



Indicative A response

The narrative

Year 9

English

Section 1. Analyse a poem

Information for teachers: The following analysis represents an “A” response to the recommended poem, *The Loner*, by Julie Holder.

Poems selected by students should be approved before starting the assessment.

Poem: “The Loner” by Julie Holder

Theme/Message: abandonment, isolation and loneliness

Meaning:

The poem talks about how some people can be cruel. It shows how one person, a young boy, has been rejected by another group that is probably more powerful.

Imagery:

The imagery in “The Loner” aims to provoke the reader. It is written in a school setting, which is a playground. The school setting is important because it draws a comparison between the school and the stronger group’s behaviour. This comparison adds to the isolation felt by “the loner”. This imagery is created through the unusual rhyme patterns and strong, powerful words.

Language:

The poem has an unhappy title. It grabs the reader's attention and focuses on the theme of loneliness and even isolation. The word "loner" gives the reader the impression that the poem is not going to be a happy one. To create this sad impression the poem uses metaphors and similes. For example, "His loneliness is his shell and shield" (metaphor).

The word choice is important, for example, "loneness". This word stands out against the word "loneliness" and it then makes it sound more powerful. It makes the reader think about the word more. Other examples are the words "shell" and "shield". A shell sounds weak, like an egg shell, and a shield sounds like something is being protected and is much stronger. These two words are a form of alliteration and add meaning to the poem.

The last phrase "watch this space" is a powerful way of ending the sad poem. It's saying that no matter what school you go to there will be a loner because of people and because of school. I think this was the poet's intention.

Tone:

The poet, Julie Holder, is trying to make the reader aware of how schools can be lonely places. The poem also talks about how rejection can powerfully hurt people. The tone of the poem is about confronting issues and emotions. The word choices and the message create this tone. The poem forces the reader to think about how children and even society can ignore people. It stirs up sympathy because it makes the reader remember when they were once "the loner".

Style:

The structure of the poem includes rhyme. It has four stanzas, the first two each have seven lines and the last two each have six lines. A regular metre is used within each line. For example,

"He leans against the playground wall,
Smacks his hands against the bricks"

A regular use of rhyme is in each stanza, but each stanza is different. This style means the poem doesn't sound corny but still sounds serious. The first stanza has a rhyme scheme of a, bb, cc, ee.

The second stanza's rhyme pattern is different because it is not regular, but the third stanza is.

The third and fourth have a repeating vowel rhyme, which is assonance. For example,

"Traces patterns with his feet,
Scuffs to make the tarmac squeak."

The last stanza is meant to bring the poem to an end.

Section 2. Write a narrative

The Loner

"I'm not going back there, I don't care what you say", Cal yelled to his mother, slamming the front door at the same time as he manoeuvred his way inside.

"What happened this time?" his mother asked, seeing the look of pain and frustration on her son's face.

How long had it been, she wondered, since Cal arrived home talking excitedly about his day at school, about his great friends, and the fun they had, especially at lunch time? His favourite place had always been hanging out at the tuckshop. He was the leader among his friends; he was the one who others followed and wanted to be with.

Then, the fire! While no-one could ever know for certain, many people believed that Cal had actually started it while playing with matches in his bedroom, but what was certain was that the horrendous burns Cal suffered had changed his life. Even though many doctors and specialists had seen him and assured him that in time he would be old enough to undergo more skin grafts, for the moment, that was not possible. He had to

live with his conspicuous scarring and he knew that this was the reason no-one wanted to be his friend, or spend time with him.

"We'll move to another town, and you can start at a new school," his parents had suggested after the accident. They did move, but that just made things worse because no-one wanted to make friends with the new guy who had ugly scars covering half his face. He tried to join in, and at lunch he always found a place to hang out, hoping that the other kids walking past him would ask him to join them. But they didn't, they just huddled in groups, whispering to each other.

"Cal, this is the third school you've been to in the past two months. You can't just keep running away from this. Why don't you give it one more try?"

"Mum you don't understand; no-one speaks to me, they just look at me like I'm a freak", he muttered, as he tried not to think about how this made him feel. But he understood the tone in his mother's voice. She was desperate. He knew she only wanted what was best for him and she promised him if he gave it one more try they would talk about a reward.

"Alright", he said reluctantly. "I'll give it another go."

The next morning Cal reappeared outside the tuckshop; something looked different, and then he noticed that someone had written "watch this space" where he used to stand. He smacked his hand against the bricks, feeling frustrated and lonely.

Suddenly, someone yelled, "Hey, you're back! We heard you moved to another school. Do you play basketball?"

He looked up and saw a group of students standing in front of him. "Yeah", he answered nervously.

"Cool! Why don't you come and join in? We need one more person for a game. You can be on my team."

"Sure", Cal replied with relief. As he

walked away, he wiped out the word "space" because, he thought, this school is going to be different.