

Comments¹

HIGHER LEVEL

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the poem

- *How well is the student's knowledge and understanding demonstrated by their interpretation of the poem?*

4	There is very good knowledge and understanding, demonstrated by careful interpretation supported by well-chosen references to the poem.
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The candidate accurately identifies the speaker and describes the situation; these are significant to her interpretation of the poem. She recognizes both the artist (Georges Braque) and the style of art alluded to (analytical cubism), though she does not explain how she knows this (this is a pattern, where both understanding and interpretation are sound, but 'knowledge' demonstrating how she arrives at these, needs to be demonstrated more consistently). The examples/quotations she does use (often with line numbers for reference) to support her valid views are relevant to her main claims, and she is able to link various aspects of the poem together in order to make her argument (eg in the discussion of how a disdainful tone is created in relation to the 'consumer', the artist, and the art). She does not achieve the top mark here because she has a tendency to make her argument too implicitly. Still, the candidate is rewarded for a fairly sophisticated discussion of the poem's critique. Several times, the candidate also briefly mentions the way the themes and approach are typical in Duffy's work, thus providing further contextualization for the poem. She incorporates a few points in answer to the first guiding question, and does explore the portrayal of Art, but chooses not to respond fully to the second guiding question. It should be noted that responding to the guiding questions is not required.

Criterion B: Appreciation of the writer's choices

- *To what extent does the student appreciate how the writer's choices of language, structure, technique and style shape meaning?*

3	There is adequate appreciation of the ways in which language, structure, technique and style shape meaning in the poem.
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¹ For a transcript of the oral, see the Appendix, pages 8-14.

There is quite a lot of discussion that demonstrates appreciation of the writer’s choices and their relation to meaning though these are not consistently explicitly identified nor analyzed in detail. For example, she (explicitly or implicitly) discusses the function of the situation, the speaker, allusions, register, dialogue and character relationships (both comparisons and contrasts), connotation, capitalization, atmosphere, tone, ambiguity, and representation. In each case, she is using these to prove her thematic points, though the connection is not always argued explicitly enough and often we are left with understanding the characters and their relationships though not always their significance in relation to the candidate’s introductory claims.

Criterion C: Organization and presentation of the commentary

- To what extent does the student deliver a structured, well-focused commentary?

4	The commentary is clearly structured and the focus is sustained.
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The candidate states in a brief introduction that she will mainly focus on two aspects of the poem, then proceeds to provide a sustained commentary for 08m 03ss. She thus sets herself manageable parameters for the time frame, though at times (as mentioned above) her argument needed further development, suggesting an even tighter focus might be required. The structure is organic but largely logical. She first delineates the situation, the allusion to the artist and his style, and the type of elite consumers identified in the poem (though quite often she does not do enough to show ‘how’ we are presented with these things, which has been dealt with on A when considering exemplification). She then goes on to explain how Duffy creates the speaker’s disdainful voice in order to critique the exploitation of the model and our conception of high art through explaining how she is objectified and how an alternative, contrasting ‘voice’ is created in the dialogue about art and its actual exploitative origins and processes. She wraps up the commentary with a brief conclusion which moves beyond simply restating the claims in her introduction. There is more than simple ‘evidence’ of a planned structure (a 3), and although she seems to get a bit muddled in the middle, we are convinced by the end that she has explored what she said she would coherently.

Criterion D: Knowledge and understanding of the work used in the discussion

- *How much knowledge and understanding has the student shown of the work used in the discussion?*

3	There is adequate knowledge and understanding of the content and some of the implications of the work discussed.
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The candidate deals with Hong Kingston's representation of prejudice in her discussion of the exploration of both ethnocentricity and/or sexism, two of the major concerns in the work. Sometimes there is insufficient detail or analysis of that detail to fully make her points. Her knowledge can thus best be described as adequate, though at times her understandings of the work's implications are quite sophisticated and independent, or heading in that direction.

Criterion E: Response to the discussion questions

- How effectively does the student respond to the discussion questions?

4	Well-informed responses to the discussion questions show a good degree of independent thought.
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At times the response is quite sophisticated and detailed (e.g. her initial discussion of mainstream Americans as 'ghosts' in relation to Chinese immigrants, though this is a bit garbled) at others, she seems to be fuzzy on these (what *are* some specific examples of the mother's sexist comments?). However, overall the candidate has demonstrated quite a good understanding of the work in relation to the various ways that the ghost motif functions in the autobiography and the two main types of prejudice that the author critiques. She recognizes the parts of the work which the questions ask her to address and is able to provide good comment on the whole. On both D and E, she seems to fall between a 3 and 4—so this has been taken into account when giving the marks.

