**Success in Higher English: Critical Reading**

**Part 1: Scottish Text Question**

**Points to note:**

* **Range of texts: traditional/new; geographical ;gender; familiar and fresh**
* **Shorter texts- poems + short stories- 6 of these- old favourites and less familiar**
* **Crossover writers – why?**
* **Aims to allow freedom of choice for teachers**
* **List will be refreshed- some changes**

**How to approach teaching the Scottish text? (Experience from Nat.5)**

* **Choose something you enjoy/your pupils will enjoy**
* **Study of theme, character, setting, stylistic devices (as usual)**
* **Longer texts: practise analysis of ‘segments’ (key moments?)**
* **Shorter texts: make links between these (theme/ style…) for final question**
* **How many Scottish writers/texts (from list) to study?**

**What sort of questions will pupils face in the exam?**

* **10 marks on text in front of them (tend to be 2,3 or 4 mark questions)**
* **10 marks ‘go beyond’ to other texts/rest of text (final question)**
* **Range of question types allowing pupils to demonstrate understanding, analysis and evaluation of literature**
* **Final question- 10 marks- bullet points or essay : “no requirement to write a mini essay”- not preferred in any way**
* **Essay writing skills tested in the essay question- Scottish text qu. Tests reading skills**
* **No time to write a mini essay – approx. 15 mins for final question**

**How is the final question marked?**

* **Up to 2 marks for identifying “commonality” eg theme, characterisation, techniques as identified in question**
* **A further 2 marks for ref. to extract given in exam**
* **Up to 6 additional marks can be awarded for similar references to at least one other text/part of text by the writer.**
* **6 marks can be combination of 3 x 2 marks or 2 x 3. ‘Detailed and insightful’ comments gain 2 or more. 1 mark for more basic comments**
* **Possible for candidates to score 10 out of 10.**

**What does this mean in practice?**

Higher Specimen Questions on a shorter prose text (Crichton Smith short story)

**16.** Analyse how Iain Crichton Smith uses both word choice and sentence structure in

the first two paragraphs (lines 1—10) to emphasise:

(i) war’s futility

(ii) cruelty

You should comment on both word choice and sentence structure in each part of

your answer. 4

**17.** Explain how the anecdote about the dogfight in paragraph 3 develops the theme of

the futility of war. 2

**18.** Analyse how Iain Crichton Smith conveys the narrator’s unfamiliarity with his

surroundings. (lines 22—38) 4

**19.** In his stories set in wartime, Iain Crichton Smith develops the theme of the

destructive nature of war. By referring to this and at least one other story by

Crichton Smith, discuss how he develops this theme. 10

**What is expected for these marks? How do they achieve openness, clarity and predictability?**

**16** Candidates should cover both (i) futility and (ii) cruelty, and both language

features of word choice and sentence structure.

Points on futility are more likely to be found in the first paragraph; and on cruelty in

the second

(1+1+1+1) 0 marks for reference/quotation alone.

**Several possible correct answers (some given in MIs.) Clear instructions.**

**17.** Candidates should explain how the anecdote about the dogfight develops the theme

of the futility of war.

Marks may be awarded for a comment with supporting evidence.

 2 marks may be awarded for one detailed/insightful comment; 1 mark for a more

basic point. ( Marks awarded = 2 or 1+1)

Detailed reference or quotation may be used, plus comment.

0 marks for reference/quotation alone.

**Flexibility in ways to gain marks.**

**18.** Candidates should discuss how the writer conveys the narrator’s unfamiliarity with

his surroundings.

2 marks can be awarded for reference plus detailed/insightful comment; 1 mark for

reference plus more basic comment. 0 marks for reference/quotation alone.

**Several possible correct answers (some given in MIs.) Flexibility: 2+2, 2+1+1, 1+1+1+1**

**19.** Up to 2 marks can be achieved for identifying elements of commonality as identified in

the question, ie the destructive nature of war.

A further 2 marks can be achieved for reference to the extract given.

6 additional marks can be awarded for discussion of similar references to at least one

other short story by the writer.

In practice this means:

Identification of commonality (2) (eg: theme, characterisation, use of imagery, setting,

or any other key element…)

From the extract:

1 x relevant reference to technique/idea/feature (1)

1 x appropriate comment (1)

(maximum of 2 marks only for discussion of extract)

From at least one other text/part of the text:

As above (x3) for up to 6 marks

OR

More detailed comment x2 for up to 6 marks

Thus, the final 6 marks can be gained by a combination of 3, 2 and 1 marks depending on

the level of depth/detail/insight. The aim would be to encourage quality of comment,

rather than quantity of references.

