



1 Know the assessment criteria

Make sure you know the marking criteria. Each criterion is equally weighted:

- Knowledge and understanding of the text; use of evidence.
- Responding to the question (Paper 2).
- Understanding the use and effects of stylistic features.
- Cohesive structure; developed argument.
- Written expression; use of terminology.

3 Structuring responses

Introduction

Briefly explain which text(s) you are exploring, their central idea(s), and what links the two texts (HL paper 1). Briefly explain how the key words/key ideas of the question apply to your texts (paper 2). Briefly comment on context.

Main body: (point, evidence, analysis)

- **Point:** introduce each point with a **topic sentence**. Each topic sentence should help to build your argument and show your response is well thought out. Use words such as: 'Furthermore...', 'However...', 'Moreover...', 'In addition...'. If comparing, use comparative phrases: 'Similar to text A, text B...', 'Unlike text A, text B...'. For paper 2, include key words from the question.
- **Evidence:** usually a short and relevant contextualised quotation that backs up your point.
- **Analysis:** This should be the longest part of your PEA paragraphs. What you analyse will vary depending on the text (paper 1) and the question (paper 2). However, features you could analyse include: lexis (word choice) and lexical sets, literary devices (figurative language, phonological language), stylistic features, colour and visual images. Remember to explain how each feature enhances the reader's understanding of the text's meaning. Embed terminology throughout.

Conclusion

Briefly sum up your main argument.

6 Learning quotations

- How many? Five per theme, five per main character, two or three per minor character, one for each important device (example of symbolism, dramatic irony, sensory imagery etc.)
- Copy quotations in different fonts/colours — stick to your bedroom wall.
- Replace the lyrics of your favourite song with quotations — sing them.
- Record yourself saying the quotations. Listen to your recordings when on the bus, out shopping, doing exercise etc.
- Leave out a key word from a quotation and get your classmates to fill in the missing word.
- Write a justification for each of your top ten quotations. Share with your classmates.
- Put each quotation in a cloud, surrounded by mini-clouds. Add analysis and relevant terminology in each mini-cloud.
- Remember to contextualise your quotations — where in the text do they come from?

9 Good use of language

- Learn your terminology and use it.
- Avoid saying 'this word...' — use the correct lexis: 'noun', 'verb', 'adjective', 'adverb', 'pronoun'...
- Use a range of literary verbs: 'connotes', 'emphasises', 'exaggerates', 'highlights', 'infers', 'implies', 'suggests'...
- Use the writer's surname: 'Ibsen's use of prose suggests...', 'Shakespeare's use of blank verse implies...'
- Use present tense.
- Use formal language.

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2 Plan effectively

Paper 1

- Spend at least 20–25 minutes planning.
- Re-read your chosen text(s) two or three times.
- Make notes on C–GAP (Context–Genre, Audience, Purpose).
- Highlight key ideas and features.
- Annotate: margin notes, arrows showing shifts in tone/perspective, links within and between texts.

Paper 2

- Spend at least 10–15 minutes planning.
- Cross out questions that do not apply to your texts.
- Highlight the key words in your chosen question.
- Repeat key words throughout.
- Apply your knowledge of your texts to the question.

Both papers

- Use bullet points, mind maps and charts when planning responses.
- Order your points carefully. Each point should build up a cohesive argument.
- When discussing multiple texts, write a balanced response with an equal number of points for each text.

4 Providing balanced responses

- **Two-halves approach:** first half of essay explores text A, second half explores/compares text B. The biggest danger with this approach is running out of time and under-developing exploration of text B. To avoid this, be rigid with your time management.
- **See-saw approach:** alternating paragraphs on each text. The biggest danger of this approach is a disjointed response. To avoid this, each alternating pair of paragraphs should explore a similar idea/feature.

5 Context

Paper 1

- Use publishing details at the end of the texts to guide your comments regarding historical/geographical/cultural contexts.
- Embed an awareness of how context affects meaning and different reader responses.

Paper 2

- Research each texts' context and each authors' background.
- Research the reception to your texts over time — have readers' responses to your texts changed since they were published? Why/why not?
- Research two or three different critical approaches to your texts: feminist, psychoanalytical, archetypal.

7 Using past papers

- Practise past papers under timed conditions (SL: 90 minutes, HL: 2 hours).
- Team up with a classmate and mark each other's papers using the assessment criteria.
- Highlight key areas in your responses to give you a visual guide of what you need to focus on.

Short on time?

- Spend 20–25 minutes reading, re-reading, highlighting, annotating and planning your response.
- Write topic sentences for each paragraph.
- Write an introduction and conclusion.
- List the quotations you would include.

8 Highlighting

In the exam, highlight:

- contextual details at the end of unseen texts
- quotations and other textual evidence you are going to include in your response
- key words of questions.
- links within and between texts

In practice essays, use a different coloured highlighter to highlight each marking criterion. Use these colours to highlight those sections of your essays that directly relate to each criterion. When you have finished highlighting, your practice essays should be colourful. If they are not, you are not addressing each criterion in enough detail.

10 Remember...

- Avoid overly praiseworthy generalisations, e.g. 'Miller's amazing play...'
- Do not paraphrase or retell the story — taking a thematic approach rather than a chronological approach should help you avoid this.
- Do not explain what terminology means — examiners already know this.
- Avoid too much crossing-out and arrows pointing to missing text. Planning should help with this.
- Avoid careless errors: titles of texts and characters/authors' names start with a capital letter; spell key words in question and terminology correctly; a text written in the 1800s is a nineteenth-century text, not an eighteenth-century text...

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