**Component 4: Prose Study**

**Candidate B Commentary: High Band 5**

*'Journeys are a catalyst for the development of the self'.* In light of this statement, compare and contrast the writers' presentation of identity in *Jane Eyre* and *Atonement*.

**Wording of task**

* A focus on such an abstract and amorphous concept as ‘*identity*’ can be problematic in encouraging candidates to take a ‘real people’ or risky psychoanalytical approach to characterisation. However, this confident candidate manages to avoid that trap and always maintains a literary perspective, concentrating on the writers’ presentation of their central characters and linking this to the novels’ wider themes.
* Use of the term ‘*presentation’* helps the candidate maintain a literary focus by foregrounding AO2, while ‘*compare and contrast’* underlines the need to address AO4.
* In addition to being a useful steer towards AO5, the use of a critical opinion helps the candidate structure an argument by narrowing the focus; concentrating solely on the ‘*presentation of identity’* would be very wide-ranging, especially when the characters are as complex as Jane Eyre and Briony in *Atonement*.
* Nevertheless, the decision to focus on the presentation of *‘identity’* rather than ‘*journeys’* leads to a rather wide canvas and depth is sometimes sacrificed to breadth. The candidate’s scope is very ambitious for 3,500 words and not all ideas are fully developed.

**AO: High Band 5 - 20 marks**

* There is clear evidence of ***sophistication*** in the candidate’s conceptual grasp. This is underpinned by secure knowledge and mature understanding of both texts, allowing the candidate to range confidently in selecting evidence and to take a ***creative*** approach in arguing a case.
* This is a ***thoughtful and individual*** response. The candidate is ***fully engaged*** throughout with very clear focus on the task and effective use of topic sentences to signal the direction of the argument. The task is perhaps too wide-ranging with some ideas left a little under-developed but the candidate ***organises the material effectively*** into a clear and relevant line of argument, striking an appropriate balance between the two texts.
* There is clear evidence of ***confident and sophisticated*** use of ***literary*** terminology to **further the argument,** rather than mere device-spotting or identification of linguistic features which are not particularly helpful or relevant.
* ***Flair*** is demonstrated in the precision of the candidate’s expression and ambitious vocabulary. A ***high level of technical accuracy*** and ***clear academic register*** are sustained throughout.
* Despite the rather ambitious scope of the title, the candidate achieves all Band 5 criteria.

**AO2: High Band 5 - 19 marks**

* This is a solidly literary response with ***perceptive and sophisticated analysis*** of language at word level, along with focus on structure and the progression of ideas, suggesting a strong sense of the **generic features of literary fiction**. There is consideration of a range of prose devices, often couched in appropriately tentative language, such as ‘*might be’* or ‘*could suggest’*, indicating a confident grasp of the texts’ complexity and the subtlety of the writers’ conscious choices.
* The solid **literary ‘heft’ of the texts** definitely helps here as the candidate can explore and analyse highly sophisticated use of language and structural devices in both and never becomes side-lined into focusing solely on plot or characterisation.
* Textual support is ***apt and confidently chosen***, always used as basis for discussion of technique linked with evaluation of effect and relevance to the main argument.
* However, there is at times scope for **more textual support** to make points fully convincing. For example, the first section on childhood innocence could have been developed a little more before moving on to the next point but this is largely the result of such a wide-ranging topic as ‘*the presentation of identity’.* The quality of the analysis might have been still higher given a narrower focus.

**AO3: Low Band 5 - 17 marks**

* A range of relevant social, historical and literary contextual influences is explored demonstrating a ***secure understanding*** of the relationship between text and context. At no time does the candidate allow context to drive the response and the paragraphs always start and end with the texts. It is interesting to note that the candidate perhaps wisely avoids writer biography which is often speculative and can detract from a solidly literary emphasis.
* Some suggested links between text and context are perhaps a little heavy-handed or assertive at times (see lines 49-54; 154-5) but references are always ***sound*** (as in lines 21-4) with **some** evidence of a ***perceptive discussion*** ***and analysis*** of connections between the two; the context is always considered in light of the text and integrated into a consideration of the task and the texts as literary works (lines 30-6; 79-82).
* Once again, the overly ambitious scope of the task means that some interesting contextual influences are raised but left a little under-developed (lines 42-6; 51-4).

**AO4: High Band 5 - 10 marks**

* ***Productive*** connections further the argument. There is clear evidence of ***illuminating*** links as the candidate confidently uses convincing comparatives when weighing up similarities and differences in the writers’ approaches, suggesting an enhanced understanding of both texts reached through simultaneous study (eg lines 68-74).
* The clear structure of the essay helps the candidate **balance AO2 and AO4** effectively to make meaningful literary connections between the two: the topic sentences outline the point being argued; the point is developed in detail in one text with appropriate close textual analysis; this is then echoed in consideration of the second text; the two texts are drawn together to sum up how they chime or differ in this particular point. This is **not the only way to approach AO4** but it is effective here.
* Once again, a slightly narrower and more clearly defined focus might have helped the candidate drive home key connections but all the Band 5 criteria are securely met.

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**AO5: High Band 5 - 10 marks**

* The candidate has clearly read widely and, once again, the choice of two very ‘hefty’ literary works means that there is a wealth of good quality critical material to inform an ***independent, autonomous*** response to both. The impressive bibliography makes clear that the candidate has not relied heavily on on-line sources which are often more uneven in quality than print-based criticism.
* There is clear evidence of ***mature and confident discussion*** of alternative interpretations; the candidate understands and engages with the views quoted and uses them productively to further the argument. There is even the confidence to discuss the validity of some of the opinions cited ((lines 244-250; 266-272).
* AO5 is also addressed in the thoughtful consideration of different, relevant interpretations of language and devices (lines 38-40; 43-46; 82-85; 128-130) and in the confident, appropriate use of tentative language.

**TOTAL MARKS: 76**