

EXAM STRUCTURE

- ◆ The unfamiliar text exam is split into three sections: a prose (unstructured fiction), a poem, and a non-fiction piece.
- ◆ Each section will first have a short question asking you to identify a language feature or describe an aspect of the text.
- ◆ After that, you'll be asked to write a short essay about how and why the author conveyed a deeper meaning in the text.

LANGUAGE FEATURES

- ◆ **Figurative language** is language that the author uses to represent something other than what the words literally mean:
 - ◆ Metaphors: when the author makes a comparison between two things by writing that one 'is' the other.
 - ◆ Similes: the same as a metaphor, except one thing is 'like' or 'as' another.
 - ◆ Symbolism: when something in the text represents something else.
 - ◆ Personification: giving something that isn't human human-like qualities.
 - ◆ Hyperbole: exaggeration that isn't meant to be taken literally.
 - ◆ Connotations: when a word causes the reader to feel or think of something else.
- ◆ **Sound devices** use the way that words are pronounced for effect:
 - ◆ Onomatopoeia: when a word sounds like what it is describing ("boom").
 - ◆ Alliteration: words starting with the same sound close together.
 - ◆ Assonance: words that use the same sounding syllables or consonants used close together.
 - ◆ Rhyme: like what Eminem does.
- ◆ **Literary devices** are choices of words or sentence structure for an effect:
 - ◆ Syntax: sentence structure (including length, whether the sentence is short or compound, etc.)
 - ◆ Diction: choice of wording
 - ◆ Style: how the author sounds when they write (formal, informal, New Zealander, etc.)
 - ◆ Enjambement: when lines of a poem don't end with grammar
 - ◆ Flow: the use of grammar to adjust the rhythm of the writing (short sentences with long ones, all short sentences, etc.)
 - ◆ Tricolon: when something comes in threes ("veni, vidi, vici")

PERCEPTION

- ◆ Perception is the marker's favourite word and the requirement for Excellence.
- ◆ It's not enough to simply spot the similes. You need to explain how and why the author is using language features to have some effect on the reader, or how and why the text is about something deeper than simply the story.

- ◆ In order to give a 'between/beneath the lines' response, you want to give the marker your original interpretations about how and why the author is conveying a particular experience or sending a particular message.
- ◆ Relevant to this is the author's purpose, the ideas behind the piece, and the mood of the piece.

WRITING TIPS

- ◆ You don't need to write full essays: simply begin with a thesis statement and briefly state your main points, then get into the paragraphs, before concluding with a short sentence on how your thesis has been justified.
- ◆ A thesis is the idea that you're going to prove. To come up with it, say in your head, "In my essay, I am going to prove that. . ." and whatever follows is your thesis.
- ◆ A solid technique is to begin by underlining every key word the question is asking, such as "the poet's relationship" or "contrasts" or "a particular mood" to make sure that your response hits all the marks.
- ◆ Next, underline or circle every language feature you spot, and anything that jumps out to you as being unique or impactful when you read it.
- ◆ If you can't remember the name of a language feature or don't know what it is, don't sweat! The exam is not on how many language features you know, it's on how well you're able to interpret what you're reading, think about deeper and more important ideas, and prove it.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ◆ Simply listing features isn't enough. Rather than telling the marker all the metaphors you've spotted, focus on 2-3 and go into detail about how they made you feel, how language has been used for a real effect, how they convey a deeper message, why the author wanted to do this, and why it's an important part of the author's piece.
- ◆ You don't need to write a full essay, but you shouldn't just bullet point or write a few sentences either. Get to the point, but make sure you're writing in the 'what, how, and why'.
- ◆ There's no wrong way to read a poem! If you're getting some deep abstract idea or message from the text, write about it!

HOW TO PREPARE

- ◆ Read not only about different language features, but how they're used for an effect.
- ◆ Look at poets and authors and differences between types of poetry and prose.
- ◆ Although you can't access the texts on the NZQA website, you can read the exemplars to see the difference between the grades.
- ◆ Read the assessment schedules and reports on the NZQA website to get an idea of what the markers want.
- ◆ Practice!