

Write a story in which someone thought to be a hero turns out to be a villain.

Student answer

Grade A

Good Dr. Brown

Doctor William Brown looked like everything a doctor should be. He had arrived from England in the previous Spring, dressed in a crisp white shirt, an expensive grey woollen suit and one of those pure silk ties which seemed to represent all the fiery reds and oranges of a new sunrise. For many hours a week, he sat behind his huge, mahogany desk and saw, at one time or another, all the inhabitants of the little village of Antinoga. All that is except Paduka. He thought the patterns on the doctor's tie looked like poisonous water snakes.

The English doctor had come at the right time too, for in the Summer of that year, a dreadful disease hit this hard-working, farming community. It swept through the village like a plague. Small children who, the previous August, had been squealing with laughter and chasing each other about in the sunshine were sick and listless. They didn't want to play with their friends. They didn't even want to eat. It was even worse for the elders of the village – they coughed, their eyes drooped shut, and eventually several of them died. Even the oldest men in the village could never remember such a thing happening before.

Everyone had the same story to tell – it had started with some minor illness which good Doctor Brown had treated. They had gone home, warmed by his words and made well again by his medicine. But then it had happened – the headaches, the blurred vision, the constant vomiting. And Dr. William Brown was so kind to them. He put his arms around the women, he even kissed their cheeks: 'It will be all right,' he murmured into their hair, 'Everything will be for the best.' Paduka was very quiet. He sat cross-legged outside the surgery and stared at the doctor as he arrived at his surgery, and when he left for home each evening.

So good was Doctor Brown, so dedicated to his cause that he gave the women very special medicine so that the patients didn't suffer as much as they might have done. 'It may seem expensive,' he told each wife as he saw them, 'but, believe me, without it, your loved ones will die screaming and in agony.' The wives stared into his deep blue eyes, which seemed to have an almost hypnotic power and nodded. They wished they could find a way to thank him.

Then one day, when the whole village returned from the funeral of one of the most popular citizens of the village, they found that Dr. William Brown had gone. There was a note on his front door written on crisp white notepaper: 'I must leave you now. My work here is done.' The women knelt on the ground and sobbed: 'What will become of us? Oh, how can we go on without the medicine?' Paduka nodded slowly, then sadly walked away.

Strangely enough, however, only weeks after the doctor had departed, the disease too had gone. Imagine the horror on the face of one of those women when, whilst visiting her sister in a neighbouring town she read the headline in the paper: 'Dr. Death Does it Again!' The police were on to a villain who had taken money from patients in a village to the North of Antinoga. He had given them 'special medicine' alright – infected water which he'd taken from a nearby river!

The man reading the same paper on a flight to Los Angeles chuckled to himself and smoothed his sunset red tie. With newly-blonded hair and an American accent, no-one would ever recognise him. He folded the paper in half and put it on the table in front of him next to the caviar and glass of champagne. 'Have you finished with this, Sir?' said an air hostess. 'Oh yes,' crooned Dr. Death, 'I certainly have.'

Examiner's comments

- The story is relevant and is controlled and fluent throughout. The irony (where a person, situation or thing appears to be the complete opposite of what it actually is) – suggested by the title – is picked up on and developed very well. 'Good Dr Brown' is anything but good!
- The student is a confident story teller who writes with real energy, involving the reader from start to finish.
- The writing is accurately written in terms of spelling, punctuation and paragraphing. Sentence lengths are varied, and this adds to the shifting moods of the story.
- A rich vocabulary is used, with adjectives and verbs being used to particularly good effect. The story has flashes of colour and some strong imagery.
- Close details suggest the characters – of Dr Brown and Paduka in particular – very effectively. We can sense something false and sinister about the doctor from the start, and realise that Paduka has 'seen through' him. The student uses such things as direct speech; physical description of appearance, clothes and behaviour; imagery and contrast to do this.
- The setting and atmosphere of the farming village of Antinoga, in spring, are clearly described. Other touches – such as the doctor's mahogany desk – add to the mood of the story.
- The structure is very strong, with the story beginning with the arrival of Dr Brown and ending with his departure. Other elements of the story bring it 'full circle', such as the descriptions of the patterns on the doctor's tie and the mention of water/the river. The little descriptions of Paduka also help to bring the whole thing together.
- The opening paragraph is successful, as we are given a strong description of the new arrival in the village straightaway. Each of the middle paragraphs moves the story on to new ground with strong leading sentences. Of course, the evil of Dr Brown is revealed at the end of the story – although we suspect that something is wrong from the start – so the whole thing comes to a very satisfying conclusion.
- The student is aware of the reader throughout, even going so far as to ask us to 'Imagine...' at one stage. The overall style is clear and straightforward – the story reads like a myth or moral tale. An excellent response!