

Essay Skills

GCSE English · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

1. Worked example

Build a thesis from a question: 'How does the writer present ambition?'

Step 1 · Don't restate the question

Weak: 'The writer presents ambition in many ways.'

Step 2 · Take a clear position

Strong: 'The writer presents ambition corrupting force that destroys the person it elevates.'

Step 3 · Why it works

It is arguable, specific and gives the essay a direction.

Answer: An arguable, specific overall argument.

Check: Every paragraph can now support this thesis.

2. Now try one with the steps

A model PETAL paragraph (original example line).

Step 1 · Point

Step 2 · Evidence

Step 3 · Technique

Step 4 · Analysis

Step 5 · Link

Answer:

3. Practice

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

1. What is a thesis statement, and where does it go? [2]

2. What does PETAL stand for? [1]

3. What does it mean to 'embed' a quotation? [1]
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4. How many assessment objectives are there in GCSE English Literature? Write the number. [1]
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5. Which assessment objective covers analysis of language, form and structure? Write the number after AO. [1]
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6. Why write 'the writer presents...' rather than 'the character feels...'? [2]
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7. Which part of a PETAL paragraph should usually be longest, and why? [2]
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8. What should a conclusion do? [1]
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9. Is AO4 assessed on every Literature question? Answer yes or no. [1]
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10. Rewrite this opening: 'In this essay I will talk about how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth.' [2]
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11. Why might a strong writer move beyond a strict PETAL order? [2]
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12. Write a topic sentence for a paragraph on guilt in Macbeth that links to the thesis 'Shakespeare presents guilt'. [2]
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13. How can a conclusion add a final insight? [2]
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14. Write a three-sentence introduction for: 'How does Stevenson present Hyde?'

[3]

4. Before you hand it in

Opening with 'In this essay I will...':

Open with your thesis.

Dropping quotations in sentences.

Embed short quotations in your own sentences.

Paragraphs that retell plot.

Start each paragraph with a claim, then prove it with methods.

A conclusion that lists your points again.

Sharpen your judgement and link to the writer's purpose.