

Candidate 2

Texts used: B/D (Practice paper 2018)

The extract from Bleak House and the poem 'The Deserted Village' present poverty and the effect of money in two very different lights; one focusing on the impact it has on humans, the other on nature.

Comment [A1]: The introduction is clear, but somewhat over-simplified; the candidate might think about opening up more possibilities in the extracts.

The past beauty of the village is revealed through the earthy, beautiful and naturalistic nouns "glade" and "bowers", both reminiscent of children's fantasy games and the innocence of the children. The "charm" of the past is further reinforced by the 'AABB' rhyme scheme, initially adding a tone of togetherness and gentility. Yet, when coupled with the destructive verbs of "fled" and "sunk", a sense of unease creeps in, contrasting the rhyme. The poem suggests that "wealth" has inflicted this terrible poverty on the entirety of "England", not only this single isolated village. The breathy 'h' in "wholesome" mirrors the all-encompassing nature of the poverty that has struck nature and small "hamlets" because of the increase in wealth. In contrast, Bleak House reveals the plight of the poverty-stricken humans who have scarcely enough money to support themselves, and the struggle they face due to the fiscal scarcity. The "opening" of the door at the start of the passage is symbolic of how society had intentionally blinded themselves to the poverty surrounding them, by "lock[ing]" the two children in. The subsequent unravelling of the depths of poverty that the children face in their day to day lives suggests that once the metaphorical door of poverty is "open" for all to see, the depths are finally comprehended. Whilst the poem evokes images of children playing in "bowers", Bleak House represents the realistic situation for poverty-stricken children. Despite Charley being a "very little girl" in stature, she is referred to as having "womanly" characteristics, because poverty has made her grow up and mature beyond her years, taking the youthful childhood bloom from her, and leaving her "white and wrinkled". These two adjectives suggest ageing and elderliness, a dark irony considering Charley is barely old enough to look after herself, let alone her two siblings. Furthermore, the child-like adverb "playing" conflicts

Comment [A2]: It is not clear that the words 'glade' and 'bowers' create all these effects.

Comment [A3]: This is an attempt to offer detailed analysis, but the 'h' sound in 'wholesome' could not achieve the effects it is credited with here.

Comment [A4]: Here, the candidate's style is unhelpfully complicated; a simple expression such as 'lack of money' or 'poverty' would be preferable.

Comment [A5]: The idea of opening the door on poverty works well in the answer.

Comment [A6]: A grammatical term is used inaccurately here.

with “washing”, the former linking to innocence, youth and vitality, the latter an adult’s job creating the evident image that poverty has brushed Charley’s childhood aside.

Ironically, an increase in wealth for the former inhabitants of the ‘Deserted Village’ has resulted in the desolation and ultimate neglect of nature. The unkempt and uncared for regions where the children played are hinted at with “the long grass” suggesting at an uncultivated and deserted playground.

Furthermore, walls which humans often build, thinking they are concrete, solid and will always keep nature out, is “mouldering”, adding a notion of death and decay into the once exuberant scene. Yet, fleeting and ephemeral things in the grand scheme of the universe, such as “princes and Lords” and the potential for “wealth” have become more solid and valuable to the people who used to live here, throughout the whole poem there are negative connotations surrounding the semantic field of gentry, whilst the “peasants” are described as “bold”. This suggests that the writer believes it is best to be rich in the surrounding of vitalised nature, instead of the worldly and temporal lure of “wealth”. The disdain with riches and wealth, and the desire for it is revealed in the enjambment between “train” and “usurp”. The slight pause at the end of “train” adds a hint of suspense, but also emphasises the relentlessness of the “train of trade” which has so altered the natural surroundings, changing it from the once “smiling” village. This pace is further reinforced in the poem with the anaphora of “and”, making a list out of the many changes wrought to the environment.

Dickens’ use of dialogue in Bleak House is interesting, because much of it comes from the boy, who appears to take the role of looking after his little sister, and being locked in a “poor” room into his stride. The use of call and response, with the narrator and his guardian asking the questions and the boy answering once again portraying a wisdom and an “air of age”, despite his tender years. Furthermore, the reference to Emma as a “burden” is a metaphor for both the physical and mental struggle that Charley is facing, one that she should not

Comment [A7]: This is a successful piece of close reading, picking an interesting image and explaining it thoughtfully.

Comment [A8]: The candidate demonstrates good understanding of a central idea in the poem.

Comment [A9]: There is an attempt here to look at the effects of enjambment, but the analysis is not convincing, and does not demonstrate clear comprehension of the poem at this point.

have had to assume due to her age. Lastly, the division between Charley and the younger two siblings is revealed via the plural pronoun “their” likening Emma and the boy together in their helplessness and ultimate reliance on Charley. This is further emphasised at the end of the passage, all “three children standing close together, yet “two” rely firmly on the “third”, highlighting the unfairness of poverty in making Charley grow up so much beyond her years. This fragility of poverty and destitution hanging in the balance is made clear in both pieces of literature perhaps being best concluded with the noun “breath”, hinting at the delicacy and easy ability of poverty.

Comment [A10]: Here, too great an effect is being credited to the use of a single word which is quoted out of context.

Comment [A11]: The candidate presumably quotes the word ‘breath’ because it appears in both extracts, but does not engage with the ways in which it is used; quoting it in isolation does not demonstrate understanding of the extracts or their effects.

Examiner Mark: 21/30

This answer demonstrates ‘secure understanding of texts’ and ‘thorough close reading’ (quotations taken from Band 2 of the ELAT marking criteria). The principle outlined for comparison, that one extract deals with people and the other with nature, is not very successful at bringing the extracts together, however, and the answer lacks a clear sense of argument and structure. The analysis of the extracts is mixed in quality and is at its weakest where small details such as single words (‘their’, ‘breath’) or even sounds (the ‘h’ sound in ‘wholesome’) are credited with creating large effects. The answer is stronger where it demonstrates a sustained and coherent understanding of ideas and effects, such as the discussion of the ‘mould’ring wall’ in Goldsmith.

This is a ‘proficient’ answer which shows a ‘clear and sustained response to literary features’ despite some weaknesses in analysis; it was given a mark in the upper half of Band 2.