

**Paper 1 – Example Poetry Commentary**  
**Higher Level**  
**May 2003**

The poem "Night Wind", written by Christopher Dewdney in 1984, is a *mélange* of diverse elements. At heart, it is a celebration of nature, of the permanence and freedom of the night wind. At the same time, the poem relates the personal journey and transformation of a man, the author, as he takes flight upon the wind, "rising on wings of darkness".

**Comment [K1]:** Clear focus on poet and text straightaway

**Comment [K2]:** Great vocabulary

**Comment [K3]:** Excellent range of three organising principles succinctly picked out

**Comment [K4]:** Nice use of quotation to end the introduction rather than a list of literary features – this suggests real confidence

In the first stanza, the author offers a description of the wind on a particular night. The author establishes in the first three lines his narrative stance as an observer, using a first-person perspective in his writing. His usage of this particular style alerts the reader that this poem will entail a very personal dialogue in which he will directly relate his senses, experiences and impressions. Indeed, the author immediately relates his impressions of the unity of the wind in all times and places that he has ever known. Though the author treats the wind as an omnipresent force or stream, he regards it at the same time as very transient and fleeting. By stating that the wind is "endlessly departing" the author gives the sense that the wind is spread over the entire continuum of his existence but at the same time always rushing off to be at another location. The author first mentions the wind's interactions with nature by stating that the wind blows deep into each tree. This image of trees fighting against a pervasive wind is repeated in the second stanza. Finally, to end his first descriptive stanza, the author begins his personification of the wind by assigning it such qualities as "restlessness", "impatience" and playfulness.

**Comment [K5]:** Clear topic for this paragraph, the essay is also organized sensibly along chronological lines – this is especially fitting given the progressive nature of the poem

**Comment [K6]:** Good literary terms smoothly used

**Comment [K7]:** Clear explanation of the effect on the reader. Introduced by the original phrase 'alerts the reader'

**Comment [K8]:** Nice, original connective, indicating that the idea will be developed further

**Comment [K9]:** Good main point – although there is no evidence to support it

**Comment [K10]:** Again, clear effect on the reader discussed. The candidate has picked up on a subtle point here

**Comment [K11]:** This point seems out of place here and doesn't seem to fit in with what's going on in the rest of the paragraph

**Comment [K12]:** These points are well picked out but the candidate does not go on to explain *why* the poet has done this. The candidate does go on to consider this in the next paragraph but it seems odd not having a comment here

**Comment [K13]:** Clear linking phrase makes obvious the progression from one paragraph to another

The author continues using this device in the second stanza as he relates the impression of being implored or claimed by the wind. Both of these actions suggest to the reader that the wind is not so much a natural force as it is an actual entity with actions and desires. The author employs an allusion to the "exodus" of the Jews from Egypt as recorded in the Bible to describe the way in which the wind passes over the face of the earth calling out for others to join it. In much the same way as the Jews may have called out in joy to one another to put down their labours and to join the leaving masses, so too does the wind call out and remonstrate with the author to leave his terrestrial prison. Again using personification, the wind "wrestles" with the very trees as it passes.

**Comment [K14]:** An excellently well developed and well explained point with some great vocabulary – compare this to the treatment of the same point in Example 2!

In the third stanza, the author undergoes a very important transformation. He releases himself to the power of the wind and is caught up in a "storm of longing" on its "wings of darkness". Perhaps the author feels as if he is imprisoned upon the earth and longs to visit faraway places, borne on the wings of the wind. The wind is happy to receive him, taking on a "giddy rush". As the author relinquishes control of himself he suddenly becomes aware that there is a "music in the wind". Only after letting go of himself does the author become fully attuned to the sounds of the night. Indeed, every sound becomes as an orchestra if one considers the descriptions of the author to be true. Words such as "clamour", "percussion", and "thrum" are generally reserved to describe great cacophonies of noise. Yet, in the third stanza, the author employs hyperbole as he exaggerates the rustle of leaves as a "clamour". It is unclear whether this exaggeration of sounds comes as a gift from the

**Comment [K15]:** Clear linking sentence which indicates a change from the subject of the previous paragraph

**Comment [K16]:** Clear main point

**Comment [K17]:** Smooth use of quotations

**Comment [K18]:** Good identification of key words, although it is done a little heavy-handedly here given the smooth style of the rest of the essay

**Comment [K19]:** This connective suggests a contrast, although it is more the case that the hyperbole adds to the point this candidate is making

wind as the author is integrated into a storm or merely because he has taken the time to stop to listen.

