

Unit 4

Creative Writing and Reading Literary and Non-fiction Texts Section A: Creative Writing Task 1:

Write your entry for a creative essay writing competition. The audience is young people. The picture below is to be the basis for the competition entry. Provide your own title.



	Examiner's Comments
<p><u>Celluloid Moments of Grace</u></p> <p>As I stood there gazing at the <u>celluloid haiku of our family</u>, I swore I could hear the manufactured mechanical click of the DSL. <u>A wry smile formed slowly on my lips as the memory gently seeped its way back into my consciousness.</u> That summer on Achill was one that I now recalled fondly, yet it had slipped, unnoticed, out of memory as the years and family and life took over. <u>An unexpected moment of grace.</u></p>	<p>Effective title</p> <p>Introduction of a motif that is repeated and echoes the title, engaging the audience</p>
<p>The <u>strangely comedic scene, eternally captured in that sepia-tinged image</u>, was like something out of those awful UTV holiday shows where they try to highlight all that <i>"our beautiful wee country"</i> has to offer. <u>Based on our faces in this photo, however, a Mediterranean all-inclusive would definitely have been a safer bet!</u></p>	<p>Introduction of humour</p>
<p>Dad's perplexed face, not even attempting to hide the fact that <u>he wasn't even close to less than impressed</u>, holding that impractical, <i>"highly masculine"</i> umbrella. <u>Mum, in that horrendous yellow mac, gripping him tightly; almost as if she feared she may tumble off the side of the frame if he, or she, were to let go.</u> Then the two of us, <u>forced to wear matching, gender appropriate, colours to our parents.</u> Michael's face was hilarious. He looked for all the world like he was about to burst into floods of tears. The <u>incongruent vividness</u> from the technicoloured collapsible chair he held awkwardly (<u>the one that always nipped you when you first sat on it</u>) forced me to chuckle softly.</p>	<p>Complex sentence structure</p> <p>Photographic detail enhances audience's engagement</p>
<p><u>Then there was me.</u> I too looked on the verge of tears as I held that pink bucket tightly with all my might. As I looked at my face I wondered, if I could, what would I say to that younger me? <u>With the weight of all my acquired wisdom of the world, what advice could I possibly give that lost little 7-year-old?</u> And lost I was, not physically, but lost without an understanding of where I was in the world or what the challenges were that stretched out before me in the years to follow <u>that moment of grace.</u> My eyes are in the bucket now. A small dune of sand sits at the bottom, surrounded on all sides by a little collection from the wild Atlantic Ocean. A little ivory pea crab meanders across the dune towards its shell home. The shell home that, when unoccupied, gives me the opportunity to return here to Keel Beach and to hear the crashing of the sea against the Cliff of Keem.</p>	<p>Varying sentence lengths</p> <p>Purposeful use of alliteration</p>
<p>And suddenly, as the memory of holding that cold hard object against my ear enters my mind, I am there; back in the old four berth caravan. Mum and dad are in the lounge; dad is lazing back on the settee, mum rests against his shoulder, protected by dad's arm as he holds her closely. Her face not the creased face of discomfort in the image, <u>but one of absolute contentment and ease as her</u> and dad share a moment of grace. As I gaze in wonder at the two childhood sweethearts my attention is drawn from them to the hypnotic bass rhythms coming from the small radio on the shelf above their head. Dad's favourite song, <u>Unchained Melody; the Righteous Brothers' classic, provides the perfect soundtrack for this moment of grace</u> as I smell Michael peeling an orange in the room next door. The early evening sun is</p>	

slowly setting over the Cliffs of Croaghau, spilling rivers of ochre, orange and rust through its meadows and valleys as it crashes down to the deep navy and blue of the coast.

Use of senses to evoke the scene

And as I stand here now, many years later, the mesmerising smell of heather and lavender pull me to the window where my children chase each other, to and fro at the foot of Croaghau. A calming sense of serenity engulfs me whispering to me, reminding me of the importance of moments of grace.

Effective conclusion

Examiner Commentary:

Task 1: Writing (i) and (ii)

Development and Style: Competence Level 5

Assured development and commanding style throughout.

Structuring/Use of Linguistic and Structural Features: Competence Level 5

Confident structuring; assured use of a variety of structural and linguistic devices to create impact. For example, the use of the “moment of grace” motif and use of the senses to evoke the scene.

Purpose and Audience: Competence Level 4

Strong sense of purpose at the top end of CL4. The candidate demonstrates an extended vocabulary to enhance and sustain the audience’s engagement. For example, “celluloid... incongruent... meanders... mesmerising”. However, the response is not directly targeted to the specified audience of young people.