**(This is standard MI for every final question in STQ at Higher).**

**8 of 10 ‘shorter question’ marks are for analysis. (2 for explain/link example to theme)**

**Compare with Nat. 5**

**14.** Look closely at lines 1—12.

Give **two** examples of the writer’s use of language to emphasise the effect of the

war on the people of the village. 4

**15.** “They watched the road often for telegrams.” (line 12)

Look closely at lines 13―18.

By referring to **one** example, show how the writer uses word choice effectively to

emphasise the significance of the telegrams to the people in the village. 2

**16.** “The two women who watched the street were different.” (line 19)

From lines 19―30, summarise the differences between the two women. Use your

own words as far as possible. 4

**17.** “They were both frightened because he could be coming to their house.” (line 36)

Looking closely at lines 36―39, show how the writer’s word choice helps to

emphasise their fear. 2

18. By referring to this story and **at least one** other story by Iain Crichton Smith, show

how the writer is successful in building tension. 8

**How do these compare with Nat. 5? (Think about what is expected for the marks, level of support in the question…)**

**14, 15, 17… quote (1) + explain (1) pattern**

**15, 17… directed to word choice.**

**16 …own words character summary. Less likely at Higher**

**18…could be a Higher question. ‘Show how…’ becomes ‘Discuss how…’**

**Compare with STQ on longer prose text at Higher:**

**Specimen paper on ‘The Trick is to Keep Breathing’**

**24.** By referring closely to lines 1—13, explain how Galloway makes the reader aware of

Joy’s attitude towards the psychiatrist. 2

**25.** “Tell me from the beginning . . . in your own words.” (lines 15—16)

Referring closely to at least two examples in lines 15—30, analyse how the writer

conveys Joy’s state of mind at this point. 4

**26.** Referring closely to at least two examples from lines 31—45, analyse how the writer

highlights the significance of Michael’s death. 4

**27.** By referring to this extract and elsewhere in the novel, discuss how Galloway

develops the theme of loss. 10

**8 of the ‘shorter question’ marks are for analysis (2 explain how writer makes reader aware).**

**Would pupils be able to apply their knowledge/analytical skill to this extract? Is there anything here that would not be covered in terms of key areas of the novel?**

**Do the extracts reflect what we would be teaching pupils about the text?**

**Other examples (from specimen paper):**

* **‘Men Should Weep’- Maggie’s character and relationships with others**
* **‘Sunset Song’- characters of Guthrie and Long Rob/writer’s style- creating sense of panic/urgency- role of community**
* **‘The Cone Gatherers’- attitudes of Lady R-C Neil etc. Sacrifice of the innocent.**
* **Poetry: we would expect poetry to be mainly analysis (popular choice at Nat.5)**
* **Poetry questions tend to focus on key techniques and themes**

**Part 2 : Critical Essay**

**Points to note:**

* **Comes after Scottish text question in exam paper**
* **3 questions per genre section**
* **“Open” questions- should be something for everyone over the 3 choices in each genre(including questions to suit Scottish texts if they have studied two from list)**
* **Aim to be positive**

**How is it marked?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Current Higher** | **New Higher** |
| **Cat. 1: 25** | **Cat 1 : 20-19** |
| **Cat 2: 21 or 23** | **Cat 2: 18-16** |
| **Cat 3: 17 or 19** | **Cat 3: 15-13** |
| **Cat 4 : 13 or 15** | **Cat 4: 12-10** |
| **Cat 5: 9 or 11** | **Cat 5: 9-6** |
| **Cat 6: 5 or 7** | **Cat 6: 5-1 \*\*** |
| **Cat 7: below 5** | **0 \*\*** |

**Similarities/Differences between Current and New Higher:**

* **‘Text friendly’ questions: across any selection of 3 (per genre) the aim is to have something for everyone (if texts are of appropriate standard)**
* **Does not mean that every question would suit every text**
* **Questions appropriately demanding for Higher level**
* **Assessment criteria ‘grid’ : key words are adequate/clear/very clear/comprehensive or committed (‘fail’ word is ‘limited’)**

**Comparison of questions:**

**New Higher specimen paper: poetry section**

10. Choose a poem in which the poet explores one of the following emotions: grief,

happiness, love, alienation.

 Discuss how the poet’s exploration of the emotion has deepened your understanding

of it.

 11. Choose two poems which deal with the same theme.

 Discuss how the theme is explored in each poem and explain which poem you

believe offers a more memorable exploration of the theme.