**Comment [K20]:** While it is nice that two possible interpretations are identified, the implications of each, or at least the candidates preferred reading could have been examined more

The fourth stanza relates the incredible experiences of the author as he rides upon the wind. The last stanza found the author in a bizarre new plane of existence, but this stanza finds him “racing” along familiar locales such as fields or playgrounds. In an instance of metaphor, the author compares himself to the “bloodrun of the atmosphere”. I personally find this comparison very apt as it relates wind passing over the surface of the earth to blood coursing through veins in the body. It is interesting to note that when he is embodied on the wind, the author notices details as insignificant as litter (newspapers) in the street along with details as macroscopic as the Milky Way above. As well, the author relates the experience of “racing down deserted streets”, again creating the impression that wind inhabits all places and times of the earth, even when no others are about to experience it.

**Comment [K21]:** Interestingly the candidate has reversed the normal Linking Phrase – Main Point order and has the main point or topic sentence first followed by the linking phrase which makes it clear how this paragraph follows on from the previous one. Nice variety in paragraph structure!

**Comment [K22]:** A good point, but why has the author chosen to do this? Despite some excellent analysis, this candidate occasionally fails to really fully develop ideas in depth

**Comment [K23]:** This is not a very good connective

**Comment [K24]:** Clear analysis of the effect on the reader

The fifth and final stanza lists more locales through which the author floats along the wind: forests, highways, oceans, and rivers. Yet, perhaps the most important development in this stanza comes from the first line “I pace the wind”. Throughout the poem, the author’s celebration of nature a recurring theme. With this line, we begin to understand a bit of the personal relationship and camaraderie that exists between the night wind and the author. To “pace” someone is to run along or to compete with that person. The author has become very intimate with the wind and nature, and as result of that relationship he is offered an incredible journey. However, the poem begs the question: Was the journey physical or mental for the author? The obvious response to this enigma is that the author has taken time to stop and listen to the music of the wind and has allowed his mind to comprehend its enormity. While not even remotely didactic in nature, this poem compels me to listen now to the wind and appreciate its energy and life.

**Comment [K25]:** Clear topic sentence, although the stanza by stanza approach is getting a little boring

**Comment [K26]:** I like this candidate’s ability to personally evaluate the most important / effective elements of the poem

**Comment [K27]:** Clear reference back to organising principles

**Comment [K28]:** This is a nice subtle point

**Comment [K29]:** Questions raised by the poem are well considered, although they may fit better in a conclusion

The final stanza concludes by mentioning that the wind has but one command: “a joyous delirium with nothing at its end”. Such a command reflects the gaiety, the lightness, and the energy of the wind. The wind has no clear direction and no purpose, but at the same time it is immortal. The wind is expressed as a continual “joie de vivre”.

**Comment [K30]:** Clear and often interesting explanations are attached to every point

Looking back at the poem as a whole, one must consider the setting. The poem takes place at night across many locations. The importance of the many locales in relation to the omnipresence of the wind has been previously discoursed upon here, but why did the author choose to set the poem at night? Did the poem have to be set at night to be effective? The clear answer to this question is: yes. By setting the poem at night, the author borrows from a universal archetype: darkness. The night is by definition absent of light and warmth. It is dark and mysterious. Yet at the same time, the night affords the author to remain hidden alone out of sight as he rides the wind. The night is more wild and full of freedom than the day, qualities essential for the liberating and delirious journey undertaken by the author. As well, wind is invisible to the human eye. At night time, when light is scarce, the wind becomes just as alive to the other sense organs as anything else. The primary sense organ is useless at night, making night the perfect setting to appreciate the “music of the wind” using auditory sense. Because of the setting,

