Synthesis and Summary

GCSE English · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

1. Worked example

Find the focus: 'Write a summary of the differences between the children's experiences of school.'

Step 1 · Underline the key words

differences · children's experiences · school

Step 2 · Decide what counts

Anything that shows what school was like FOR THE CHILDREN: space, warmth, lessons, attendance, how long they stayed, enjoyment.

Step 3 · Decide what does not

Descriptions of the adults or the writers, unless linked to the children.

Answer: Focus: what children experienced in each school, and how it differed.

Check: Every point you plan must pass the focus test.

2. Now try one with the steps

Pair the evidence into differences.

Step 1 · Class size

Step 2 · Attendance and leaving age

Step 3 · What they learn

Answer:

3. Practice

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

1. Roughly how many children were in Source A's schoolroom? Write the number. [1]

2. How many children are in the teacher's class in Source B? Write the number. [1]

3. Until what age will Source B's pupils stay in education or training? Write the number. [1]

4. Why did attendance fall in Source A? [1]

5. What does 'synthesis' mean in a reading question? [1]

6. Give two comparative connectives you could use in a summary of differences. [1]

7. Why should you not analyse language techniques in a summary question? [2]

8. Turn this fact into an inference: 'the smallest seated upon the floor for want of benches'. [2]

9. Write one sentence comparing what the children learn in each source. [2]

10. What can you infer from 'he considered himself fortunate if a child remained with him until the age of eleven'? [2]

11. What does the Tomasz anecdote suggest about children's experience in Source B? [2]

12. Identify one similarity between the two sources' schools. [1]

13. Write a synthesised overview sentence for a summary of the differences. [2]

14. Why is 'Source A had ninety children and Source B has thirty-one' a weak summary point on its own? [2]

4. Before you hand it in

Writing about Source A, then Source B, in separate halves.
Pair the evidence point by point, linking with whereas or in contrast.

Analysing techniques ('the writer uses a semicolon...').
Focus on what the texts show and what you can infer.

Listing facts with no inference.
After each fact, add 'which suggests...' or 'implying...'.

Drifting from the focus (the adults, the buildings for their own sake).
Test every point: does it show something about the children's experience?