EXAMINATION TECHNIQUE

English

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Paper One is divided into 2 sections you should allow 2 hours and 50 minutes for this paper.

Section One: Comprehending (100 marks)

Section Two: Composing (100 marks)

On the day of the exam you must answer three questions:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Marks</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Comprehension based questions</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Specific, functional writing tasks</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TIMING: Reading and selecting questions: 10 minutes
Question A: 55 minutes
Question B: 35 minutes
Composition: 1 hour and 10 minutes

ANSWER questions in following order: Question A
Question B
Composition

Remember Questions A and B cannot be answered on same text
Question A: (55 minutes)

Think of each question as a task that you must perform.

1. First of all identify the Task. Be as clear as you can about exactly what you are being asked to do.

2. Locate and underline the Key Terms of the question.

3. Where appropriate (unless it specifies in your own words) use specific detail and textual evidence to develop your answer.

4. Note the number of marks per question as an indicator to the approximate length of your answer.

5. Plan all parts of the question before you begin to write your answer. Some questions may ask about the content or ideas in the text; others about the style of the writing. Some questions may ask for a personal opinion of issues raised in the text. Distinguish between questions that ask for the author's views and those which ask for your own views.

Question B (35 minutes)

Question B is a writing assignment arising out of the text.

1. Your writing will be assessed on your ability to do the following:

   • Engage with the set task
• Sustain your response over the entire answer
• Manage and control language to achieve clear communication

2. The language you use in your answer should be appropriate to the task.

3. Do note the audience / readership as this will help you to determine the appropriate language for the assignment and the correct format or layout for your answer.

4. The length of your answers will vary according to the task – approximate length: one to two pages. Remember this is not a composition.

5. It is advisable to have read all the texts before beginning to plan your question B. There may be material here for your chosen writing assignment.

6. Begin a new page of the answer book so that the full effect of layout is visible to the examiner.

7. The content of your writing assignment is also very important.

• Plan the points you intend to make.
• Decide on format / layout.
• Use appropriate language

Composition
The content of your composition must reflect a maturity of approach and a thoughtful response.

When writing your composition you should consider the following:

- The purpose of the writing
- The audience
- The context (newspaper / magazine etc.)
- Use of appropriate language

Plan your composition -

In an essay, ideas and information cannot be presented all at once; they must be arranged in some order:

- An Introduction
- Body of the essay
- Conclusion

Newspaper and magazine articles should adopt the journalistic conventions of a headline, sub-headings, introduction etc. to give shape to the writing.

The paragraph is the most important unit of thought. In the main body of the essay your paragraphs should be ordered to reflect a sense of movement and progression.

Each paragraph should deal with one aspect of the topic. It should have one main idea or topic sentence, together with support or illustrations.
Your paragraphs should be connected by the onward thrust of your approach or by transitional words such as “nevertheless”, “furthermore”, “however” etc.

Avoid very long and very short paragraphs

Features of good paragraphs

- One topic
- Clarity
- Unity - no digressions
- Cohesion - all sentences should relate to the topic sentence

Remember to use the characteristic techniques of your chosen style.
There are 5 main ways in which language may be used:

The 5 categories are:

1. Language of information
2. Language of argument
3. Language of persuasion
4. Language of narration
5. Aesthetic use of language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Information</td>
<td>Clarity, Order</td>
<td>To show, To inform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Argument (a rational, ordered presentation)</td>
<td>Order, Reason, Logic</td>
<td>To demonstrate, To make a case for, To convince</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Persuasion (one new dimension here - emotive; to convince is more central) Rhetorical devices should be considered in this category</td>
<td>Clarity, Emotion</td>
<td>To convince, To persuade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Narration (A narrative that works convinces as real. It comes alive as we read)</td>
<td>Truth, Realism</td>
<td>To involve / engage / captivate the reader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Aesthetic: This is not really a separate category but is found throughout the other styles of writing. In every category we enjoy or note the beauty / rhythm / energy of words which is characteristic of the aesthetic dimension of language to be found in literature.

APPROACH TO ANSWERING PAPER TWO

This part of the paper is divided into three sections, Section I The Single Text, Section II The Comparative Study, and Section III Poetry. Each of these sections has to be attempted. Remember you must answer on Shakespearean Drama, either as a Single Text or as an element in the Comparative Study.

