**Component 1 Section B: Balancing AOs**

**Use the colour coding to compare how effectively Candidates F and G address and balance all five AOs: AO1; AO2 (double weighted); AO3; AO4 and AO5**

***‘For both poets, relationships seem to be exclusively about pain rather than pleasure or fulfilment.****’*

Explore connections between the ways in which Larkin and Duffy present human relationships, showing how far you agree with this comment. You must analyse in detail at least two poems from each of your set texts.

**CANDIDATE G**

Clear grasp of significance of wider contexts and possible influence on poets

Despite Duffy’s poetry being published in the later 20th Century and Larkin’s ‘The Whitsun Weddings’ anthology being written in a post-war, post-industrialisation Britain, the two poets convey a sense of pain in a relationship despite the large time gap and the largely different societies. For example, in ‘Talking in Bed’ and ‘Disgrace’ a sense of pain in relationships is conveyed by the slow deterioration of a relationship emphasised by an emotional distance. Moreover, in the poems ‘Stuffed’ and ‘Sunny Prestatyn’ there is a sense of female pain as a result of domestic abuse and domination, but an idea of male pleasure in this. As the critic Jones claims, Larkin ‘embraces the purely personal’ by engaging in his own relationships, as does Duffy.

Confident, relevant engagement with view in question.

Uses effective choice of paired poems to outline trajectory for nuanced argument

Sound use of relevant critical view

Firstly, in the poems ‘Talking in Bed’ and ‘Disgrace’ there is a stronger sense of pain articulated as the poems focus on a sense of distance between the two lovers despite a physical closeness. This idea is articulated when Larkin writes ‘*lying together’*, the word ‘together’ creating a sense of physical closeness and intimacy as the two lovers are ‘*in bed’*. However, the narrator emphasises that communication ‘*ought to be easiest’*, the word ‘ought’ emphasising a sense of difficulty in talking and opening up emotionally as the hard sounds conveyed articulate a lack of connection. This concept thus suggests that the verb ‘lying’ could also be perceived as a pun, referring to deceit and a lack of honesty instead of physically lying down. This would disprove the critic Navemore who claims that ‘Larkin seldom presents himself as anything but the onlooker’ as although the poem is not a dramatic monologue, the strong sense of a person struggling with coming to terms with a failing relationship is conveyed to the reader. The poem is also autobiographical as it was written about Larkin’s relationship with Monica Jones, re-suggesting the reading of ‘lying’ as deceit as Larkin had an affair with Betty Mackereth, his secretary, and Maeve Brennan his colleague at Hull University where he was librarian for 30 years, and thus the theme of deceit reflects his own romance.

Uses biographical context productively to discuss language choice showing secure understanding of connections between texts and contexts

Develops link (pain of distance) with confident analysis of language choices in both poems in turn: lines 29 to 62

*(AO4 as ‘scaffolding’, supporting double weighted AO2)*

Secure, relevant connections between ideas in chosen poems

Confident discussion of alternative interpretation

Confident, perceptive application of literary terminology.

Some linguistic terms also used to explain how meaning conveyed

Similarly, Duffy’s poem ‘Disgrace’ is also presenting an idea of distance in a relationship. This occurs despite the frequent use of the pronoun ‘*we*’ which suggests a couple as it is apparent that the two lovers are no longer a united force, as they ‘*had not been home in our hearts for months*.’ The metaphor here employed by Duffy is significant as the noun ‘home’ connotes a place of comfort, love and security thus elucidating that their ‘hearts’ are no longer full of love as the relationship has deteriorated. The disappointed tone of this declarative sentence articulates the persona of the dramatic monologue’s pain and sorrow that the relationship which was previously full of love and light has disintegrated. This also demonstrates that Navemore’s statement cannot be applied to Duffy’s poem as the monologue creates a strong sense of voice and involvement which enables the reader to experience the pain and anguish of lost love with the persona, discrediting the idea of an ‘onlooker’.