Criterion F: Language

- *How clear, varied and accurate is the language?*
- *How appropriate is the choice of register and style? (Register refers, in this context, to the student's use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the commentary.)*

4	The language is clear and appropriate, with a good degree of accuracy in grammar and sentence construction; register and style are effective and appropriate.
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This is an articulate candidate, whose points *on the whole* are made clearly and fluently. However, one often feels that she could use a more precise terminology, especially within the commentary. There are expressions in both the commentary and the discussion (where one would expect it more) that are too informal, but these are more than balanced by overall sophistication and eloquence.

Total Mark: 22

NOTES

1. Only 10 minutes of the commentary and 10 of the discussion have been considered for this mark. Where the teacher/candidate has gone over this time limit, the response has not been assessed, though it has been included in the transcript (see Appendix, below).
2. The work explored in the discussion is NOT currently an author on the *PLA*. Students volunteered to take part in creating samples for workshops and it was necessary to use a Part 4 work in order to do this given syllabus coverage. However, it should be noted that ALL works for the Part 2 oral must come from the *PLA*.

About the subsequent questions to the IOC

The teacher asks the student to return to a couple of points made that need some development, namely, the paralleling of the prostitute and the artist and its effects. However, the third question takes the candidate over time, and it would have been better to simply end the oral after 09:53 m/ss. Unfortunately, a very good point made by the student (which really brings her whole interpretation together) cannot be considered.

About the Discussion questions

The first question refers the candidate to a major motif in the work ('ghosts') which links to various types of prejudice explored within the work. In subsequent questions, the teacher asks the candidate to build on her discussion of the author's exploration of prejudice—sometimes referring the candidate to specific chapters within the work that help her to build on her argument regarding the function of the ghost motif.

Appendix: Transcript of IOC and Discussion (Sample 1)

NB: The second text is by an author (Maxine Hong Kingston) who is *not* listed on the PLA. See 'Notes' below.

Total Length of the Oral: 21:33

Length of IOC: 10:47

Length of Discussion: 10:44

The 'overtime' is indicated by red font, and has not been included in the marking.

IOC

So I'll be commenting on "Standing Female Nude" by Carol Ann Duffy and I'll be mainly talking about two aspects of the poem. One is the deconstruction of the idea of art by approaching it from several viewpoints, mainly societal, and the other is the theme of exploitation through art.

So to touch upon the idea of the deconstruction of the idea of art first, Duffy, the sole *narrator* of the poem is actually the model in this *situation* which is basically that there is a cubist painter making a painting and the model is commenting on the process of the painting and on art as she does so. And from the references made within the poem it can be presumed that the painter is Georges Braque and the style is analytical cubism. So just to give a little bit of background this is interesting because formally, one of the main characteristics of analytical pieces is that they remove depth from the image and combine the object in the background frame so this kind of adds to the sense that the essence of the model is being taken out in order for the artist to be able to create the image that he wants. So there is that.

And, within the poem the consumers of art, which would be the elite section of society, are kind of referred to as an ambiguous third party which is made reference to several times throughout the poem. For example, line 15, 'They tell me he's a genius'. Um, yeah, so when this crops up it's usually demonstrating the opinion of the majority and the people who can claim within society to have an opinion on art or to understand it, which the model is not a part of, sorry, not a part of that section of society.

So basically, well it's also important to understand that the narration the *narrator* has a rather disdainful *tone* when talking about all of these things, both the process of the painting and this third party elite and art in general. And also the use of the word Art in the poem is quite interesting because there are several variations of it. At, in line 7 for example, it's *capitalized* which carries *connotations* of this high and mighty concept of art, as a really inaccessible thing

which within the poem it is presented as to some extent. And then later on line 20 we have “you have not the money for the arts I sell” which is much more, not *ambiguous* exactly since we know what the model is referring to as a prostitute, but it is ambiguous in the sense that in the preceding line, well, not in the preceding line, sorry, basically this statement could be coming from either or the model in very different senses, but this is kind of the model having a... returning the idea of her and the artist’s treatment of her which is that something is inaccessible to her and that therefore she may not have an opinion on it she may not have her own *voice* or be *represented* as herself. Basically, she’s just being used as an object in this. And there’s also, getting into the exploitation of the model this idea of a sexually charged *atmosphere* in the painting process and the power imbalance in that way, and you’ve got, for example lines 18 & 19, “He possesses me on canvas as he dips the brush / repeatedly into the paint” which is quite an obvious reference.