Section I (The Single Text, 60 marks) 50 mins

You will be required to attempt a question on one of the prescribed Single Texts. Two questions will be set on each of the texts.

Section II (The Comparative Study, 70 marks) 60 mins

You will required to answer one question from this section. Normally two questions are set on each of the modes of comparison.

Section III (Poetry: 70 marks) 60 mins
Poetry is worth 70 marks on the higher level paper. Fifty marks are available for seen poetry and 20 marks for unseen poetry. It is extremely important that you do everything you can to maximise your chances on the day of the examination. The first thing that you need to do is to become familiar with the marking scheme.

The marking scheme  PCLM

On a general level, the corrector will be looking for four different qualities in your Answers in paper two.

1. The first of these is Clarity of Purpose. Here, the corrector will want to see that your answer engages with the question asked. This is worth 30 per cent of the available marks. In order to get the full marks available for Clarity of Purpose, you would have to:

- Provide an original and fresh answer. (Slavishly learnt-off material can often damage your prospects in the exam.)
- Show that you understand the genre you are writing about. This means for example that you demonstrate how drama differs from other areas of the course. While you don’t want to over do it, a technical knowledge of the different genres can help here. Remember that with the comparative section you must compare and contrast the texts that you have studied.
Focus on what the question is asking you to do. If you were asked to explain why you liked or disliked the work of a certain poet, you would have to state explicitly why you like his or her poetry. It would not be acceptable simply to say, ‘I like her poetry’. You must always justify your statements by providing examples from the poems on the course. According to the chief examiner's report of 2005, ‘answers were most successful where candidates made good use of the text to reinforce a point of view or response.’

Most marks are lost for Clarity of Purpose by:

- Retelling what the story of the text. This is known as paraphrasing. Remember, you are expected to know the content of your texts. The content of the text is only useful insofar as it illustrates a point that addresses the question asked. In reference to the poetry section of the paper, the chief examiner's report in 2001 specifically mentioned this point, saying that candidates should be aware that, while questions on poetry will require them to come to terms with the content of poems, they may also require them to deal with the language of poetry. The easiest way to avoid paraphrasing is to deal with the text in a global sense. Paragraphs that concentrate too much on the events in a novel, play or film lend themselves to paraphrasing.

- Reproducing an essay that you learnt off by heart that does not address the question fully.

2. The second area that the corrector will consider is the Coherence of Delivery. Here, the corrector wants to see an ability to sustain your
response throughout the entire answer. This is worth 30 per cent of the available marks.

In order to gain the full 15 marks available for Coherence of Delivery, you need to sustain your essay in a manner that demonstrates:

- Continuity of argument: in other words, your ideas need to follow on from one another.

- Management of ideas: you must control the manner in which you present your ideas in an essay. The easiest way to ensure this is to write in focused paragraphs. A focused paragraph deals with one aspect of the question. This one aspect can be technical, e.g. use of rhythm, or thematic, e.g. death, love etc. Remember you would have to tie all these in with the question asked. In a poetry essay if you chose to focus your paragraph on death, in a personal response you would have to show how the poet’s treatment of this theme of death impacted on you.

- Engagement with the texts: you must show that you understand how the texts function and achieve their impact. It is not simply enough to know what the text is about. A statement such as ‘this is a dramatic scene’ is useless unless you show how the scene is dramatic.

You will lose marks available for Coherency of Delivery if you:

- Fail to shape your argument. Remember, your essay must have a beginning, a middle and a conclusion.
• Write in disorganised paragraphs that lack focus. Remember, the definition of a paragraph is a group of sentences dealing with one idea.

• Use the wrong register. Your tone of voice and the type of language that you use are important aspects of your essay. While you should try to write in a natural style, the fact that you are writing an essay implies a certain degree of formality.

3. The third area that the corrector will concern him/herself with is Efficiency of Language use. The corrector will want to see clear evidence of your ability to manage and control your language, so as to achieve clear communication. This is worth 30 percent of the available marks. If you want to obtain the full 15 marks available for Efficiency of Language, you must:

• Control your expression. This means that your sentences should flow naturally. Avoid very long sentences. If something can be said clearly in a short sentence, don’t try to make it more complicated. You must ensure that the syntax (word order) of your sentences is logical.