 12. Choose a poem which features a relationship.

 Discuss how the poet’s presentation of this relationship adds to your understanding

of the central concern(s) of the poem.

**Current Higher 2013 critical essay paper: poetry section**

13) Choose a poem which explores the pain of love or the pleasure of love or the power of love.

Show how the poet’s exploration deepens your understanding of the pain or the pleasure or the power of love.

14) Choose a poem in which humour is used to convey a serious message.

Show how the poet uses humour to convey the underlying seriousness of the poem.

15) Choose a poem in which there is a powerful evocation of place.

Show how the poet powerfully evokes a specific place to explore an important theme.

16) Choose a poem in which the poet or narrator is reflecting on a joyful experience.

Show how the reflections of the poet or narrator convey the joyfulness of the experience.

**Despite reduced number of options, which has the wider choice?**

**Critical essay example 1) Choose a play in which a central character is heroic yet vulnerable.**

**Show how the dramatist makes you aware of both qualities and discuss how they affect your response to the character’s fate in the play as a whole.**

Death of a Salesman

In ‘Death of a Salesman’ by Arthur Miller, the protagonist, Willy Loman, is a heroic yet vulnerable character. The play explores the plight of the vulnerable individual in the harsh “business is business” 20th century society. Willy Loman is a desperate and hard working salesman forever trying to make it as a big shot in the business world.

The first scene of the play is when we see Willy in a vulnerable and fragile state. He has just come home from a failed business trip that was cut short by his failure to make it to his destination. One of his first words are “I’m tired to the death” showing us that; while he is an extremely exhausted man, he is a hard working and, in many ways, heroic. His obsession with the phrase “be liked and you will never want” is clearly portrayed in his false interpretation of how to get by in life. Unfortunately, Willy seems to be living in a dream and believes he is ”vital in New England”, when in fact he is not. His sheer refusal to see reality results in him teaching his sons, Biff and Happy, all the wrong values. His sheer determination to convince people “a man who creates a personal interest is the man who gets ahead”, can be seen as heroic in the way that he believes what he believes and never gives up.

Willy constantly switches from the present to the past when reality gets too much for him. In the past, his heroic dedication to his sons,, and Biff’s football career shows that he is an influencial and powerful figure to their father and idolise him as something he is not. In the past everything seems to be going well for the family and Willy’s great influence on the boys can be seen as heroic and favourable. It is only when we jump back into the future do we see he is, in fact, a deteriorating old man, vulnerable and inevitably losing track of his life.

Arthur Miller makes us aware of Willy’s vulnerable state when we see that he quite often contradicts himself. “Biff is a lazy bum”…”there’s one thing about Biff – he is not lazy”. This demonstrates Willy’s vulnerable state and how he finds it difficult to decide whether Biff is a lazy bum or not. This is clear confusion of the simplest tasks. This makes us feel sympathetic towards Willy because we can quite obviously see that Wlly is constantly trying to make his sons, his wife, Linda, and the business world see that Willy Loman can be a heroic and influencial figure in the sales industry.

It is only when we find out that Willy is trying to kill himself do we understand the extent of Willy’s troubles and worries. Linda is forever praising and supporting Willy “You’re the handsomest man in the world” and we see that in Linda’s eyes Willy will always be a hero of some sort.

In act 2 Willy tries to gain a desk job at his work rather than being a travelling salesperson. From this point onwards everything spirals downwards as Willy is, in fact, fired in the meeting for being unfit to work for the firm. This is when we see a very heroic side of Willy come through. Previous arrangements have been made to have dinner with his sons after his meeting. Although Willy has just lost everything, he still manages to keep a brave face for his sons and refuses to face up to the fact that his fate has inevitably been decided for him. This shows a heroic and determined personality.

After an emotional and intense climax final scene, Willy seems happy but shocked that his son Biff uses him after many years of conflict resulting from an incident that happened some ten years previously “Biff – he likes me!” Willy then falls back into the dream, a helpless and broken man. The hope of trying to live out the American Dream fails.

Willy realises there is nothing else he can do to escape, and so he kills himself. This is a heroic thing, in this case, as he does it so that Biff can gain the money he needs to go to university, from the insurance. Willy’s vulnerable character has given everything to the dream and gives up the only thing he has left, his life. This is a heroic and admirable act, yet shows the desperation Willy, the vulnerable individual, felt after years of trying to live out the wrong dream. “He had the wrong dreams, all, all wrong”.

**Commentary: The opening paragraph briefly, but effectively, identifies the source of Willy’s vulnerability in the “harsh” world of business. Thereafter, there is reference to his “vulnerable and fragile state” coming back from a business trip and the candidate successfully makes the point that his determination to work on despite his exhaustion is “heroic”.

