

Critical Interpretations

GCSE English · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

1. Worked example

Turn one reading into two: Juliet in Act 1 Scene 3 ('I'll look to like, if looking liking move').

Step 1 · Reading 1

She is obedient, agreeing to consider Paris to please her mother.

Step 2 · Reading 2

The careful conditional 'if' suggests she is already keeping her own judgement in reserve.

Step 3 · Tentative phrasing

'This could show obedience; alternatively, the conditional hints at the independence she will later show.'

Answer: Two readings from one line, each backed by a word in the quotation.

Check: Both readings tied to evidence.

2. Now try one with the steps

Then and now: how might audiences react to the witches in Macbeth?

Step 1 · Jacobean audience

Step 2 · Modern audience

Step 3 · Sentence

Answer:

3. Practice

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

1. Give two tentative phrases you can use to introduce an interpretation. [1]

2. Do you need to quote named critics to show alternative interpretations at GCSE? Answer yes or no. [1]

3. Name three 'lenses' you could use to find alternative readings. [1]

4. What does 'then and now' mean way of interpreting a text? [1]
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5. Why should every interpretation still have evidence? [1]
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6. Give two readings of Lady Macbeth. [2]
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7. Give two readings of the ending of Romeo and Juliet. [2]
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8. How might a modern audience see Capulet's treatment of Juliet differently from an Elizabethan one? [2]
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9. Why is an answer that says 'both readings are valid' and stops weaker than one that judges? [1]
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10. Apply a class lens to Scrooge's question 'Are there no prisons?' [2]
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11. Apply a psychological lens to Macbeth's dagger hallucination in Act 2 Scene 1. [2]
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12. Write a sentence weighing two readings of Scrooge's change and reaching a judgement. [2]
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13. Why are alternative interpretations credited under AO1? [2]
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14. Offer an alternative reading of Hyde that differs from 'he is pure evil'. [2]
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4. Before you hand it in

Listing lenses: 'A feminist would say... A Marxist would say...' with no evidence.

Use a lens to analyse a specific quotation, then judge.

Inventing readings the text does not support.

Point to the words that allow the reading.

Hedging everything ('maybe', 'possibly') until no argument remains.

Be tentative about readings, then confident in your judgement.

Assuming the original audience all thought the same.

'Many in a Jacobean audience might...' is safer and more accurate.