

ABOUT THE STANDARD

- ◆ It has an abstract name, but written text at Level 3 is fundamentally an essay about an idea you've got from the wonders of literature using **aspects** of books/poems/short stories you've studied.
- ◆ **Aspects** include:
 - ◆ Author's purpose
 - ◆ Intended audiences
 - ◆ Themes
 - ◆ Characters
 - ◆ Settings
 - ◆ Language features (symbolism, metaphors, style, etc.)
 - ◆ Narrative structure
- ◆ The most important thing about Level 3 is that the focus of the essay shifts from being about a text (e.g. symbolism in a book) to an **idea** (e.g. *"A text set in a challenging environment has much to teach us"*, like in the 2017 exam).
- ◆ To write a killer Level 3 written text essay, you've got to have a few things down: the essay's purpose, the critical evaluation, the perception, and the writing structure. Here's how you do it.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- ◆ The very first thing that's so often overlooked at Level 3 is that you're not being given a question; you're being given a statement and asked *"Discuss the extent to which you agree"*. This means that the **purpose of your essay is to critically evaluate how true the statement you've chosen about written text as a whole is.**
- ◆ **Critical evaluation** means that you can't take the statement as having already been proven just because it's there, and then go on to write an essay about it. That's not to say you can't totally agree with it, though. It means that you've got to **weigh everything up (including counter-arguments) and justify why your opinion is right.**
- ◆ In the marking schedule, NZQA wrote that students who got Excellence often "viewed the statement as a continuum and placed themselves along it", meaning it's a great idea to **offer up ways the statement might not be entirely true or false in literature.**
 - ◆ For example, is there more to whether a text has "much" to teach us than just where it's set? Can you think of any texts without a particularly challenging environment that you learnt something important from? Maybe the knowledge we gain from a text is due to a number of factors coming together through the narrative?
- ◆ Along with "respond critically", the next thing to bear in mind is that you've also got to "respond **perceptively**". This means that your essay needs to revolve around a **perceptive idea.**
- ◆ **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 "The best villains are the characters who are like us". You have to analyse how villains are seen as the best, how they're like us, why the best ones are like us (or not), why authors create villains like this, and why it's important to have these villains for some deeper reason (that's where you can bring in society, the human condition, or literature).
- ◆ This is why author's purpose and the historical context in which the text was written are so important - as evidence to use to back up this perceptive response to the statement about literature. The aspects of written text we defined earlier (themes, symbolism, etc.) all go back to the purpose for which the text was written or it's important to read, and if it's deep enough text, this will go back to the Big Three.
- ◆ The essay is **persuasive**, in that it's focused on proving an argument: the extent to which you agree with your chosen statement. This is how you're marked.
- ◆ 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: *"Whilst true that a text set in a challenging environment may have much to teach us, it is the culmination of aspects that determine how much knowledge a text can impart."*
- ◆ Things like quotes, symbolism, or themes aren't your idea - they're evidence to bring in to prove it.
 - ◆ For example, if your thesis is that a challenging environment is just one factor in how much a text has to teach us, you may use a quote about the luxurious setting in *The Great Gatsby* to prove that it's often the characters' and their perceptions of the environment that teach us more.
- ◆ This means that it's super important that your **essay doesn't revolve around the book - it revolves around your thesis.**
- ◆ 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 book is proving it using **how** and **why**.
- ◆ Your essay is an argument about written text, not describing the deep parts of a book. As such, aspects of specific texts are just pieces of evidence to prove a deeper, wider idea. This is the purpose of studying English - to discuss the importance of literature, not just to read books.
- ◆ Make sure you're actually discussing the extent to which you agree with your statement, along with how and why this is.
- ◆ To be perceptive, bring it back to the Big Three - society, the human condition, or wider literature. You can always do this. Even *Puss n' Boots* is an example of how literature can teach us about discrimination.
- ◆ The best tip to set yourself up for success? Read exemplars and write practice essays!