His heroism is further dealt with using several examples: his refusal to give up ;his dedication to his sons; Linda’s view of him; his “brave face” his decision to commit suicide to benefit Biff. Vulnerability is also addressed, though less frequently: his exhaustion his confusion; his desperation .

There are some skilfully-written sections in the essay, for example the second paragraph There are also some less successful passages, for example the odd conclusion regarding Willy’s influence in the business world which follows a reference to his confusion about Biff’s laziness . There is also a missed opportunity to link Willy’s sacking to the description of his “plight” in the opening paragraph. Clarification of the exact nature of the American Dream would also have been helpful.

Nevertheless, this answer shows very clear understanding of the character.**

**Knowledge and understanding:** very clear K and U of text

Very clear (in places) textual evidence used to focus on the demands of the question .

**Analysis:** clear analysis of the effect of language features

**Evaluation :** very clear evaluative stance

**Technical:** few errors. Understood at first reading

**Mark : Cat 2 (just): 16/20**

**Critical essay Example 2) : Choose a novel in which a confrontation between two characters is of central importance in the text. Explain the circumstances of the confrontation and discuss its importance to your understanding of the novel as a whole.**

The Catcher in the Rye

In “The Catcher in the Rye” by J D Salinger there is a confrontation between the main character Holden and a hotel lift operator. In the novel Holden is a sixteen year old boy who narrates in first person his journey from leaving school to New York and then at the end to his home. He has set views on life and tries to integrate in the Adult World but the confrontation illustrates his innocence.

After running away from school Holden ends up in New York. He sees many of the adults as “phonies”. This highlights his childlike innocence as he is unable to have a complicated attitude to something, for him it is either black or white. He fits into his own category of “phony” as we seen on the train journey to New York where he lies to a mother of one of the boys from his school. He says himself, “I’m the most terrific liar you ever saw”. Once in New York he tries desperately to integrate into the adult world. As shown when he asks the cab driver if he wants to go out with him for a drink and childlike questions such as where do the ducks “go in winter”.

Another desperate attempt to integrate into the world of adult’s is shown throughout the novel in his failed attempts to lose his virginity. When he is in the Hotel Maurice the lift operator asks him is he wants to hire a prostitute for five dollars. Holden agrees and he demonstrates his innocence as all he does is talk to Sunny, the prostitute, he mentions he is a virgin and lies about having a spinal injury so as to have an excuse to allow him to get Sunny to leave.

Although Holden pays Sunny, Maurice comes back later and demands and extracts more money from Holden. In the confrontation Holden bursts into tears. He is the punched in the stomach. This is a central part of the novel as this confrontation signals the downward spiral of events where in the end Holden ends in a mental institute. Holden is shown as powerless after being beaten up and tries to cope through his childlike way of slipping into his imagination. He pretends he is an actor and has been shot. It is his way of coping with the true nature of what has just happened and detracts from the fact his physical weakness has been exploited by Maurice allowing him to steal money.

This confrontation signals the start of Holden’s depression but other factors play a vital role. Jane Gallagher was his childhood girlfriend who although doesn’t appear in the book affects Holden deeply. She is described by Holden as perfect and Holden idealises his time with Jane. Holden throughout the novel is terrified that she had lost this childlike innocence due to having sex with Holden’s old roommate, Stradlater. Holden is angry that Stradlater in Holden’s opinion used her for sex and wasn’t interested in the details of her personality. For example when speaking to Stradlater about Jane Holden asks “does she still keep all her kings in the back row”. Stradlater dismisses this questions as unimportant as it regards checkers. This idea of Jane’s loss of innocence plagues Holden throughout the novel.

Holden visualises himself in a fantasy as saving children from going into adulthood and losing their innocence. This comes up as Pheobe asks Holden what he wants to be when he grows up. Holden replies with the image of him saving people as “they start to fall over the edge of a cliff”. This falls represents the loss of innocence. This idea is reinforced by his love of things being the same as he says “that’s the nice thing about carrousels as they always play the same songs”. This shows Holden’s innocence as he doesn’t realise his own innocence, illustrated by his categorisation of “phonies” and the scene where Maurice punches him. His views disillusioned and this is illustrated by his actions in the novel.