Um, yes, but all throughout the poem, well, I just think it is quite interesting because what Carol Ann Duffy is doing here is giving the model back the voice, and quite an eloquent one at that, I mean the *language* is not exactly that which one would expect from her section of society, which is similar kind of to what Carol Ann Duffy is doing in several other poems which is giving the kind of disenfranchised party back its power. So, yeah you have, “I shall be represented analytically and hung in great museums.” Not what you would expect exactly in terms of linguistic fluency or eloquence. But yeah you do have this disdainful *tone* and you have the model calling the artist ‘little man’ on line 19 and you have lines 22, 23, 24 which are a dialogue between the artist and the model and the model is asking, “Why do you do this? / Because I have to. There’s no choice. Don’t talk. / My smile confuses him.” So she is allowing herself, well, Carol Ann Duffy is allowing the model once again to have a voice and to be disdainful about this idea of art as something that is a [unintelligible] as opposed to the normal every day activities of the lower classes, when in fact it’s made clear within the poem that the artist and the model are not so different economically, for example, both, “make our living how we can”, line 21, for example illustrates that. And then you have outright statements such as, “These artists take themselves too seriously” on lines 24 and 25.

And hmmm, yeah, and you do get a sense of the, more of a sense of the interaction of the artist and the model in the general *presentation of their interaction*, so you have *instructions* from the artist to the model, “Madame. And do try to be still” and the *dialogue* between them and then you have at the end of the poem what is basically the model’s judgment of the piece once it’s finished. And so you have the artist rewarding himself by lighting a cigarette and then the model saying “I say 12 francs and get my shawl”. So this is actually quite *ambiguous* because it’s not in an obvious way her assessment of the value of the painting but it can be taken that way I think, however, it’s what she’s supposed to be being paid for her time as the model, but

that is her only comment in response to the artist's kind of rather exultant attitude upon finishing the piece.

Yeah, so in conclusion, the poem, of course there are other aspects I haven't really touched upon, but it uses an analytical, the making of an analytical Cubist piece to talk about the idea of art from different perspectives and kind of deconstruct the notion that it's a very inaccessible thing, only for a certain group of people, and to give that disenfranchised group back their voice, for the groups that are thought not to be a part of that dialogue.

8 minutes, 3 seconds

IOC Subsequent Questions

Jordyn, what is this woman's occupation?

Well, she refers to herself as a river whore.

Does that inform your interpretation of the view of art at all?

What do you mean by the view of art exactly?

Well, when she says she's a river prostitute and you mention later in the poem that, um, she suggests they're not actually that different. What do you think we can infer from that?

Well, it's quite interesting in the sense that it presents the idea of the artist selling himself as well and that it's, yeah, ultimately the elite is always the party that is in power and the artist despite his attitude doesn't really have that much-- not control over the situation--but that he doesn't have much power in comparison to the others and yet he gives himself this kind of like reward of thinking that he's very elite in some way because he has access to this idea or thing which is supposed to be only the domain of the rich.

The other thing that I thought was interesting in what you said, is you said that [in] the allusion to the type of art that's being created, the essence of the model has somehow been extracted and I wondered why you saw that as significant.

Because it's just, I think that in art it's quite a personal thing whether the artist decides to put the character of the model into the piece but then I think probably Duffy did decide to talk about that because of the analytical cubism and the original image looks nothing at all like the final image it doesn't give any depth at all to the character and the fact that things are said like 'He drains the color from me and "it does not look like me". I think, also it's also interesting in the sense that, for example the model makes reference to the Queen of England looking at the pieces when they're hung in the museum, and there is quite a gap between the making of the painting and the knowledge that is had at that time about who the model is and what the

situation is and what the painting is and what the painting becomes later which is something that is hung in the museum, and it's much more, like there is no connection between the two because it's not acknowledged; the character of the model is not acknowledged and the background of the model is not acknowledged.

Ends 10:47

DISCUSSION

Begins 10:49

Okay, we need to move on to the discussion and we're going to focus on *Woman Warrior* and I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about what you see as the significance of the recurring ghost motif in the autobiography.

I think it's quite interesting because it's one of the ways that the idea of kind of an opposite ethnocentricity is accessed. And I, well like, there is the idea of the ghosts in China which are quite a different thing and then there are the ghosts that occur in the United States when the family is already living there and I think around page 90 maybe 91 there is kind of a passage that explores all different kinds of ghosts and basically they're all of the people that you would see in the normal course of the day in the neighborhood in the United States just going around doing their jobs, mailman and meter readers and so on, and all of these being 'ghosts' are very foreign and kind of frightening to the family especially the children because of the way that these figures have been presented to them by the mother, which is because of her own lack of understanding of the United States culture and her own kind of superstitions that have carried over from China.