CL54 Total mark awarded: 54

Task 1: Writing (iii)

Range of Sentence Structures: Competence Level 5

Confident use of a wide range of sentence structures, manipulated for impact. For example, “An unexpected moment of grace.” and “Then there was me.” Accurate and controlled deployment of paragraphing.

Use of Punctuation and Grammar: Competence Level 4

Increasingly accurate use of grammar and a range of punctuation to sustain clarity and actively engage. Placed at the top end of CL4 as the response lacked the variety expected for CL5.

Spelling: Competence Level 5

Lapses in spelling limited to occasional errors.

CL545 Total mark awarded: 28

Task 2

You have **26 minutes** in which to read **both texts** and respond to the **task** below.

Compare and contrast how the writers of Texts A and B have created a sense of unease. Present supporting evidence from both texts.

	Examiner Comments
<p>In Text A, the writer employs <u>a sudden shift in the mood</u> of the scene; a <u>swift change from the idyllic description of the “lily pond and the lazy lizards”</u> ✓ alliteration is to finding himself <u>“confronted by a flat wilderness”</u>. ✓ The rapid change in mood and location is physically manifested in the use of the verb <u>“Gasp”</u> effectively employed by the writer to show Finn’s reaction when he is faced with this starkly different view. The rapid transition to a sense of unease created by the setting is underpinned by the use of another <u>forceful verb, “confronted”</u>. ✓ The reader gets a sense that Finn almost <u>has to react in some way to defend against the hostility of this new setting, in which, he finds himself</u>.</p>	
<p>In Text B, by contrast, © the sense of unease is gradually built as the young characters embark on the <u>“Night-raid” of the puppy farm</u>. <u>Whilst the reader might initially associate the use of a night-time setting with danger, threat and unease; the initial mood created by the writer is rather a mood of the character’s heightened awareness at the beginning of their clandestine mission</u>. This emotion of the characters is mirrored in the illuminated night: <u>“with a bright half-moon occasionally obscured by hurrying clouds.”</u> ✓ It isn’t until the following lines that we get a real <u>sense of the character’s apprehension</u> and growing unease: <u>“Excitement clutched at Elaine’s stomach. There was no doubt she was regretting her offer to join the others on the raid.</u> ✓ Her <u>“regret” runs counter</u> to the suggestion of excitement but <u>is effective</u> in leaving the reader in no doubt that Elaine is entering a situation that she knows is full of danger and threat and the reader is invited to share the concern that Elaine is experiencing.</p>	Perceptive interpretation
<p>The <u>personification of the trees</u> in the <u>military simile</u>: <u>“stood like sentries all around”</u> ✓ amplifies the ominous silence of the place: <u>“The stillness was the first thing that hit him”</u>. ✓ The use of the verb <u>“hit”</u> ✓ at this point <u>reinforces the physical manifestation of fear and threat</u> that Finn is experiencing. This is continued by the use of the <u>verb, clamped</u>: <u>“he had suddenly been clamped with earmuffs”</u>. ✓ These <u>active verbs create an image of a place both alive and perilous</u>. The <u>sibilant description of the “sentries”</u> ✓ <u>links back to the fact that the scene was once the setting of a great battle</u> and this reinforces the sense of unease within the scene and the heightened tension that the reader feels. Text B also © has Elaine <u>physically reacting to the environment</u>, she is described as having <u>“shivered slightly”</u> ✓ and <u>“shuddered”</u> ✓ whilst in Text A Finn <u>“shivered”</u>, ✓ <u>“gave another shiver”</u>. ✓</p>	Evaluative
<p>Like Finn © who spoke to Tara in a <u>“hushed”</u> ✓ voice describes the scene as <u>“creepy”, “eerie” and “cold”</u>. ✓ Elaine is equally nervous and her anxiety is clearly evident as the claustrophobia of the scene is identified as the</p>	

countryside 'closes in' ✓ on their car. Mike's supportive response reinforces the sense of unease that he can see Elaine experiencing as he, "...gave Elaine's arm a re-assuring squeeze". ✓

In Text A the infertile nature of the place is identified in some of the writer's adjectives and language choices: "flat wilderness" ✓ and "scrubby field". ✓ The writer repeats this later when he describes the "scrubby grass" ✓ and the "wasteland" ✓; in Text B © an intentionally intimidating description of their environment is developed as they approach the "half-derelict" ✓ farm where the trees and hedges "looked like monsters from a nightmare" ✓ with the unease increasing due to their "creaking" ✓ noises. Even the use of the word "leering" ✓ suggests something smirking or staring with malicious intention.