In the novel “Catcher in the Rye” by J D Salinger the confrontation between Holden and Maurice is of central importance to the text as it is the start of Holden’s downward spiral of depression that leaves him in a mental home in the end. The confrontation is also important as it illustrates Holden’s innocence to the reader. It shows that despite his attempts to integrate into adult society after running away from school he is still innocent and vulnerable as shown by his powerlessness against Maurice. This explains Holden’s underlying illusions about society and himself that lead to his depression and ultimately determines his fate in a mental institute are shown to the reader.

**Commentary: On the first page the candidate names the two characters, Holden and the lift operator Maurice, between whom there is a confrontation. Providing background on Holden, she details the nature of the confrontation: “he has set values on life and tries to integrate in the adult world but the confrontation illustrates his innocence”.

Examples of his innocence follow , with the candidate observing that he “sees many of the adults as phonies”. Underlining Holden’s childlike innocence, s/he uses the example of the lies he tells while on a train journey: “I’m the most terrific liar you ever saw”. At this point s/he shows that Holden thinks he can cope in the adult world. However, there is further evidence of his innocence in the conversation he has with the New York taxi driver, asking him out for a drink, like an adult but then asking where the ducks go in winter, like a child.

The response shows clear knowledge and understanding of the incident. For example, s/he makes the point about his pretence at being an actor to “detract from the fact that his physical weakness has been exploited by Maurice”. More could have been said about the incident itself: instead, the candidate goes back into the text to discuss other factors eg Jane Gallacher and Stradlater.

There is an imbalance in the structure when the candidate goes on to include the carousel imagery without an adequate link into this. S/he does try to rescue the situation by re-introducing Maurice at the this paragraph but this is short-lived and unconvincing.**

**Knowledge and understanding:** clear K and U of text

Clear textual evidence to support demands of question

**Analysis:** clear analysis of features of language

**Evaluation**: clear evaluative stance

**Technica**l: few errors. Understood at first reading.

**Mark: Cat 3 (middle) 14/20**

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|  |  | **Critical essay example 3).Choose a play in which a character has to exist in a hostile environment.****Briefly describe the environment and discuss the extent to which it influences your response** **to the character’s behaviour and to the outcome of the play.** |

A Streetcar Named Desire

Tennessee William’s “A Streetcar Named Desire” is set in New Orleans and follows the character of Blanche DuBois who goes to stay with her sister Stella and her husband after having to leave Lousiana for behaviour that was unacceptable for that time. However Blanche is not as welcome as she hoped, as conflict occurs between her and her sister’s husband Stanley.

Stanley’s dislike for the character of Blanche is made clear from the very first scene, when he is seen to see through her façade. Blanche is hiding the truth of her past, and living in a constant illusion. When offered a drink by Stanley she states that she doesn’t drink often, although she has already had two drinks that night, one without being offered. Stanley replies to this with “some people rarely touch it, but it touches them often”.

It is clear to Stanley that Blanche is a threat to his power over his wife, and his position as a “king” in their household, and he will do anything possible to remove this threat.

Stanley’s dislike for her character is further propelled when he overhears Blanche trying to persuade Stella to leave him, reminding her of their aristocratic background, and comparing it to the small area in which Stella now lives, with her “animal like” husband. It is when he sees that Blanche is actually having an effect on his wife, he begins to plan her downfall.

Stanley attacks Blanche, through revealing the truth about her past, her permicious nature, and her countless affairs with young men, to both her sister and Mitch, Stanley’s friend whom Blanche had been dating.

Blanche had attempted to create a new image of herself in Mitch’s eyes, lying to him about several things, including her age. “I call her little, in spite of her being somewhat older”. In fact Blanche is five years older than Stella. Mitch also unknowingly assists her in her illusions, helping her to cover a naked light bulb with a paper lantern when she first arrives. Blanche holds a great fear of the light, as to her it symbolises the truth, and this is used against her when her past is revealed. Mitch hold her under the light to see her true age.

After this encounter Blanche can be seen to be slowly decaying, as when Stanley returns from the hospital, where Stella is giving birth, he finds her “dressed in a somewhat soiled white gown”. This can be seen to symbolise her reputation, as she can no longer be seen as a pure, innocent, viginal beauty, the stains on her dress represent her damaged reputation.

However this image of Blanche only propels Stanley further as he chooses this moment to regain his power completely, and rape Blanche. Stanley teases her with this new found power, and stands in her way, so that she is forced to brush past him, when she clearly wants to avoid contact, and after a slight struggle e is seen to carry her “inert” figure to the bedroom.

This is too much for Blanche, as her mental state begins to deteriorate, and when she tells Stella of Stanley’s action’s she cannot believe her and instead arranges for her to be sent to a mental institute.