But, at the same time, Maxine Hong Kingston is kind of I feel making a comment about how she herself even at times I mean and this Chinese concept of them being the only humans, and it doesn't necessarily only, I mean, the Chinese are really used only as an example, it that it could be the other way, it's just interesting that instead of it's being used as the Chinese in the United States instead of the United States citizens of the United States against the Chinese. But then it's, yeah, I think there are comments like they could understand human language, but the human language was Chinese in this case, when one of the ghosts comes up to the window of the house and repeats what the children are saying. Yeah, so Chinese is considered as the only language and Chinese people are considered as the only humans, and in that sense they are just living in a world of ghosts, in a grocery store or wherever they go. Which is, hmmm, yeah, it's quite a, I mean, especially since the book was published mainly in the United States and marketed mainly to people that were living there, it's quite opposite to what they would usually consider, in that sense it's a very strong way to present ethnocentricity.

What is she suggesting about ethnocentricity then?

Well, among other things, I suppose that it's quite a universal, universal [unintelligible].

But what effect do you think it would have on an audience that is used to seeing themselves at the center?

Hmmm. I'm not really sure what the emotional reaction to that would or should be, because I'm not sure that I had one. But I think it is definitely a very strong way to present that especially because of the link with language that it has and the way that she ties everything to it. Since, yeah, there is actually this concept especially in the United States of immigrants, or people who don't speak the language fluently, not having the same mental capacity or even being human to the same extent even. I mean it's a really strong way to say it, but I'm glad the author has made the statement in that way because I think that actually is the feeling to some extent that people have often and it's good that she addresses it, like, very directly. Yeah, because especially in the United States that is an issue.

Does she deal with other aspects of groups that are treated differently?

Other aspects...

So here you're talking about the Chinese Americans versus mainstream Americans, I assume Anglo Americans. Are there are groups that she sees as being treated differentially within the society or within her society?

Well, yeah, she talks a lot about gender, and, both in her recounting of the tales that her mother tells her and her actual accounts, like her very realistic accounts of life in her household and she kind of narrates her rebellion against those standards which were held by her parents and especially her mother because in many ways there was a double standard in the sense that Chinese American women were to be so powerful and do so much within the community and within the household and within the family and at the same time they were not given acknowledgment for this or, yeah, it might be appropriate to say they were not given as much acknowledgment because in many cases Hong Kingston shows herself reacting negatively to the comments that the girls are not worth anything, or that yeah, that girls are not worth anything, but then in the stories her mother tells female figures are very prominent and for example in the story of Mu Lan the female figure has all the responsibility for redeeming the situation and for, yeah, well securing honor and for rescuing the oppressed so I...she in some sense deals with this conflict a lot in the story. Both those narratives are, yeah, about this concept.

What are some of the ways she demonstrates that sexism within the family?

Ummm. We see comments of her parents, and then, well especially her mother, the father actually is not that prominent a figure in the story, but, yeah, well I think the fact that it is her mother making the comments is a really important one to consider because it is the women who are oppressing themselves in that case.

Okay, linking those two things, in the chapter called “At the Western Palace”, there is a scene where Moon Orchid and Brave Orchid go to confront Moon Orchid’s husband and in that situation the two women are described as ghosts. Why do you think that Hong Kingston inverts her previous definition of ghosts?

Well, I think in that particular situation, they found themselves very out of their depth because they were dealing with the husband who had since the time of his parting from his wife become very American and has now another wife and works, you know, in an office building and so on. So I think they find themselves, it’s not only ghosts culturally, but also I suppose as kind of remnants of a time that was not any longer acknowledged because it just wasn’t valid in the current world of the story. And also because to some extent they are treated as ghosts, I mean, they are ushered away in the way that seems most appropriate given the situation by the husband, umm, yeah, as reminders of something which was not really existing for him any longer, that he couldn’t deal with at the time.

Okay. At the end of the first chapter, ‘No Name Aunt’ it describes the No Name Aunt also as a ghost. What do you think Kingston was doing with that reference?

Well, I think possibly she could have been referring to the way that history and family history is very much constructed by the society in order to make it more, well yeah, constructed by the society, because, in the story that she is told by her mother, well basically, that chapter is a retelling of the story that she’s told by her mother but more from the point of view of the No Name Aunt to take that narrative back. The aunt is no longer acknowledged in the family and basically her mother is only telling her about the aunt to say that she should never mention it and to warn her against this type of situation which is considered very disgraceful within the context of a Chinese family and leads to the ransacking of the house among other things in the story. But yeah, she’s a ghost because she’s made a ghost. And one of the things that Maxine Hong Kingston is doing is taking back the characters from their original, point at which they started, before they were altered by any stories or by the family members for purposes of other people, **and trying to reconsider things so that she herself can understand Chinese culture without it being so personal. Because I think at some point she makes mention of the fact that she doesn’t really understand anything except from the point of view in which it has been presented to her which is very much that of her mother and that of her family and her idea of China is only what comes from her mother’s stories, and so, it’s such a personal thing she can’t really talk about it from any other perspective.**

OK. This is the end of the recording.

Discussion should end 20:49, but ends 21:33.