**Comment [K31]:** This signals a change in the structure of the essay which will now be looked at holistically. However, the phrase ‘Looking back ...’ is a little too informal

**Comment [K32]:** It is never a good idea to point out your own repetitions, especially in such a pompous manner!

**Comment [K33]:** This interrogative style is also inappropriate to essay writing

**Comment [K34]:** An interesting point – although the candidate seems to be a little lost here

**Comment [K35]:** The candidate does, however, manage to make a valid point

“Night Wind” is an effective title to this poem, a celebration of freedom and adventure in the night skies.

**Comment [K36]:** The candidate is once again a little lost, the discussion of the loss of our ‘primary sense organ’ is a little by the by and could have been done more concisely

Structurally, the poem consists of five stanzas each harbouring between six and ten lines. No clear rhyme scheme is followed. Indeed the only instance of end rhyme occurs in lines seven and eight. The fact that the author does not rely upon rhyme to produce sonorous effects places more emphasis on the sound words such as “clamour”, “bang” and “muffled” in the third stanza. There are several notable instances of alliteration in the poem including: “strains like something” in line and “down deserted streets” in line thirty-two. The instances are notable because they are the only two examples to be found. The dearth of traditional poetic devices such as alliteration and rhyme, coupled with the author’s unorthodox capitalization scheme in which he does not capitalize the first word in each line, gives the author a very distinct style. His style might be compared to the wind in the in the poem following no clear path or rules and following an absurd, delirious course.

**Comment [K37]:** Clear topic sentence, although the essay has lost a little of its structure now and the candidate is making random points – probably because they still had time left and wanted to fill it

**Comment [K38]:** This may be true, but why emphasise those words

**Comment [K39]:** This is a nice complex point

In fact, the author’s style epitomizes the poem. “Night Wind” tells the story of a man’ upon the wind. It tells the story of an escape into new-found freedom. At the same time, the poem is a celebration of nature and a description of the wind. The author’s intent is clearly to relate a very meaningful experience and to inspire others to share in a similar undertaking. Above all else, this poem shows a new-found respect for a very common subject.

**Comment [K40]:** Return to original organising principles and a summary of the story to indicate that a conclusion is being reached

**Comment [K41]:** Clear and definite final point

**Key:**

	Topic sentences – to indicate subject of a paragraph
	Organising Principles or points relating to them
	Connective words used to join ideas together
	Quotations
	Analysis – considering the effect on the audience
	Storytelling
	Spelling / Grammatical mistakes

**Examiner’s Comments:**

- Good, sound use of literary terms and some great vocabulary. Although the candidate is obviously showing off with ‘melange’ it works well, despite the occasional pomposity.
- Some excellently detailed points which suggest a clear understanding of the poem. Many points are analysed well, although there are a number of occasions where some interesting ideas could have been examined in more depth
- Clear organising principles in the introduction, all of which are related to deeper themes or ideas. Note that the ‘story’ of the poem is just alluded to in passing.
- Generally clear stanza by stanza structure, although this breaks down a little towards the end

**Marks Awarded:**

Understanding of the Text	5	Clear understanding of the basic story and an obviously personal grasp of the freedom and beauty of the journey on the Night Wind that the poet is trying to relate
Interpretation of the Extract	4	Excellent – this is clearly personal and original work. References are always relevant however they are not always analysed in detail: what effect, for example does the personification of the wind described in paragraph two have?

Appreciation of Literary Features	4	Literary features are well identified although, as above, the effect of these is not always analysed
Presentation	5	Well structured, working through the poem stanza by stanza and drawing the whole poem together in the conclusion ending with a good summary of the overall message of the poem
Language	5	Excellent language – clear, precise, adventurous and controlled – phrases like ‘joie de vivre’ and words like cacophony and mélange just make it
	<b>23</b>	<b>Level 7</b>