Blanche is constantly striving to be liked and now that she has lost the prospect of comfort and safety from Mitch, her sister and Stanley, she chooses not to face reality, but to draw herself further into her world of disillusionment.

She is seen to be led off by a doctor within the last scene to whom she states “I have always depended on the kindness of stranger” this is an ironic statement as no strangers are kind to her. But this is her entered her illusion.

Stanley’s hostility towards Blanche did make me sympathetic towards her character. But it also made me think about the extreme lengths people would go to protect their lifestyle.

**Commentary: the essay begins with a brief summary of the plot and the candidate introduces the idea of conflict between Blanche and Stanley. Thus the “hostile environment” is established.**

**The candidate reveals adequate knowledge and understanding of the text through discussion of of the conflict between the two characters Stanley apparently feels threatened by Blanche’s presence as he has a powerful hold over his wife. When it emerges that Blanche is trying to persuade Stella to leave her husband, he “begins to plan her downfall”. This takes the form of revealing facts “about her past”, her “pernicious nature” and her “countless affairs” . Her true age is uncovered. She is five years older than her sister and has tried to hide her true age. When the truth emerges, Blanche is seen to be “slowly decaying”. This is followed by an account of the rape scene – Stanley’s bid to regain control. This scene is covered in a straightforward, basic fashion, showing the candidate’s awareness of Blanche’s vulnerability. Finally, Blanche retreats from reality because of the “hostile environment” with which she is now faced, and “draws herself further into her world of disillusionment” The conclusion indicates sympathy for Blanche as has been implied throughout the response.**

**The essay deals less well with the second part of the question.**

**Knowledge and understanding:** adequate K + U of the text

Adequate textual evidence to support a line of thought- some focus on the question.

**Analysis:** adequate analysis of language features

**Evaluations:** adequate evidence of evaluative stance

**Technical:** few errors, understood at first reading.

**Top end of Cat 4 : 12/20**

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| **Critical Essay: example 4):Choose a novel in which a confrontation between two characters is of central importance in the text. Explain the circumstances of the confrontation and discuss its importance to your understanding of the novel as a whole.** |

The Great Gatsby

The ‘Great Gatsby’ by Fitzgerald is a novel in which the main character Gatsby falls in love with Daisy Buchanan and maks it his dream to do anything to have her back after she marries Tom Buchanan. This essay will look at a confrontation between Gatsby and Tom, which enivitably see’s Gatsby’s dream die.

Gatsby is a very determined character in this novel and from as very young age he tried to change himself into something else and of more importance, with the love of Daisy as his motivation. He changed his name, worked on speech and education. When we are finally introduced to Gatsby in chapter 3 he is standing out towards the green light, which is at the end of Daisy’s dock across the water. The light symbolises the decline of the American Dream which is the central theme of the play. This fact that Gatsby is reaching out for it suggests he is using it as a guide for his dream to have Daisy, which he wants very badly. The green light also represents the green land which the first settlers must have seen when they reached America.

“Fresh, green breast”

This use of word choice in fresh conveys an idea of new opertunities and unspoilt land and food. ‘Green’ conveys an idea of welcoming unspoilt land full of potential and ‘breast’ conveys an idea of fertility and nutriment, as though America could support and successfully care for these people. This welcoming imagery that America was the land of dreams and people could have what ever they wished for. In Gatsby’s case he managed to get the social, financial status he requires for Daisy’s approval but he never managed to win her heart fully no matter how much he tried to.

After meeting Daisy at Nick’s house, Gatsby and Daisy began an affair.

“Daisy comes over quiet often in the afternoons.”

However, when Gatsby is invited with Nick to tea at Tom and Daisy’s they decide to head into town. It is the hottest day of the summer, and this helps to create a climax for what’s to come. Hot weather can be related to feeling uncomfortable and helps make an intense atmosphere in the hotel room, Gatby is deluded and believes Daisy loves him, however she would never leave Tom and the safe, financial security he gives her. This leads to a confrontation and pivotal, climactic scene between the two love rivals, Gatsby and Tom.

“Daisy never loved you”

Gatsby is too wrapped up in his affair that the fails to see that Daisy is just having fun with him. However, Tom believes that it just a meaningless flirtation between them and doesn’t see the threat as he knows Daisy will come to him, as they are both careless people, as Tom has also been having an affair.

