ABOUT THE STANDARD

◆ Written text at Level 2 is pretty much about getting a written text, taking evidence from it in the form of **aspects**, and then - most importantly - analysing it.

◆ **Aspects** include:
  ◇ Author's purpose
  ◇ Intended audiences
  ◇ Themes
  ◇ Characters
  ◇ Settings
  ◇ Language features (symbolism, metaphors, style, etc.)
  ◇ Narrative structure

◆ When we **analyse**, we're using evidence to come up with interpretations of those aspects in order to answer the question.

◆ To get Excellence, our interpretations have to be **perceptive**. This effectively just means being deep about it. Or in the words of NZQA, being **insightful** and **original**. That's all well and good, but it probably doesn't help too much - so let's figure out how to actually do that in your essay.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

◆ One of the most important things to keep in mind is that your essay is **persuasive**, not informative. You're not telling the marker what *A Clockwork Orange* is about (they're English teachers, they've read it like four times), you're trying to prove an argument: how your answer to the essay question is solid.

◆ As such, the essay is **thesis-based, with aspects of specific text only being used as evidence to support it.**

◆ **A thesis is the idea that your essay is going to prove.**
  ◇ For example: "T*he idea of religion in The Great Gatsby serves as Fitzgerald's warning to readers in 1920s America that pursuing the 'American Dream' can come at the cost of morality.*"

◆ In the marking schedule, NZQA wrote that students who got Excellence "maintained a strong thesis throughout their essay." **This means that you've got to be consistently referring back to your thesis as the whole purpose, and every point you make should reflect that**. So no tangents about fun facts you read on SparkNotes.

◆ There's a common misconception that if you get E in the mocks, you should hold onto that essay for dear life, and regurgitate it from your mind palace in the real thing. This is a bad idea. In their last assessment report, NZQA wrote that they could tell a lot of essays were pre-prepared, and this meant that they often didn't do so well because they didn't answer the question - or in other words, the thesis wasn't relevant to it.

◆ You'll remember that in order to be perceptive, we've got to be **insightful** and **original**.

- **Insight** means that we're going below the surface of the text and accurately pointing at deeper ideas. Aspects of the book, like setting or characters, are surface-level stuff. It's what the book is about, but it's not really what it's *about*. To do that, we need to discuss what the author is really getting at.
- We can demonstrate insight by linking our evidence with **perceptive ideas**.
- **A perceptive idea is one that discusses the statement by weaving in 'the Big Three': society, the human condition, and/or wider literature.**
    - Society refers to the world we live in, the world your author(s) lived in, or the world the author(s) want us to live in.
    - The human condition refers to the feelings, flaws, and experiences that are universally human.
    - Wider literature refers to how the statement and the written text you've chosen fits in or says something about literature at that time or in general.
- **To demonstrate perception, you have to present an argument centered around this perceptive idea and prove it using "how" and "why"**. It's not enough to say that "x conveys y". You've got to prove it.
- It's important that we're not just yarning about society for the fun of it. It actually has to be relevant to the text, because that's what we're analysing - not discrimination in the 21st century. To ensure we're staying on track, **we can link the text with the idea using the author's purpose: why the author chose to weave these ideas into their writing.**
- By doing this, we can also show **appreciation for the author's purpose** - by telling the marker that the purpose is significant for us to read about and that it does come across through the author's use of aspects of the text.
- A valuable thing to bear in mind that's closely linked with the author's purpose is the historical context in which they were writing and how this context compares to now.
- For example, how is the society in which Shakespeare was writing *Macbeth* different or relevant to now?
- It's also a great idea that your essay is as **original** as possible.
- This means having **personal voice**, or making sure that your writing style is interesting - try and vary your sentence lengths, vocabulary, and don't repeat your points.
- It also means that the best points are ones that are different from Becky sitting next to you. If you've got a unique idea about how Gatsby changed in one part of the book, write it - as long as it develops your argument.
- The best way to start your essay off on the right track is by using the **upside-down triangle introduction structure**. Your introduction is split into three parts, with the most amount of words spent on the first chunk, then the second, then the third:
    1. **The philosophical yarn:** this is where you introduce and write about the elements of the Big Three you've chosen - e.g. discrimination in society or the grieving process. This is also where you can begin to show **appreciation**, by showing the marker that you think these wider ideas are important.
    2. Your **thesis**: In one (maybe two) sentences, clearly state the idea you're going to prove. A good method is to say (in your head!) "In my essay, I'm going to prove that …" and write whatever comes next.
    3. Your **evidence**: Here is where you finally introduce your three main points. This may be how symbolism, historical context, and themes in The Great Gatsby help prove your thesis.
- Your three main points are your three paragraphs. Each paragraph needs to have a purpose, which is **always to help prove your thesis. This is how your paragraphs become linked together**, rather than random yarns to just show you've read a book.

- A good (but not compulsory) paragraph structure is **TEXAS**:
    - **Topic sentence** - the purpose of that paragraph.
    - **Evidence** - what evidence from written text do you have to prove your idea about written text?
    - **eXplain** - how does this prove your thesis?
    - **Author's purpose** - why is your thesis shared or not by the authors you're discussing?
    - **Summary** - tie it all nicely together and drop the mic.
- A good rule of thumb is three paragraphs, with 1-2 pieces of evidence per paragraph.

OVERALL

- It all comes back to your thesis. Make sure you're referring to it often, and explain how your evidence about the film is proving it using **how** and **why**.
- Every point you make should come back to your thesis.
- Aspects of written text are evidence for backing up your arguments about how you've originally interpreted the text. To relate it to society, the human condition, or wider literature, you need to be framing these around the author's purpose.
- The best tip to set yourself up for success? Read exemplars and write practice essays!