

Question A5: Evaluating critically

In Section A, Question 5, you will probably have to give your views and opinions on characters, relationships or events by saying what you think and feel about the extract or an aspect of the extract. You may have to decide how far you agree with a given statement and you will need to find evidence from the text in order to explain how this evidence supports your views and opinions. Remember that the question will always be evaluative and a statement will be given for you to discuss – the question will always ask for reference across the whole text in addition to the specified lines.

What exactly must I do?

Re-read the specified lines on which the question focuses. Remember that the question will always ask for reference across the whole text in addition to the specified lines (for the top band this is vital). Aim to spend about 12 minutes answering this question. You will need to give your opinion on something, decide how far you agree with a given statement, find evidence from the text to support your opinion and explain how this evidence supports your view.



ACTIVITY 1

Read the following extract. It talks about events in Nazi Germany under Hitler's regime. Jewish families are being rounded up to be sent to the concentration camps.

Then came November 9. Kristallnacht. The night of broken glass. It was the very incident that destroyed so many of his fellow Jews, but it proved to be Max Vandenburg's moment of escape.

He was twenty-two.

Many Jewish establishments were in the process of being surgically smashed and looted when there was a clatter of knuckles on his apartment door. With his aunt, his mother, his cousins, and their children, Max was crammed into the living room.

'Open up!'

There was a great temptation to scatter into the other rooms, but apprehension was the strangest thing. They couldn't move.

Again. 'Open up!'

Max stood up and walked to the door. The wood was alive, still humming from the beating it had just been given. He looked back at the faces naked with fear, turned the lock, and opened the door.

From *The Book Thief* by Marcus Zusak

'It is clear that this is a dangerous situation.' How far do you agree with this statement?

[10]

Think about the following:

- What is the text about?
- What can you infer (work out) about the characters?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about the events and characters?
- What is your opinion about the language used?
- What do you think about the techniques the writer uses?

ACTIVITY CONTINUES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

ACTIVITY 2

Now read this student's response to the question in Activity 1. It is a top-level response. Highlight examples of the following:

- Embedded quotations
- Explanations of the effects of language
- Use of terminology
- Discussion of the structure
- Focus on the question (‘What are your thoughts and feelings ... ?’)

The extract starts with the statement 'Then came November 9'. This sounds like a momentous occasion and that it is memorable. This makes me feel like something big is about to happen.

Then it mentions 'Kristallnacht. The night of broken glass.' This is something famous that is renowned for being a savage, violent night. This builds a sense of danger. This is compounded by the verb 'destroyed' which underlines how dangerous the situation is.

ACTIVITY CONTINUES

'Max Vandenburg's moment of escape' provides some sense of hope that the situation for Max might not be grim. This is a relief as it says that he was only 'twenty-two' which sounds young.

The situation is grim as it says 'surgically smashed'. The adverb 'surgically' ... and the onomatopoeia of 'smashed' and later 'clatter' builds the violent sounds. We realise the number of people in the situation and in danger as the writer uses listing ('aunt, his mother, his cousins, and their children') which gives a sense of people hiding and huddling together.

The imperative command of 'Open up!' shows aggression and this is repeated (again, 'Open up!') to emphasise the aggression. This makes me worry for the characters involved.

The short sentence, 'They couldn't move.' underlines the fear and makes me feel sorry for the characters. Personification is employed in 'The wood was alive, still humming from the beating it had just been given' and this emphasises that the humans could be next.

The metaphor 'the faces naked with fear,' makes me empathise with the fear and dread that the characters are evidently experiencing. At the end of the extract the phrase, 'turned the lock, and opened the door' makes me apprehensive as we anticipate who or what is behind the door. Overall, all these things make me agree that this is a dangerous situation.



ACTIVITY 3

Read the following extract about a boy growing up in South Africa. He regularly gets up early in the morning to go shooting animals.

The boy stretched his body full length, touching the wall at his head with his hands, and the bedfoot with his toes; then he sprung out, like a fish leaping from water. And it was cold, cold.

He always dressed rapidly to try and conserve his night-warmth till the sun rose two hours later; but by the time he had on his clothes his hands were numbed and he could scarcely hold his shoes. These he could not put on for fear of waking his parents, who never came to know how early he rose. He imagined them turning in their beds, and he smiled scornfully.

He would have to hurry. Before the light grew strong he must be four miles away, and already the air smelled of morning and the stars were dimming. He felt the dust push up between his toes and he thought: 'I could walk a hundred miles on feet like these! I could walk all day, and never tire!'

From *A Sunrise on the Veld* by Doris Lessing

'In the extract the boy is presented as someone who loves life.' How far do you agree?

[10]

ACTIVITY CONTINUES ➔

1 Think about the actions and words that show he is full of energy.

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2 Write a conclusion summarising your response to the question.

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Extended practice

The writer in the following passage describes the main character's first impressions of arriving at Hill House, a sprawling, isolated house, reputed to be haunted.

The house was vile. She shivered and thought, the words coming freely into her mind, Hill House is vile, it is diseased; get away from here at once.

No human eye can isolate the unhappy coincidence of line and place which suggests evil in the face of a house, and yet somehow a maniac juxtaposition, a badly turned angle, some chance meeting of roof and sky, turned Hill House into a place of despair, more frightening because the face of Hill House seemed awake, with a watchfulness from the blank windows and a touch of glee in the eyebrow of a cornice. Almost any house, caught unexpectedly or at an odd angle, can turn a deeply humorous look on a watching person; even a mischievous little chimney, or a dormer like a dimple, can catch up a beholder with a sense of fellowship; but a house arrogant and hating, never off guard, can only be evil. This house, which seemed somehow to have formed itself, flying together into its own powerful pattern under the hands of its builders, fitting itself into its own construction of lines and angles, reared its great head back against the sky without concession to humanity. It was a house without kindness, never meant to be lived in, not a fit place for people or for love or for hope.

From *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson

Extended practice continues ➞

Support your answer with evidence from the text.