• Ensure that your paragraphs are structured correctly. As previously stated, you must write in ordered paragraphs that work together to answer the question. Try to link your paragraphs where possible.

• Use lively, interesting language and phrasing. Try to vary your sentence length and avoid repetition of words and phrases. Once
again, knowledge of the technical aspects of the author or director's work can help make your language more interesting.

You will lose marks for your language if you:

- Fail to write clear and logical sentences that make complete sense to the person reading them. The golden rule is, if you are slightly unclear about what your sentence is saying, then the person reading it will be completely lost.

- Use learnt-off material that does not logically fit in with the rest of your argument or address the question asked.

- Write an essay that does not contain ordered paragraphs.

4. The final area that the marking scheme addresses is called Accuracy of Mechanics. This is basically spelling and grammar. Ten per cent of the available marks are given for this.

There are 5 marks available for grammar and spelling. While the corrector will not punish you for obvious slips of the hand you will be penalised for poor spelling and grammar. However, if your grammar and spelling are very weak, they will obviously impact on other areas of the marking scheme.
How to Write a Paper Two Essay
How To Write a Paper Two Essay

According to the Chief Examiner for English:
“the best answers in the Single Text Section were anchored in a careful and assured examination of all aspects of the question. While unfocused narrative remains a minor problem, most candidates displayed an admirable flexibility in adapting their knowledge to the demands of the question. “

Every essay you write should be focused on one thing, and one thing only: the question.

The most basic principle of essay writing is that the essay should be structured. Your essay must form a cogent and coherent response to the question asked. In order to do this, your essay must always contain the following:

• an introduction
• a number of well focused body paragraphs
• a conclusion
Introductions

Your introduction should be a short re-wording of the question asked. Writing too much in your introduction can lead to a lack of focus on the question. One of the best pieces of essay writing technique that you can employ, is to ask yourself if someone could tell what the question asked was just by reading your introduction. If the answer is no to this question, you need to start again. I recommend that you avoid mentioning a specific scene, act, or character unless they have been specifically asked in the question. In order to avoid mentioning irrelevant material, you must take the time to make a list of the key question words before you start to write your introduction.

Look at this sample introduction to an essay that appeared on the Leaving Certificate Higher English paper.

When we first meet Banquo he appears keen, observant and above all impervious to the temptation that the Witches represent. However, in the course of the play, Banquo’s principles are deeply compromised and we justifiably feel that he is not the innocent solider who met the Witches and scorned their prophecies.

Now look at the question
‘The Banquo Macbeth has Killed is not the innocent soldier who met the Witches and scorned their prophecies, nor the man who prayed to be delivered from temptation. He is a man whose principles have been deeply compromised.’

Notice how my introduction is completely focused on the question asked. I do not say too much and I avoid going into too much specific detail. I will leave that for my main body paragraph.
Effective Paragraphs

A paragraph is a group of sentences that deal with one idea. In other words, for your paragraph to function correctly, there must be a clear and discernible focus to it. So, if the question were centred on Shakespeare’s vision of Evil, then one of your paragraphs might have as its focus the way in which the witches are a symbol for evil in the play. In such an essay, the witches should never be the sole focus of the paragraph.

A paragraph must never have two competing ideas. If you cannot say, what aspect of the question your paragraph is dealing with, then your paragraph is not focused. Remember, paragraphs that deal with more than one idea at one time tend to be confused and are by definition not answering the question efficiently. As you begin to come to terms with the idea of focused paragraphs, it might be a good idea to write the focus of any given paragraph alongside it. This will help you to think about the direction your paragraphs are taking.

The best paragraphs contain at least three obvious references to the question asked. For example, if the question were centred on the word ‘deceit’, then your paragraph should mention the word deceit three or four times, but should also contain words and phrases like ‘appearance and reality’, ‘lies’, ‘indirections’ etc.
Remember that you should indent the beginning of each paragraph and it is good practice to leave a few lines between each paragraph.

Every paragraph you write must contain quotations that make thematic, character or technical points. Using quotations correctly will allow you to avoid paraphrasing the text. Paraphrase or unfocused narrative (retelling the story of a novel, play or poem) weakens your answer and is not rewarded in the marking scheme. According to the Chief Examiner for English, “Students should be aware of the dangers of unfocused narrative particularly in their response to a Single Text question. It is important to move beyond mere description of content.”

