate response), Dr Rieux from *The Plague* (pages 5-6 of the candidate response), Anys from *Year of Wonder* (pages 6, 7 and 9 of the candidate response), Paneloux from *The Plague* (page 8 of the candidate's response), as well as the key incident of the death of the child (pages 9-11 of the candidate response) and the allegory of war (pages 12 and 13 of the candidate response), both from *The Plague*. All of these observations are integrated into a **relevant** discussion of the function and impact of setting in these novels, encompassing society, societal expectations of women, and changing religious beliefs.

This response also uses **textual evidence which is relevant to the demands of the question**: there are five quotations from *Year of Wonders* and eight from *The Plague*, and numerous textual references to specific incidents in both novels.

Analysis

This response offers a **relevant analysis of a range of literary techniques, which supports the line of argument**. The response covers evocative language (page 2), nostalgic tone (page 2) imagery (pages 2, 10, 12) narrative voice (pages 3, 4 and 8), foreshadowing (page 4), characterisation (pages 5-8, 9-10), and allegory (pages 12-13).

From the outset, the candidate establishes setting as having a profound impact on the reader's experience of the novels. Both settings 'follow rigid structures that govern daily life' (page 1), soon to be disrupted by the arrival of the plagues. The initial settings are analysed and contrasted on pages 2-3: 'Brooks uses evocative language to romanticise the village's peaceful, cyclical way of life. The natural imagery she uses to portray the setting creates a nostalgic tone, and sets up a friendly feel about the village' (page 2). The opposite is true for Oran, which is 'a typical city, concerned with commerce and economic gain' and its inhabitants are 'unlike the citizens of Eyam, they are absorbed in the simple mindless pleasures that only result in money making' (page 3). The response then discusses the 'psychological disintegration of each setting' as 'the initial outbreak of the plague unfolds' (page 4). In Eyam, 'a ... narrow-minded village must progress through the crisis', and the main character 'ignores the expectations and uses the outbreak to show bravery' (page 5). Oran contrasts with this, and rather than opportunities opening up, 'the town [is] becoming a metaphorical prison, stripping citizens of their agency' (page 5).

The next section explores 'gender limitations' imposed by the setting in more depth, discussing the character of Anys (pages 6-7) and how both she and Anna 'embrace new opportunities [...] in dealing with the changing setting [where] the setting functions to portray the handling of change by the citizens' (page 7).

The response then returns to a discussion of the impact of the peaceful setting of the village green when it becomes the murder site of Anys Gowdie (page 9). This is compared successfully, and appropriately, to the idea that settings previously 'associated with education, innocence and future possibility' in *The Plague* become 'a place of meaningless death', in reference to the death of the child (page 9). The analysis of the importance of the church as a setting, which begins on page 8 a little hesitantly, is returned to on page 10 and shown to be fully relevant as the dramatic shift in Paneloux's attitude is imbued with particular poignancy because of the setting. Similarly, the observation that 'Anna and Elinor going down into the mine [...] emphasises hidden truths and entrapment' (page 12) is **relevant**, if a touch underdeveloped. The final, brief exploration of 'the allegory of war [...] as a microcosm for the plague' is an interesting one, but the candidate does not link this to the question, as they had with all their previous comments.

Evaluation

Overall, there is a **discernible and relevant evaluative stance with respect to the texts and the question, and based on evidence discussed within the response**. On occasion, the response refers to the impact of the writing on the reader explicitly, for example on pages 3-4 or page 8, but more often, the evaluation is implied and embedded within the analysis, for example 'peacefulness and community become[s] a site of chaos' (page 9) or 'harsh and powerful nature of the plague and the helplessness of human kind against such an uncontrollable force' (page 10).

Technical accuracy

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

Range

Holistically, this response fully meets the standard described in the 15-13 band range and is therefore awarded the highest mark from that band range.