

Candidate Style Answers

OCR GCSE English Literature J360

Unit A664 Unseen Contemporary Poetry – Examined unit

This Support Material booklet is designed to accompany the OCR GCSE English Literature specification for teaching from September 2010.

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Introduction

OCR has produced these candidate style answers to support teachers in interpreting the assessment criteria for the new GCSE specifications and to bridge the gap between new specification release and availability of exemplar candidate work.

This content has been produced by subject experts, with the input of Chairs of Examiners, to illustrate how the sample assessment questions might be answered and provide some commentary on what factors contribute to an overall grading. The candidate style answers are not written in a way that is intended to replicate student work but to demonstrate what a “good” or “excellent” response might include, supported by examiner commentary and conclusions.

As these responses have not been through full moderation and do not replicate student work, they have not been graded and are instead, banded “middle” or “high” to give an indication of the level of each response.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

Unit A664 Contemporary Poetry - Unseen

Question

ROGER MCGOUGH: *Catching Up on Sleep*

What do you find particularly entertaining about this poem?

Candidate A

In this poem Roger McGough tells me that he is having trouble getting to sleep. I think he has been sleeping badly or having a lot of late nights, because he is having “to catch up on my sleep”. He uses personification and imagines that sleep is a person that he is chasing and is trying to catch up with. When he goes to bed he can’t sleep because he can’t catch sleep because sleep keeps getting out of his way.

The poet says that sleep is a “slippery customer”, because it keeps slipping away when the poet tries to grab hold of it. It “bobs and weaves” always trying to not get caught. The man trying to sleep gets up on his knees in bed. Perhaps he is trying to pray that he can catch up with sleep and go to sleep. In the second verse he shows me how he tries to get to sleep. When he says “The sheep are countless” I think he is saying that when people are trying to sleep, they count sheep to help them sleep. He says “I pretend to snore”, which I think means he is trying to trick sleep. Chloroform is used in hospitals to make patients feel no pain when they are having operations. When he says he yearns for chloroform he is saying that he would like a drug that would make him unconscious.

I think the last lines of the poem are entertaining because the poet is saying that when dawn comes so he can give up the struggle to catch up with sleep, sleep catches up on him and when he should get up he falls asleep. After all that trying to catch up with sleep, sleep has caught up with him.

The way the poem is written is very good. In the first verse it says “It side steps my clumsy tackles” and “side” is written away from where all the other lines start. I think this is showing how sleep “bobs and weaves” and doesn’t want to be caught.

I like this poem because it shows that the poet can’t sleep when he wants to and goes to sleep when he doesn’t want to.

Commentary

The response shows some understanding of what the poem is about. It selects and evaluates some textual details to support its interpretation. It comments on how language and structure contribute to the poet’s presentation of ideas. A higher response.