This confrontation shows the decline of the American dream because Gatsby failed to get his dream as she is not worthy of him and we realise that he was never going to succeed because Daisy is a selfish person who comes from old money, unlike Gatsby. This confrontation was important to understand the novel as a whole because of the decline of the American Dream, which is the theme of the novel throughout. When Gatsby dies at the end of the novel, the dream dies with him too, as he showed so much wasted determination. We begin to understand that the Buchanan’s are extremely snobbish people who retreat behind their money when faced with a problem and get away freely everytime without facing consequences, which contrasts to the honest and likeable character of Gatsby.

The ‘Great Gatsby’ by Fitzgerald is a novel which see’s a confrontation between Gatsby and Tom, which eventually symbolises the decline of the American Dream and how corrupt America was now. We understand after the conflict how unlikeable and immoral the characters were on East Egg such as Tom and Daisy. I feel Fitzgerald did this very successfully and enabled us to understand other important aspects such as theme as a result of conflict.

**Commentary :In the first part of the response , the candidate tries to establish the circumstances of the confrontation. We learn of Gatsby’s determination, his love for Daisy and how the light symbolises the American Dream. This last point is developed at some length although the minute analysis of “Fresh, green breast” distracts from the demands of the question-the confrontation .**

**When the candidate moves on to deal with the confrontation, it is clear that s/he understands that Daisy will never leave Tom and that the incident is “pivotal” and “climactic” but the scene itself is largely dealt with through a single quotation – “Daisy never loved you” . The candidate deduces from this that Daisy was “just having fun” and that Daisy and Tom are “both careless people”. These are slightly superficial comments-nothing intrinsically wrong with them-but it is not entirely clear how they are reached.**

**In the final section of the essay, the candidate tries to respond to the second half of the question by dealing with the wider implications of Gatsby’s failure and its relationship to the American Dream. The response demonstrates candidate some understanding of the implications of the confrontation for the text as a whole and there is also no doubt that she has a basic grasp of symbolism and characterisation but these are not well explained. Even though there is knowledge and understanding of the text, the lack of explanation, the poor contextualisation and the consequent dependence on assertion, especially in the second half of the essay, places this essay in Cat 4 (10-12).**

**Knowledge and understanding:** Adequate knowledge and understanding of text

Adequate textual evidence to support line of thought- some focus on the question

**Analysis:** Adequate analysis of effects of language features

**Evaluation**: adequate evidence of evaluative stance

**Technical: f**ew errors. Understood at first reading

**Mark : Cat 4 10/20. Basic pass**

**Critical essay Example 5) : Choose a novel or short story which is set during a period of social or political change. Discuss how important the writer’s evocation of the period is to your appreciation of the text as a whole.**

The Remains of the Day

In the novel ‘The Remains of the Day’ by Kazuo Ishiguro, the setting is in the 1920s and 30s, and post-war. Both these times were of great social and political upheaval, and this setting is essential to conveying many of the writer’s themes, such as less, dignity and loyalty.

The elderly butler, Stevens, of Darlington Hall, an English country house, goes on a car journey to the West Country, in the hope of employing a previous housekeeper. During the journey, flashback is used to tell the story of Stevens’ life and the history of Darlington Hall.

The manor, Darlington Hall, is beautifully described and has a symbolical significance to the novel. The description of

‘a series of orange shafts breaking the gloom of the corridor’

Reflects the beauty of the house and also a slightly dreamy quality. This shows how lovely the house was in its great days in the 1920s-30s. the importance of routines and chores at this time is huge, and Stevens places great emphasis on it, shown by the time he reprimands the housekeeper for her lack of ‘house knowledge’ (the proper place for ornaments). The importance of well-polished silver is also shown: ‘it was a public index of a house’s standard’. However, post-war, Darlington Hall’s grandeur has declined. Many of the rooms have been shut down, there are only a few staff remaining and the silver company ‘Giffen & Co.’ is obsolete. This decline of an English country house reflects the huge changes in English society, such as the demise of the aristocracy, which become clear later on.

The man Stevens serves, Lord Darlington, is extremely involved in politics. After the First World War, Germany was forced into a state of economic depression. A close friend of Lord Darlington’s, who lived in Germany, shot himself because of the dire conditions. This spurs Lord Darlington, in the name of ‘honour’ and ‘fair play’ to alleviate the problems in Germany. However his noble values are incongruous as the world moves forwards:

‘”His lordship is a traditional English Gentleman. Decent, honest, well-meaning. But his lordship here is an amateur.”’

This is a speech made by an American gentleman at an international conference at Darlington Hall. Although he is ‘a truly good man at heart’, Lord Darlington is weak and easily manipulated. For example, at a point when he is under the influence of an eminent fascist, he sack two Jewish maids. He also tries to encourage the British Prime Minister to visit Nazi Germany. He is, of course, disgraced as a ‘Nazi sympathiser’ and ‘traitor’.