Perhaps the strongest suggestion of unease in Text A comes from the discussion of the wasteland as home to "a whole bunch of dead foreigners" ✓ due to "a fierce battle" ✓ where "loads of people died." ✓ The reference to the temperature becoming "colder" ✓ as they move towards the graves reinforces the anxiety and unease the characters, and reader, will be feeling. If we look at Text B © we can see that the writer uses an unnerving description of the farm buildings to add to the feeling of apprehension: "standing out black against the moonlit sky". ✓ The simile that follows "the windows... like unwinking eyes" ✓ giving the impression that the characters are being watched and monitored.

Examiner Commentary:

This confident response is analytical and evaluative, where the candidate clearly demonstrates a perceptive understanding.

Read and understand Text/select appropriate material: Competence Level 5

Precise and judicious selection of examples from both texts to support understanding and explore meaningful comparisons and contrasts.

Develop and sustain interpretation of writer's ideas: Competence Level 5

Sustained perceptive interpretation of both writers' intentions.

Explain and evaluate elements of writers' craft: Competence Level 5

Evaluates elements of the writers' craft across both texts and how these elements impact the reader.

CL555 Total mark awarded: 32

Tasks 3 and 4

The extract below is the beginning of the newspaper article.

Explain how the writer has tried to gain and hold the interest of the reader.

WHY I HATE FASHION

I am a reasonably normal person – I like food and friends and comfort. It is just that I cannot ignore the fashion silliness any more. I walk past a shop that sells 6 inch heels and I am angry. Top Shop? Angry again. All these adverts for this season’s “must have”... . Don’t even go there. I have had it with the giant faces and figures of overpaid skinny actors telling me what I should buy from every billboard and magazine and TV screen.

I decided to write this piece last year when I read that a 16-year-old girl wearing high-heeled shoes had fallen between the carriages of a train. She died, of course. It was snowing that night, but still this young woman, with a lifetime of fashion choices before her, ran along the platform and is now dead.

	Examiner’s Comments
<p>The writer opens the extract employing <u>widespread use of the first-person narrative to firmly establish a connection and rapport with the reader</u>. She informs us of the fact that she is: <i>“a reasonably normal person”</i>, ✓ she continues, informing us that she likes creature comforts: <i>“I like food and friends and comfort.”</i> ✓ <u>The combined use of the inclusive first-person narrative and the confession that she is just like the reader creates an immediate bond</u>. We, the readers, can connect with this person, <u>therefore, we should equally feel the keenness of her irritation at the ‘fakeness’ of the fashion industry</u>. Our attention is <u>therefore grabbed from the very start</u>. The <i>‘girl next door’</i> theme is developed further by the use of an <u>informal style, where you could imagine the person was having a discussion with you</u>: <i>“Don’t even go there.”</i> ✓ <u>A comment usually reserved for a chat between friends; the writer is gaining our confidence in a very subtle and astute fashion. We want to know what it is that vexes her so.</u></p> <p>And so when she employs her ‘question and answer technique’: <i>“Top Shop? Angry again.”</i> ✓ <u>we are drawn further into the passage, and in many ways, we can empathise with how she is feeling as we too may have had similar experiences.</u></p> <p>The writer’s scorn toward the advertising images that are flashed on screen or billboard is <u>amplified through hyperbole</u>: <i>“giant faces and figures of overpaid skinny actors telling me what I should buy”</i>. ✓ This is almost a <u>grotesque image</u> that is created for the reader and our shared disgust at the fashion industry is continued.</p> <p><u>Short sentences aligned with an exasperated, angry tone engages the reader and reflects her anger</u>: <i>“I am angry...I’ve had it”</i>. ✓ <u>The blunt and harrowing statement: “She died of course.”</u> ✓ <u>at once brings the reality of the situation into full view. There is an almost flippant, inevitable tone to the sentence</u></p>	<p>Detailed analysis of first-person narrative</p> <p>Perceptive</p> <p>Insightful comment</p>

that both shocks and reminds the reader that this is not an empty rant, but something which is actually claiming lives.

Examiner Commentary:

The candidate clearly demonstrates a perceptive understanding.

Read and understand Text/select appropriate material: Competence Level 5

Precise and judicious selection of examples from the text to support understanding.

Develop and sustain interpretation of writer's intentions: Competence Level 5

Sustained perceptive interpretation of the writer's intention(s).

