Paper 1 – Example Poetry Commentary
Higher Level
May 2003

There is a common saying that people often use when they feel trapped in a mundane life. They say they wish to be "as free as the wind". In "Night Wind", Dewdney expands on that expression. He gives the wind a life of its own and takes the reader on a journey across the universe. His use of structure, imagery, and allusion all serve to show the freedom of the wind. The heavy emphasis on the idea of freedom makes a few oppressive images stand out, highlighting the need for escape as an underlying theme. Dewdney also uses dark images to imply mystery and spark the curiosity of the reader.

The most prominent theme of "Night Wind" is the idea of freedom. The structure of the poem itself places the reader in a calm, carefree mood. Dewdney wrote in free verse; the absence of any rhyme scheme, meter, and attention to line length creates a musical, whimsical effect. The words seem to flow from line to line in a carefree manner as the wind blows from place to place. They relax the reader and free him from the common idea that poetry is rigid and structured.

Freedom is further emphasized through Dewdney's extensive use of imagery. 'The wind blows forever". Dewdney uses the fourth stanza to place several contrasting images in the reader's mind. The juxtaposition of four completely different atmospheres provides the reader with the idea that the wind can go anywhere and everywhere. It has no limits. Dewdney uses the phrase "Above me the Milky Way..." to inspire the reader to think about the vast expanses of the universe and how far one could go with the wind.

Dewdney's diction is another example of how freedom is incorporated into the poem. He talks of the wind blowing "without burden." This implies a total freedom, with no cares in the world. He also says the wind can blow "through all the worlds I have known and through all the lives I have led." These powerful phrases tell the reader that the wind is unstoppable. It can blow wherever it wants because no one can overpower it The last phrase, "... nothing at its end," brings the point into the face of the reader. Dewdney tells the reader that true freedom comes when there is no end. Infinity is the only place where freedom can be found.

In line 14, Dewdney uses a Biblical allusion to emphasize the freedom of the wind. The line states that the wind is ".. . in exodus, a deliverance..." In the Bible, Exodus is the book where Moses leads God's people to the promised land. He delivers them from the oppressive life of slavery by the Egyptians. In line 10, Dewdney says "without burden", which is a direct link to this allusion. Just as Moses delivered the people from the burden, of slavery, the wind can delivery him from his burdens.

Along with the idea of freedom, Dewdney uses images of oppression to tell the reader of his longing for escape. He uses personification here, giving the wind a personality. He calls the wind "restless" and "impatient". It needs to move, to be free. He also says that the wind

Comment [K1]: This is not a relevant way to start a commentary. Here it doesn't work too badly, but the candidate would have been better to have started with 'In 'Night Wind' Dewdney expands on …'

Comment [K2]: Good short summary of the 'story' of the poem

Comment [K3]: Good literary terms

Comment [K4]: Good clear organising principle

Comment [K5]: Good clear organising principle

Comment [K6]: 3rd organising principle, these are used to structure the oral clearly and well

Comment [K7]: Good clear topic sentence to make the subject of this paragraph clear. It also shows a nice degree of personal engagement for the candidate to identify one as the most prominent. Note, at this stage, the essay is being structure using the organising principles identified in the introduction

Comment [K8]: Good use of literary terms, all four of these are contributing to the same effect

Comment [K9]: Some great analysis here, although it should be related to the overall effect that the poet wants to achieve. He wants to show us that he is wild and free, not that poetry can be this way

Comment [K10]: Good connective to make it clear that this idea is being developed in more detail

Comment [K11]: The candidate here has picked out the key element in the fourth stanza, although they don't have any quotations to demonstrate the four different atmospheres

Comment [K12]: Clear comment on the effect that the poet intends to have on the reader

Comment [K13]: Another good linking phrase that is more complex and subtle than a straightforward connective like 'Moreover'

Comment [K14]: Good smooth use of quotation

Comment [K15]: Once again, clear explanation of the effect on the reader, although some of these ideas should be developed in more details

Comment [K16]: While this is true, it is a little simplistic. The point about 'all the lives I have led' implies there is something deeper, more transcendental about this wind

Comment [K17]: This is a very informal phrase

Comment [K18]: Here the candidate starts to go off the point a little, the poem is not really about infinity by itself but, instead, that the wind almost allows the speaker to reach out and commune with something infinite

Comment [K19]: A clear topic sentence again, although the candidate should move on from the idea of freedom

Comment [K20]: While this is true, it is a bit like telling the story in the bible. This allusion could be included more smoothly

Comment [K21]: This is a very nice point!

