## Sample Textual Analysis Paper 1 (Literature)

Write a guided textual analysis of the following extract. Use the following guiding question to help focus your response:

- *How does the writer present such a rich and vivid portrayal of autumn?*

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Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
  Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
  With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
  And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
    To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
  With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
    For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
  Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
  Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
  Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
    Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
  Steady thy laden head across a brook;
  Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
    Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

- *From To Autumn by John Keats (1819)*

## Marking Activity: *Reading Like an Examiner*

Read three sample responses (below) to the same textual analysis task. Each response demonstrates a different level of analysis, ranging from mostly descriptive comments to sophisticated interpretation and evaluation. However, the examiner comments below have been mixed up. Your first task is to read each comment carefully and decide which sample it best describes. Prepare to justify your decisions by referring to specific features of the essays.

Once you have matched the comments to the samples, use the assessment rubric to decide which grade each response should receive. Consider how effectively each student analyses the text, develops ideas, organises their response, and communicates their thinking. Be prepared to explain your reasoning just as a real examiner would. This activity will help you understand what distinguishes descriptive writing from analytical writing, and what examiners look for in high-scoring responses.

| Examiner's Comment | Which Sample? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Answer mostly describes what the extract is about | X | | |
| Presents clear, conceptual claims and arguments | | | X |
| Analysis often goes beyond simple description | | X | |
| Claims are inconsistent in quality | | | |
| Identifies the extract's main message and shows awareness of writer's purpose | | | |
| Moves beyond literal meanings to explore connotations or multiple interpretations | | | |
| Claims are vague or incomplete | | | |
| Carefully selects precise supporting evidence from the passage | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Some effective analysis of words and imagery, but attention to detail could be improved | | | |
| Mostly consistent paragraph structures | | | |
| A mixture of well-chosen and less careful references to the text | | | |
| Comments and impact statements mostly explain obvious effects such as ‘makes the poem flow’ | | | |
| Some use of literary and analytical terminology | | | |
| Impact on reader is considered, but remains broad or general | | | |
| Responds to the task and includes some evidence but lacks higher level thinking | | | |
| Provides both detailed ‘zoom-in’ analysis and broader explanations that are convincing | | | |
| Consistently develops ideas about reader impact beyond ‘makes the reader want to read on’ | | | |
| Analysis remains basic or at the literal level | | | |
| Connection sentences and conclusion restate points rather than show developed thinking | | | |
| Sustained and controlled paragraph structures | | | |
| Some interpretation, but can be fairly obvious | | | |
| Uses precise analytical literary terminology | | | |

## Textual Analysis Sample Response 1

In this extract, John Keats presents autumn as a pleasant season. He uses a range of techniques to help readers imagine the season and appreciate its richness and vividness.

Keats uses imagery to present autumn as a rich and vivid season. At the beginning of the poem, he describes autumn as a *"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun"*. This quotation creates a picture of a rich and successful season in which nature is producing plenty of food and crops. The imagery helps the reader imagine a landscape that is full and productive. As a result, autumn is presented as a positive and enjoyable time of year. Readers may appreciate the beauty of the natural world and the sense of richness that Keats creates. Through this description, the poem celebrates autumn as a rich season.

Keats uses personification, where a non-human thing is given human qualities. In the second stanza, Autumn is presented as a person *"sitting careless on a granary floor"* and *"on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep"*. This creates the image of a human figure resting in a field. The description suggests that Autumn is like a farmer because the figure is surrounded by crops and harvest work. Readers can clearly imagine the season as a person sitting and sleeping in the countryside. Through this personification, Keats makes Autumn seem more vivid and easier to picture.

Keats uses assonance throughout the poem. In several parts of the extract, similar vowel sounds are repeated to create a smooth and flowing effect. This makes the poem sound pleasant when read aloud and helps the lines move from one to the next. The repeated sounds create a sense of rhythm and make the language more interesting for the reader. As a result, the poem is enjoyable to read and makes the reader feel like autumn is a happy time. Through this use of assonance, Keats creates a flowing style that encourages readers to read on.

Overall, Keats presents autumn as a rich and vivid season. His use of imagery, personification, and sound helps readers picture autumn and appreciate the poem's theme.

## Textual Analysis Sample Response 2

In this extract, John Keats creates a rich and vivid portrayal of the autumn season through imagery, personification, and sound. Rather than presenting autumn in the traditional way as a transition to winter, he depicts it as a period of abundance, rest, and beauty.