Confident, apt support

Perceptive analysis

Sophisticated ideas based on confident discussion of implicit meaning

Confident discussion of critical view used for both poems

Well-chosen view used to stimulate discussion of poetic technique

Both Larkin and Duffy create a sense of a failed and unpleasurable relationship when the imagery of darkness is employed. The critic Watts claims that Duffy utilises ‘tightly coiled images and precision wording’ and indeed there is an overwhelming sense of pain and sorrow evoked in the reader via Duffy’s personification of the house as ‘*nursing/a thickening cyst of dust and gloom’*, the use of enjambment creating a sinister tone as the maternal image of the verb ‘nursing’ contrasts the darkness and desolation of the nouns ‘dust and gloom’ which articulate the idea that the house represents the coldness of the relationship, this adjective evoking a sense of the forlorn and dark. This imagery of darkness is further seen when Duffy writes ‘*small deaths of lightbulbs’*, the noun ‘lightbulbs’ symbolic of light and warmth which subsequently creates the image of lost passion and correction. Similarly, the critic can also be applied to Larkin’s poem, as evidenced when he writes ‘*dark towns heap up on the horizon’.* The adjective ’dark’ depicts the image of a silhouette of a town in the sunset, however it could alternatively be argued to present the domestic and everyday as gloomy and unforgiving as there is no warmth or sign of welcoming here, this suggesting that the poet’s intention is to present everyday life as dull as a result of the lack of passion in the relationship. Moreover, the image of a ‘horizon’ being ‘heap[ed] up’ shows that light from the sun is being blocked, creating a sense of entrapment which presents an emotional darkness due to the relationship being dead yet the two lovers are still ‘together’. Furthermore, Larkin also employs pathetic fallacy when he writes ‘*wind’s incomplete unrest’* as the noun ‘unrest’ creates the image of constant wind which subsequently creates a rapidly hostile environment which is perhaps a metaphor for the hostility in the relationship and the narrator’s whirring thoughts as he tries to find words that are ‘*not untrue’*. Likewise, Duffy also creates a sense of a hostile environment via the semantic field of violence, as seen when it is written ‘*Dead flies’, ‘stiffened’, ‘blackened’, ‘rotten’* and *‘screaming*’, creating an atmosphere of decay and anguish to reflect the persona’s pain in the relationship. This is most evident by the image of rotten applies which reflects the original sin as it refers to Eve eating the forbidden fruit, suggesting adultery and betrayal. This may be influenced by Duffy’s Roman Catholic background despite the fact that she was atheist as it is her sexuality was condemned by the church and her indulgence in pre-marital sex with Adrian Henri shunned by the church. Overall both poets show no sense of love or pleasure as the persona and narrator describe the failing relationships which they are in.

Confident discussion of implicit meaning

Sophisticated, thoughtful analysis

Confidently explores ambiguity and layers of meaning

Mature evaluation of effects of poet’s language choices

Again, AO4 link is productive in leading to detailed AO2 analysis as development: lines 63 to 105

Fully and creatively engaged. Individual, thoughtful

Confident connections between text and range of contextual influences.

Perceptive use of tentative language when discussing contextual factors

Productive use of biographical context to discuss language choice and meaning

On the other hand, in the poems ‘Stuffed’ and ‘Sunny Prestatyn’ there is a sense that relationships are painful only to women as a sense of domination is conveyed to elicit male pleasure. This is seen in ‘Sunny Prestatyn’ as the ‘*girl on the poster’* is argued to be an extended metaphor for a woman in real life who is domestically abused and violated, turning the compound adjective ‘boss-eyed’ from the image of graffiti to the image of someone who has a damaged tale as she has been attacked. Similarly, in ‘Stuffed’ Duffy creates a disturbing idea of sexual domination and abuse as in the final stanza it is revealed that the person ‘*like[s] her not to tell’* the pronoun ‘*she’* suggesting that the ‘*owl’* and *‘crocodile’* animals are in fact an extended metaphor for women who are victims of sexual abuse. The critic Mendelson argues that ‘Duffy’s talent…is her ventriloquism’ and indeed she creates a strong sense of a dominant persona via her utilisation of a strict structure, as each of the first three stanzas begins with the personal pronoun *‘I’* and a verb, followed by the two lines beginning with a monosyllabic adjective. This creates the sense of a dominant person who enjoys submission, reinforced by the perverse image of ‘*my living doll’* as the noun ‘doll’ evokes the image of an inanimate object which is meant to be played with, however the oxymoronic adjective ‘living’ suggests that the doll is actually alive and this presents it to be a woman. Duffy has said she writes for the everyday, and in modern society domestic violence is now as common as one in five women will be harassed in their lifetime, and thus Duffy uses this dominant twisted person to perhaps advocate a change in outlook of society as it was not illegal for marital rape to occur when Duffy wrote the poem. Moreover, the evident misogyny is highlighted perhaps due to Duffy’s own life as a female poet as she was overlooked for many awards due to her sexuality, as she was passed over for Poet Laureate in 1999 due to her gender. She is the only female to have received Poet Laureate, emphasising how misogyny is still prevalent today.

