

# Studies in language and literature: Sample A

Extended Essay: Exemplar Commentary		
Subject	English	If applicable, theme for WSEE
If applicable, category for language essays	Cat 1	If applicable, subjects used for WSEE
Title of essay	How is light used to depict the course of the Wingfield family's hope in Tennessee Williams' <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> ?	
Essay number	A	Examination session
<b>Assessment of extended essay</b>		
Criteria	Mark awarded	Commentary
A: Focus and method	6	<p>The essay is a good example of work which meets the requirements of the top level (5-6) of achievement in this criterion. The research topic is effectively communicated and the purpose and focus of the research is clear. In addition, the candidate has made an effective selection of source material in support of her answer (especially the inclusion of the lighting photos, gleaned from various stage productions and reproduced in color in the appendices). The methodology of the essay is firmly focused on an exploration of dramatic technique used by Williams and how this is used to support both the meaning of the events of the play and intensify its tragic outcome. This sophisticated approach in particular justifies the mark of "6" for this criterion.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of the way lighting techniques are used by Williams to represent and/or symbolize both hope and the lack of hope is excellent, and sources are used effectively and with understanding throughout the discussion. Subject-specific terminology—especially important in an essay of this nature—is confidently employed to support the points made, and includes references to concepts such as "plastic theatre" coined by Williams himself to describe his stagecraft techniques. The candidate's confidence in selecting examples from the text to illustrate her ideas and demonstrate her understanding merit a mark of "6" here also.</p> <p>The research is analysed effectively and remains clearly focused on the research question. Conclusions to individual points of analysis are effectively supported by the evidence—for example, when "tracking" the upsurge of hope, or conversely, the regression into despair and disillusionment in a particular scene. A clearly structured and reasoned argument is supported by a</p>
[6]		
B: Knowledge and understanding	6	
[6]		
C: Critical thinking	10	
[12]		

strong final conclusion. The importance of Williams's stage directions is acknowledged and the candidate pays careful attention to the fact that through these, Williams controlled the lighting scheme to eg reproduce the effect of a religious painting "where the figures are radiant in an atmosphere that is relatively dusky." The essay as a whole merits a place in the top band of achievement for this criterion (10-12). However, a few further examples or quotations from the play and, in places, a more detailed discussion of context would have helped the candidate to explore her topic still further, and thus a mark of 10 has been awarded.

D: Presentation

4

[4]

The formal presentation is good and the structure and layout support the reading, understanding and evaluation of the EE. Full color copies of the stills from the stage productions are helpfully supplied as appendices and provide visual aids to the discussion.

E: Engagement

[6]

3

The reflections are quite pedestrian compared to the quality of the essay. There is some recognition of skills development but overall is quite descriptive.

(not included)

Total marks  
awarded

26/34

An excellent example of a candidate who really examines the play as a play, with careful attention being paid to a key element of the staging and its contribution to the meaning of the theatrical experience. There are well-argued and expressed ideas throughout.