Keats uses rich and vivid imagery to portray autumn as a season of abundance. In the opening lines, he describes autumn as a *"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun"*. The phrase *"mellow fruitfulness"* suggests warmth, ripeness, and plenty, creating an image of a landscape filled with crops ready for harvest. Likewise, the image of the sun as *"maturing"* implies that the season has developed fully and reached its most productive stage. This sense of abundance is reinforced by verbs such as *"fill", "swell", and "plump",* which suggest fruits and plants growing larger and fuller. These words help readers visualise a countryside overflowing with produce and natural riches. Readers may therefore appreciate the richness of the natural world and recognise autumn as a time of richness and prosperity. Through these images, Keats celebrates nature's ability to provide nourishment and abundance, even as the year approaches its later stage.

Through personification, Keats portrays Autumn as a season of relaxation and rest. In the second stanza, Autumn is presented as a human farmer *"sitting careless on a granary floor"* and later *"on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep"*. The adjective *"careless"* suggests that Autumn is free from worry or concern, creating an impression of calmness and ease. Similarly, the image of Autumn *"sound asleep"* presents the season as peaceful and content. Autumn appears unconcerned by the unfinished harvest, suggesting that there is enough abundance for work to be paused and people to rest. As a result, readers are encouraged to view autumn as a season of rest rather than hard labour. Through this personified figure, Keats presents Autumn as calm, relaxed, and at ease.

Lastly, Keats uses sound patterns to create a calm and pleasant atmosphere. Throughout the second stanza, long vowel sounds appear in words such as *"furrow", "drows'd"*, and *"winnowing"*. This repeated long o sound slows the pace of the poem and gives the language a dreamlike quality. The words seem longer and softer when read aloud, helping to create a sense of relaxation and ease. Keats also uses repeated f alliteration in words such as *"furrow", "fume",* and *"flowers"*. These soft sounds contribute to the poem's gentle tone and make the description feel soothing. As a result, readers may feel calm and restful while reading the stanza. Through these sound patterns, Keats creates a pleasant atmosphere that reflects the peaceful presentation of autumn.

Overall, Keats presents autumn as a season of abundance, peacefulness, and rest. Through his use of imagery, personification, and sound, he encourages readers to appreciate the richness of the natural world and the pleasures associated with the harvest season.

## Textual Analysis Sample Response 3

In the given extract, John Keats creates a rich and vivid portrayal of the autumn season through imagery, personification, and sound. Rather than presenting autumn as the end of summer and the beginning of the year's decline, he depicts it as a period of great abundance, human fulfilment, and deep contentment. Through his celebration of harvest, images of restful ease, and the poem's sensory richness, Keats encourages readers to appreciate a time of year that seems resplendent in a fully developed stage of abundance and even surfeit.

Keats uses rich and vivid imagery to portray autumn as a season of abundance. In the opening lines, he describes autumn as a *"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun"*. The phrase *"mellow fruitfulness"* evokes warmth, richness, and fulfilment, presenting the natural world as having reached its most productive stage. The noun *"fruitfulness"* suggests fertility and plenty, while the adjective *"mellow"* suggests a soft, laid-back atmosphere of ease and freedom from worry. Similarly, the description of the sun as *"maturing"* presents autumn as the culmination of a natural process where something has achieved its full growth and potential. The sense of abundance is developed through Keats' repeated use of dynamic verbs as Autumn conspires to *"load and bless"* the vines, *"fill"* fruit *"to the core"*, *"swell"* the gourds and *"plump"* the hazel shells. The accumulation of these verbs creates the impression that growth is occurring everywhere at once, as though the landscape is continuously producing and nourishing life. In this way the language itself begins to feel abundant as the density of vocabulary mirrors the surplus being described, immersing the reader in a world overflowing with produce. Readers may therefore find themselves viewing autumn differently from its conventional association with decline, instead appreciating it as a season of achievement, reward, and full nourishment. Through this celebration of nature's abundance, Keats presents autumn as a period in which life has reached its fullest expression.

Through personification, Keats further develops the portrayal autumn as a season of relaxation and fulfilment as well as a co-operation between humans and the natural world. In the second stanza, Autumn is presented as a human farmer, *"sitting careless on a granary floor… Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep"*. The adjective *"careless"* and the image of Autumn sleeping on a *"half-reap'd furrow"* both suggest a lack of urgency. Although the harvest remains unfinished, there is no sense of anxiety or pressure. Instead, Keats presents a forgiving and generous world in which abundance allows work to be paused freely. This impression is reinforced by the image of Autumn's hair being *"soft-lifted"* by the wind, creating a gentle interaction between the personified figure and the natural world suggesting how Autumn exists in harmony with humanity. It's by working together that such abundance and surfeit is provided. As a result, readers are encouraged to view autumn as a period of rest and satisfaction, when the rewards of labour can finally be enjoyed, rather than a time of hectic preparation against the coming winter. The sense of autumn being a season of cooperation between natural forces has persisted throughout the extract. Just as Autumn is described in the first stanza as *"conspiring"* with the sun to produce abundance, the second stanza presents the fulfilment that results from such a partnership, creating an atmosphere of gentle ease and contentment.

