

Approaching Shakespeare

GCSE English · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

1. Worked example

Plan: 'How does Shakespeare present ambition in this extract and in the play whole?'

Step 1 · Thesis

Shakespeare presents ambition force that corrupts and finally empties the person it drives.

Step 2 · Extract

Two or three methods in the extract: a metaphor, the soliloquy form, a shift in tone.

Step 3 · Whole play

Track it: beginning, turning point, end.

Step 4 · Context

Link to Jacobean beliefs (the Divine Right of Kings, the natural order).

Answer: Thesis → extract → whole play → context woven throughout.

Check: Answers both parts of the question.

2. Now try one with the steps

Analyse a form choice: why is Macbeth's 'Is this a dagger which I see before me' a soliloquy?

Step 1 · Form

Step 2 · Effect

Step 3 · Purpose

Answer:

3. Practice

Show your working. The marks tell you how much is expected.

1. What is a soliloquy? [1]

2. What is dramatic irony? [1]

3. How many stressed syllables are in a line of iambic pentameter? Write the number. [1]

4. What is blank verse? [1]
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5. How many acts are in a Shakespeare play? Write the number. [1]
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6. Why write 'Shakespeare presents...' rather than 'the character feels...'? [2]
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7. What might a switch from verse to prose suggest? [2]
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8. Why are rhyming couplets often used at the end of scenes? [1]
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9. How should context be used in a Shakespeare answer? [2]
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10. Explain the effect of the aside 'Stars, hide your fires; / Let not light see my black and deep desires.' [3]
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11. Why might Shakespeare make the lovers' first conversation a shared sonnet? [2]
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12. How can a motif help you move from an extract to the whole play? [2]
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13. Give one reason why Act 3 is often a turning point. [1]
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14. Write a sentence analysing how Shakespeare uses staging, not just words, in any scene you know. [2]
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4. Before you hand it in

Writing about characters people.

'Shakespeare presents...', 'Shakespeare uses... to suggest...'

A separate history paragraph.

Weave it in: '...which would alarm an audience who believed...'

Forgetting it is a play.

Ask what the audience sees and knows at that moment.

Only analysing words, never verse, prose or structure.

Include at least one point on form (soliloquy, verse/prose, sonnet) or structure (act placement).