Productive, perceptive use of contextual influences, expressed in appropriate tentative tone.

Productive links as framework

Highly accurate expression in which precision of vocabulary demonstrates flair.

Clear sustained academic style and registers

Confident balancing of AOs with AO2 as driving force and AOs 3, 4 and 5 used to support literary appreciation

Mature grasp of way biographical context can be springboard for more conceptual discussion of wider contextual, influences

On the contrary, Mendelson’s comment cannot be used to describe Larkin’s poem as the poem is observational in nature. As the critic Navemore says, Larkin ‘seldom presents himself as anything but the onlooker’. The narrator of the poem is perhaps purposefully distant to accentuate how society did not pay attention to domestic violence and instead looked away, opposing Duffy’s style of explicit violence to frighten the reader in advocating change. However, both poets employ a semantic field of violence, as evident when Larkin writes ‘*stab*’ and ‘*snaggle-toothed’*, the verb ‘stab’ perhaps symbolic of penetration to relate to when the ‘fissured crotch’ is ‘*well scored’* in suggesting the woman has been repeatedly dominated by men for their own pleasure and ignoring the pleasure of the female.

Illuminating links as connections shed light on each poem and lead to enhanced understanding.

Links are between poets’ work rather than their lives or broad ideas

Confident, mature discussion of range of alternative views. Autonomous, independent reader

Moreover, both poets employ sexual innuendo to create the sense of male enjoyment at the expense of female pain, as suggested when Larkin writes ‘*Behind her, a hunk of coat’*, the adjective ‘hunk’ being used to perhaps pun the coast with a large muscular man to create the idea of domination. Similarly, the verb ‘*I screw’* is a sexual colloquialism which presents the person of Duffy’s poem to be sexually abusive and dominant despite a ‘*snarl*’ to reiterate no consent.

Thoughtful, considered and fully engaged conclusion

To conclude, the poems ‘Stuffed’ and ‘Sunny Prestatyn’ present pleasure to disprove the hypothesis, however this is exclusive to men who dominate and abuse women. Relationships here are presented to be painful due to failed love and violence, articulating a lack of

 (*Online Exam Review, Component 1, Section B, Candidate 2)*

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| **AO1****Band 5** | *Fully engaged throughout. Thorough knowledge and confident understanding support sophisticated, creative and individual response.**Perceptive application of literary concepts and terminology. Labelling of linguistic features/word classes (noun, adjective, verb, etc) sometimes helpful and never detracts from quality of literary appreciation.**Effectively organised with high levels of technical accuracy and academic register sustained throughout. Precision of vocabulary facilitates expression of complex and nuanced meaning demonstrating flair.* |
| **AO2****Band 5** | *Critical appreciation of poems is driving force of response and analysis of both poets’ choice of language and poetic technique is detailed and developed.* *Perceptive, sophisticated analysis and evaluation of effects of writers’ choices* *Confident, apt textual support and sophisticated discussion of implicit meaning* |
| **AO3****Band 5** | *Productive discussion and analysis of range of contexts. Biographical context used to discuss poems and language choices and linked with wider, more conceptual contextual factors such as social/historical/literary influences.* *Confident grasp of relationship between text and context, often appropriately couched in tentative terms.* |
| **AO4****Band 5** | *Illuminating links between poems grounded in analysis of writers’ language choices which shed light on each poet’s choices.* *Productive connections effectively used as framework for argument and fully developed with detailed evidence from both poets’ work.* *(AO4 and AO2 closely linked as connections are between poems rather than poets.)* |
| **AO5****Low Band 4** | *Mature, confident discussion of other interpretations. Fully engaged with view in question which is used to structure confident line of argument.* *Clear evidence of autonomous, independent reader able to handle range of other readings and use them to inform own interpretation.*  |