As a general rule, in order to avoid mere description of what happens in a text, you should follow the PQE method. You should always Point, Quote and Explain at least twice in every paragraph. Look at the following examples:

Once Macbeth kills Duncan, the evil that descends on Scotland is conveyed in a series of unforgettable images. In Act II, scene iv, Ross informs us that the "heavens
have become troubled with man’s act” and “dark night strangles the travelling lamp”.

Notice how the quotation is working with the flow of my paragraph. It is not sticking out, and is working with the main point of the paragraph, which centres on the unforgettable imagery used by Shakespeare to convey the idea of evil. In the above excerpt, I have not explained what the quotation means. Many students make that mistake. You should use the quotation to explain the point that you are making.

Block quotations can be very effective in making your point, provided you do not use so many of them as to fragment your paragraph. When using block quotation, you should drop down a line and move to the centre of the page. Take a look at this excerpt from a paragraph on Banquo:

There then follows an awkward exchange, during which Macbeth quite obviously suggests an underhanded and even treasonable enterprise that will be to Banquo’s benefit:

If you shall cleave to my consent, when ’tis, It shall make honor for you.
Banquo’s reply reveals the first signs of moral compromise.

Although the block quotation stands on its own, it still follows the logic of the previous sentence. When the paragraph resumes, the focus is still very clear and question focused. In fact, the next sentence justifies the use of the block quotation. Whether you are using block quotation or smaller quotations within your sentences, it is important to remember that these quotations are only useful in so far as they are supporting a point that is completely relevant to the question asked. You should not write quotations in different colours. This costs valuable time and looks rather immature.

PARAGRAPHS LENGTH

How Long?

It is of course impossible to prescribe the length of paragraph. However in an examination situation, most paragraphs will consist of sixteen to eighteen lines of exam booklet. Keeping this in mind, you should make sure that you practise writing essays on examination style booklet. All well written essays tend to contain paragraphs of even length. If you think about this for a moment, it is entirely logical. If the question
contains three parts, then, in order to obtain full marks, you must deal with each of these three parts more or less evenly. One paragraph containing four sentences and another containing twenty-four sentences tend to indicate a poorly structured essay.

It is important that you get into the habit of approaching each paragraph in a structured well thought out fashion. The following list should help you to assess your own paragraph’s strengths and weaknesses. The best paragraphs always contain:

- A clear topic sentence that is closely linked to the question asked.
- More than one clear reference to the question asked.
- At least three quotations.
- Apt use of technical vocabulary such as; atmosphere, dramatic irony, motif of poison, soliloquy etc
- A link to the previous and or next paragraph.

Conclusions

Your conclusion should reflect your introduction. It should not be too long and should not introduce any new material. You should make sure that your conclusion reflects the entire question completely.
The Essay check list

1. Does the paragraph contain at least three clear and obvious references to the question. For example, if your single text question were to centre on “Shakespeare’s vision of evil”, then your paragraph should have words like visual image, Shakespeare intends us to view evil as, one aspect of Shakespeare’s presentation of evil is etc.

2. If the paragraph were taken out of the essay would one be able to tell what the question asked was? If you have completed the above points from the check list, then the answer has to be yes to this question.

3. Does my paragraph have at least one genre specific technical word? So, in a drama essay this would include words like: soliloquy, monologue, imagery, motif etc.

4. Do my paragraphs link? You need to make your paragraphs link by using words such as; nevertheless, although, however etc. These words will maintain the forward thrust of your essay.

5. Has my essay given roughly even treatment to all parts of the question? If you don’t do this then you are going suffer an inevitable loss of marks.

6. Are the paragraphs evenly distributed? This follows from the point above. If you write one paragraph that is 2 pages long and another that is
5 sentences long, that inevitably means that you are not answering the question in an even handed manner.

7. Conclusions - Does your conclusion reflect key aspects of the question and, by implication, the introduction that you have written? Above all, never introduce new material into your conclusion.

8. Have you written roughly four pages? There is no official length to an essay but most Paper Two essays fall within the 1000 to 1,200 word range.

9. Do not write an essay without reading this checklist through.