Explain and evaluate elements of writers' craft: Competence Level 5

Evaluation of elements of the writer's craft and how these elements impact the reader. The candidate evaluates the writer's use of hyperbole and tone as well as providing a perceptive analysis of first-person narrative.

CL555 Total mark awarded: 15

Task 4

The extract below is the final four paragraphs of the newspaper article.

As the writer finishes off her article, she is considering the part fashion has played in her own life and also the part it played in the tragic death of a 16 year-old girl.

Explain how the writer has created a negative view of fashion.

I couldn't help suspecting that had she been wearing a shoe designed for actually walking rather than for fashion, she would be alive. This was different from the usual fashion death, where a model has a heart attack on the catwalk, because she lives on grapes.

This was an ordinary girl, a bystander. And why was she wearing high-heeled shoes on an icy night? Because fashion, the whispering monster, told her to.

I thought about that young woman for days; I couldn't forget her. Why? Because I realised that fashion has hounded me. It has followed me around like an eternal schoolyard bully, throwing self-doubt and rubbish into my path.

I can look at clothes on the catwalk now and laugh at their daftness. They are not for me. I still think about that young woman on the train tracks though. What price did she pay for her shoes?

	Examiner's Comments
<p>As the extract continues the reader is struck by the speaker's <u>confession</u> which succeeds at persuading the reader to see fashion from her highly negative perspective:</p> <p><i>"I couldn't help suspecting that had she been wearing a shoe designed for actually walking rather than for fashion, she would be alive."</i> ✓</p> <p>This appears like an almost <u>ridiculous statement</u>, but on reflection the reader can see that the fact the poor girl is no longer with us due to 'fashion choices' ✓ is something that needs actioned upon and <u>we the readers have a duty to support the writer's negative view of fashion.</u></p> <p>The somewhat <u>bizarre opening sentence</u> of the extract is continued further into the first paragraph when the writer moves between describing in an almost flippant tone: <i>"the usual fashion death"</i>, ✓ to the poor model who has <i>"a heart attack"</i> ✓ as a result of living <i>"on grapes"</i>. ✓ Again, these statements seem like <u>hyperbole</u>, yet everyone will have heard of fad diets that these models are forced to follow to be the correct shape for fashion. In a very <u>subtle way, the writer is using the peculiar world of the fashion industry and its odd tragedies to effectively get across the tragedy of these poor lives lost in the pursuit of a certain style or look.</u></p> <p>The start of the second paragraph sees a <u>shift in tone</u> from the flippant first paragraph. The <u>repetition</u> of <i>"This was"</i> ✓ in this paragraph occurs using a</p>	<p>range of writer's craft examined</p>

serious and sombre tone and promotes the negative view the writer holds. The use of the past tense here reminding us that a life has been needlessly lost: *“This was an ordinary girl, a bystander.”* ✓ The reader is struck by the empathy that the writer is now exhibiting. This juxtaposition magnifies how horrific the fashion industry is.

This idea is furthered in the next paragraph with the negative metaphor *“the whispering monster.”* The use of the verb *“whispering”* ✓ personifies fashion as an insidious evil further portraying it in a negative light.

The anecdotal confession that she too has been pressurised by this *“monster”* *“hounded me”, “like an eternal schoolyard bully, throwing self-doubt and rubbish into my path”* ✓ makes the reader sympathise with the writer and inevitably feel more inclined to agree with the writer’s viewpoint.

The final paragraph moves the discussion along offering hope for the reader that they too can break free from the spell of fashion: *“I can look at clothes... and laugh at their daftness. They are not for me.”* ✓ However, in the final lines we are reminded of the human element to this tale and the writer confides that she does: *“still think about that young woman...”* ✓

The reader is left with a question: *“What price did she pay for her shoes?”* ✓ A seemingly commonly asked question with an underlying message. It remains unanswered, leaving the final damning verdict on fashion up to us, the reader.

Assured understanding

Evaluative

Examiner Commentary:

The candidate clearly demonstrates an analytical and perceptive understanding.

Read and understand Text/select appropriate material: Competence Level 5

Precise and judicious selection of examples from the text provides evidence of assured understanding.

Develop and sustain interpretation of writer’s intentions: Competence Level 5

Sustained perceptive interpretation of the writer’s intention(s).

Explain and evaluate elements of writers’ craft: Competence Level 5

Evaluation of elements of the writer’s craft and how these elements impact the reader. For example, tonal shift, use of past tense negative metaphor.

CL555 Total mark awarded: 15