Comment [K22]: Again, nice complex linking phrase making it clear that we are moving on to a new but related point

Comment [K23]: Clear topic sentence

"implores" him. It asks him to come along. The phrase in line 20, "a storm of longing" is excellent. It describes feelings brewing inside of him. He needs to escape and the frenzied storm inside is about to erupt.

When the wind finally "gathers" Dewdney and takes him away on an adventure, there examples of this new carefree attitude described earlier. Dewdney feels a "giddy rush", a 'joyous delirium". He says he hears "a music in the wind." He uses the image of the guy wires in line 23 to describe his escape. The cables that once held him down have been snapped by the wind. Also, the image of banging doors in line 26 highlights the idea of escape. I see the image not as a door shut but as one being blown open by a strong gust and banging, against the wall as it opens. The doors have opened for him. He has escaped.

The last significant aspect of "Night Wind" that I can see is the use of dark images. The setting is at night, as can be seen by line one as well as the references to stars throughout the poem. Dewdney uses the phrase "wings of darkness" in line 20 to emphasize the freedom and mystery of the wind. The wind is unpredictable. It can take one anywhere. This dark setting implies mystery, and insights the reader to continue the poem to find where the wind may carry him. In line 37, Dewdney says, '… thee gale's mysterious, unspoken imperative..." It is exciting not to know where the wind may take him. He can go anywhere because he is truly free. The mystery of the poem leaves the reader asking himself where else the wind will take him. This further emphasizes the theme of freedom as the wind may go wherever it chooses!

"Night Wind" by Christopher Dewdney is about escape from burden. Its whimsical, carefree structure and striking images give the reader a feeling of freedom. They relax him and allow him to simply enjoy the poem. Just as the wind blows the leaves and newspapers along in line 31, 'Night Wind" takes the reader on its journey to freedom.

Comment [K24]: Saying that something is 'highly effective' is good thing to do, but this phrase is a little too informal

Comment [K25]: Good attempt to analyse here, but this idea could have been developed in more depth. What might this brewing storm suggest? Why might he have it?

Comment [K26]: Good subtle connective making it clear that time has progressed

Comment [K27]: This is true, but what might the image of guy wires suggest? A build up of tension and then sudden release, the ecstatic whip and crack of sudden freedom?

Comment [K28]: This is all true, and the candidate has tried to develop these ideas a little more but they are still a little simplistic

Comment [K29]: Generally avoid referring to yourself when you are writing an essay

Comment [K30]: While the topic here is clear, it would be better if the topic were a theme or mood, etc rather than having a paragraph based around a specific literary feature

Comment [K31]: This is unnecessary – you will never have to 'prove' something this obvious about the story of the poem

Comment [K32]: This is a little repetitive: the candidate has already talked about freedom and the fact that the wind can go anywhere. It is also, again, a bit simplistic

Comment [K33]: Unfortunately, instead of making a new point here the candidate drags their essay back to the, already exhausted, point about freedom

Comment [K34]: This is a nice way to end – picking out a key line / image from the poem and using it in your last sentence gives the essay a sense of finality and completeness

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:

- The candidate structures the essay well using the organising principles from the introduction although they lose their way a bit by the end of the essay and get a bit repetitive or simply pick out random literary devices
- Good smooth use of quotations, some lovely linking phrases and, apart from some informality, generally good language
- There is clear analysis of the effect on the reader although, unfortunately, these ideas tend not to be too well developed and point out only one, simple and sometimes obvious effect. Although there are occasional excellent points (e.g. Exodus) there is no sense of the joy and exultation that this journey with the wind brings or that the speaker and wind become, in some sense, one.

Marks Awarded:

Understanding of the Text	4	Clear understanding of the basic story and also an identification of some of the more theme of freedom but not much detail about this
Interpretation of the Extract	3	Often the candidates points involve a re-telling of the story without much analysis and without points being developed in detail
Appreciation of Literary Features	3	Good identification of a wide range of literary features but the effect on the reader is not always fully explained
Presentation	4	There is a good attempt at structure here: each paragraph has a clear topic and quotations are used well
Language	4	Generally good language, some mistakes but only really one or two. Good use of Literary Terms throughout
	18	**Level 5**