

## EXAM STRUCTURE

- ◆ The written text exam will give you a choice of essay questions on aspects of written text. Aspects of written text include:
  - ◆ Author's purpose
  - ◆ Intended audiences
  - ◆ Themes
  - ◆ Characters
  - ◆ Settings
  - ◆ Language features (symbolism, metaphors, style, etc.)
  - ◆ Narrative structure
- ◆ The questions will all be split into a **describe** and **explain** component.
- ◆ The **describe** is an 'on the lines' response: discussing how the aspect is used in the text in order.
- ◆ The **explain** is a 'between the lines' response: discussing how and why the aspect is used for a deeper idea to have some effect on the reader.

## THE QUESTION AND YOUR THESIS

- ◆ You are marked on how well you prove your thesis throughout your essay.
- ◆ Your thesis is the idea that you are going to prove: your original and perceptive answer to the essay question.
- ◆ Your thesis needs to answer both parts of the question, and include the key words that you can't answer the question without, which you should underline.
- ◆ To come up with your thesis, say in your head, "In my essay, I am going to prove that. . ." and whatever follows is your thesis.
- ◆ Your thesis should be proven by three main points: your essay's three paragraphs.

## PERCEPTION

- ◆ Perception is the marker's favourite word and the requirement for Excellence.
- ◆ In order to show perception, your analysis needs to look into the text, come up with an interpretation about particular aspects (such as theme or character), and discuss how that points to a perceptive idea.
- ◆ A perceptive idea is one that goes to the deeper meaning of the text and what the author was really writing about. It may be something to do with:
  - ◆ Society: the world or communities that people live in at certain times
  - ◆ The human condition: the experiences, feelings, and problems of humanity
  - ◆ Wider literature: the effect of literature or links to other texts (if the question is asking about the ending of your text, etc.)
- ◆ To show perception in your writing, make sure that you're including 'how' and 'why'. How does the character

represent the struggle between hope and reality, and why did the author want to show it in this way?

## ESSAY STRUCTURE

- ◆ Your essay needs to have an introduction, approximately three main paragraphs, and a conclusion.
- ◆ A great introduction structure is the 'upside-down triangle'. Like the food pyramid, you spend the most amount of words on your base, a bit less in the middle, and the tip only makes up a small part.
  - ◆ The base of your triangle is the 'philosophical yarn': this is where you grab the reader's attention by discussing your deeper perceptive idea about society, the human condition, and/or literature and explaining why it's important.
  - ◆ Next, clearly say your thesis in order to show the marker that you're answering the question.
  - ◆ Finally, briefly list your three main points.
- ◆ A not-compulsory but helpful paragraph structure is TEXAS:
  - ◆ Topic sentence: the purpose of your paragraph.
  - ◆ Evidence: where the aspect of the text is within the text itself.
  - ◆ eXplain: how does the aspect prove your thesis?
  - ◆ Author's purpose: why did the author do this for some deeper idea?
  - ◆ Summary: conclude by reinforcing that your topic sentence has been proved, and how this proves your thesis.
- ◆ To conclude, simply link your three main points together to show how your thesis is proved, and that this is important because it demonstrates a perceptive idea.

## COMMON MISTAKES

- ◆ Make sure everything you're writing is relevant to proving your thesis.
- ◆ Your thesis needs to answer the essay question – not be a memorised essay.
- ◆ Your essay is on your idea about the text, not the plot of the text. Avoid explaining to the marker what the storyline is about and pretend like they've already read it.
- ◆ Your evidence is used to back up your argument, not to show the marker that you've read the book.
- ◆ When explaining your interpretation about the deeper ideas in the text or the author's purpose, you need to explain 'how' and 'why' it is true in order to prove your argument.
- ◆ Read what you're writing out loud to pay attention to flow and rhythm. Too many short and simple sentences in a row will make your writing sound robotic and basic.
- ◆ Use conjunctions, like 'which' and 'however' in order to connect sentences and make your ideas flow onto each other.

## HOW TO PREPARE

- ◆ Read the text and use secondary sources (Thug Notes, Spark Notes, articles) to study various interpretations of the text.

- ◆ The context in which the author was writing may be relevant to understanding their purpose (e.g. Shakespeare, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Anthony Burgess, and Suzanne Collins were all writing in very different societies).
- ◆ Create a list of all your evidence (quotes, characters, themes) that you would use to explain to someone how and why there are deeper ideas underneath the text.
- ◆ Read past exams to get an idea of the types of questions that you'll be asked.
- ◆ Read the assessment schedules and reports on the NZQA website to understand what markers want.
- ◆ Write practice essays and compare them to the exemplars on the NZQA website.