Throughout this, Stevens’ unquestioning loyalty to Lord Darlington is made clear. Even when the Jewish maids are dismissed, Stevens calmly points out that:

‘our duties are not to our own foibles and sentiments, but to the wishes of our employer.’

Stevens never accepts that his loyalty to the weak Lord Darlington was misplaced, but dismisses his poorer characteristics as ‘modesty’ and focuses on the good intentions, rather than the shocking results. This is made clear by the reaction of a young man:

‘”You just let all this go on before you and you never think to look at it for what it is.”’

It never seems to occur to Stevens to have his own political opinions: he is utterly devoted to Lord Darlington:

‘I will not consider my vocation fulfilled until I have done all I can to see his lordship through. The day his lordship’s work is complete, I will be able to call myself a well-contented man.’

It seems that Stevens has no identity beyond his position as Lord Darlington’s butler.

Stevens has been isolated from change in the world, and his attitudes are at odds with those of the people of post-war England. When the new owner of Darlington Hall comments

‘”And you’re a genuine, old fashioned English butler…”’

It seems as if Stevens is a rare antique, rather than a person. A crucial idea for Stevens is dignity, which he sees as

‘crucially, a butler’s ability never to abandon the professional being he inhabits.’

Hence, he feels it is not his place to comment on political matter:

‘”I am unable to assist in this matter.”’

However, in a small village, he meets people with views very different to his own:

‘“there’s no dignity to be head in being a slave.”’

‘”We fought for that right…it’s one of the privileges of being born English that no matter who you are…you can express your opinion freely.”’

The strength of this view in post-war England contrasts with Stevens’ feeling that it is up to other people to make decisions:

‘there is a limit to what the ordinary man can learn and know.’

However, Stevens renounces his notion of his own dignity at the end:

‘I trusted in his lordship’s wisdom. I can’t even say I made my own mistakes. Really – one has to ask – what dignity is there in that?’

He understands that his own unswerving loyalty and shewed concept of dignity have left him unfulfilled. The world has changed around him: people are exuberantly celebrating on the pier, rather than demonstrating the ‘quiet restraint’ he admires. The traditional values he has lived by, in the framework of the manor house are now obsolete.

‘The Remains of the Day’ shows the contrast between political and social attitudes before and after the Second World War. The setting of a grand manor and the political involvement of the aristocracy (which is meaningless) reflect this as they decline. The central character, Stevens, is isolated from the post-war world by his notions of loyalty and dignity, which mean he loses the meaning in his life.

**Commentary: From the outset the candidate makes clear the period (1920s, 1930s and post-war) in which Ishiguro sets his novel. One indication that this script may be a successful answer to this question is suggested by the word “upheaval”. This candidate is proposing to discuss not just the writer’s evocation of the setting in time but also the social and political changes of the era. The focus is to be on the use of flashback “to tell the story of Stevens’s life and the history of Darlington Hall.”

An effective structure emerges, with the physical setting of Darlington Hall is used as a symbol of an aristocratic world which has fallen into decline by the 1940s. The candidate supports his/her fluent comments with apt, concise quotations which are woven seamlessly into the flow of his argument.

Having explored the changing social world of the Hall before and after World War II, the candidate turns his/her attention to Stevens’s master, Lord Darlington, as a representative of the social class whose world changes irrevocably from the 1920s to the 1940s. The candidate skilfully discusses the incongruity of the master’s innate nobility towards a Germany defeated in World War I, set against his weakness in allowing himself to be influenced by fascist and anti-Semitic forces, as exemplified by his sacking of two Jewish maids.

In tandem with the candidate’s skilful discussion of the character of Stevens’s employer, s/he never loses sight of Stevens’s unswerving loyalty, sense of duty and dignity. S/he carefully balances the butler’s life which “has been isolated from change in the world” with the comments of ordinary people in post-war England who hold diametrically opposed views to his own – “there’s no dignity to be had in being a slave.” This contrast is neatly summed up when the butler’s quiet constraint is juxtaposed with the “exuberantly celebrating” people on the pier.

At the end of a most impressive essay the candidate confidently draws his essay to a very satisfying conclusion which shows his genuine insight into Stevens’s character.**

**Knowledge and understanding:** comprehensive K and U of text

Comprehensive selection of textual evidence to support relevant and coherent argument

**Analysis:** Comprehensive of the effective of features of language

**Evaluation:** committed, very clear stance

**Technical :** few errors. Understood at first reading

**Cat 1: 20/20**