Finally, Keats uses sound techniques such as assonance, rhyme, and euphony to portray autumn as a rich and sensuous season. Throughout the second stanza, long vowel sounds recur in words such as *"furrow",*

*"drows'd"*, and *"winnowing"*. This repeated long o sound creates a lingering and dreamlike quality that evokes Autumn's restful ease, so the poem seems to drift from line to line slowly, gently, and even sleepily. Keats develops this effect through his use of rhyme, particularly in rhyming pairs such as *"floor/store"* and *"flowers/hours"* where the same long vowel sounds reinforce the atmosphere of ease and contentment established through the poem's imagery. In addition, when assonance combines with soft consonance and alliteration in words such as *"furrow", "fume",* and *"flowers"* Keats creates euphony, a pleasing and harmonious sound. As a result, the language itself brings to life the feeling of ease and relaxation it describes. Readers may feel lulled into the same tranquil and almost sleepy world inhabited by the personified Autumn. More broadly, Keats combines sound and imagery to create a rich sensory experience of the season, allowing readers not only to picture autumn's abundance but also to hear and feel its atmosphere of fulfilment, repose, and plenty.

In conclusion, through imagery, personification, and sound, Keats presents autumn as a season of over-abundance, fulfilment, and sensory richness. His vivid descriptions of overflowing harvests, his portrayal of Autumn as a relaxed and contented figure, and his use of gentle, musical sounds all contribute to a celebration of nature at its most productive. Rather than focusing on traditional images of summer’s decline or preparation for winter, Keats encourages readers to appreciate maturity and completeness, suggesting the rich rewards that come in the full flush of autumn.

# Textual Analysis (Paper 1) Rubric (SL / HL)

| Criterion A: Understanding and interpretation | Criterion B: Analysis and evaluation | Criterion C: Focus and organisation | Criterion D: Language |
|---|---|---|---|

| Marks | Descriptor | Marks | Descriptor | Marks | Descriptor | Marks | Descriptor |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below. | 0 | The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below. | 0 | The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below. | 0 | The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below. |
| 1 | The response demonstrates little understanding of the literal meaning of the text.<br><br>References to the text are infrequent or are rarely appropriate. | 1 | The response is descriptive and/or demonstrates little relevant analysis of textual features and/or writer's choices. | 1 | Little organization is apparent. No discernible focus is apparent. | 1 | Language is rarely clear and appropriate; there are many errors in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction and little sense of register and style. |
| 2 | The response demonstrates some understanding of the literal meaning of the text.<br><br>References to the text are at times appropriate. | 2 | The response contains some appropriate analysis of textual features and/or writer's choices, but is reliant on description. | 2 | Some organization is apparent. There is little focus. | 2 | Language is sometimes clear and carefully chosen; grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction are fairly accurate, although errors and inconsistencies are apparent; the register and style are to some extent appropriate to the task. |
| 3 | The response demonstrates an understanding of the literal meaning. There is a satisfactory interpretation of some implications of the text.<br><br>References to the text are generally relevant and mostly support the candidate's ideas. | 3 | The response demonstrates a generally appropriate analysis of textual features and/or writer's choices, with occasional insights. | 3 | The analysis is adequately organized in a generally coherent manner. There is some focus. | 3 | Language is clear and carefully chosen with an adequate degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction despite some lapses; register and style are mostly appropriate to the task. |
| 4 | The response demonstrates a thorough understanding of the literal meaning. There is a convincing interpretation of many implications of the text.<br><br>References to the text are relevant and support the candidate's ideas. | 4 | The response demonstrates an appropriate and at times insightful analysis of textual features and/or writer's choices. There is a good evaluation of how such features and/or choices shape meaning. | 4 | The analysis is well organized and mostly coherent. The analysis is adequately focused. | 4 | Language is clear and carefully chosen, with a good degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are consistently appropriate to the task. |
| 5 | The response demonstrates a thorough and perceptive understanding of the literal meaning. There is a convincing and insightful interpretation of larger implications and subtleties of the text.<br><br>References to the text are well-chosen and effectively support the candidate's ideas. | 5 | The response demonstrates an insightful and convincing analysis of textual features and/or writer's choices. There is a very good evaluation of how such features and/or choices shape meaning. | 5 | The analysis is effectively organized and coherent. The analysis is well focused. | 5 | Language is very clear, effective, carefully chosen and precise, with a high degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are effective and appropriate to the task. |

**Total: 20 Marks**