Essay Writing

KS3 English · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

1. Worked example

Extract: 'The door creaked open and a thin line of light crept across the floor.' How does the writer build tension? Write a PEEL paragraph.

Step 1 · Point — answer the question in one clear sentence

The writer builds tension by making the light, rather than a person, the thing that enters the room, so the reader is left waiting to discover what is behind it.

Step 2 · Evidence — choose the shortest, most useful quotation

'a thin line of light crept'

Step 3 · Explanation — zoom in on individual words

'Crept' is usually used for a person or animal moving secretly, so personifying the light makes it seem deliberate and sinister. 'Thin' suggests the door is only slightly open, revealing very little, which forces the reader to imagine what is hidden. The slow movement delays any answer and stretches the moment out.

Step 4 · Link — connect back to the question and the wider text

By delaying the reveal in this way, the writer holds the reader in suspense and prepares them for the threat that the rest of the extract goes on to describe.

Answer: A focused paragraph: one clear point, a short quotation, word-level analysis and a link back to tension

Check: Does the explanation talk about specific words ('crept', 'thin') rather than retelling the event? ✓

2. Now try one with the steps

Turn summary into analysis: 'The waves destroyed the pier.'

Step 1 · Spot the summary

Step 2 · Find the writer's actual word

Step 3 · Comment on it

Answer:

3. Practice

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

1. What does PEEL stand for? [1]

2. Why is it important to quote precisely in an essay? [2]

3. How many parts does a PEEL paragraph have? Write the number. [1]

4. Give two analytical verbs you could use instead of 'shows'. [1]

5. Which tense should you use when writing about what happens in a text? [1]

6. Improve this Point: 'Shakespeare makes Lady Macbeth ambitious.' [2]

7. What is the difference between analysis and summary in an essay? [2]

8. Embed this quotation in a sentence of your own: 'The waves devoured the pier.' [2]

9. What does the command phrase 'To what extent...' ask you to do? [1]

10. What should the 'Link' in a PEEL paragraph do? [2]

11. Write a PEEL paragraph: 'How does Shakespeare use language to present the witches in Act 1?' [6]

12. Write a thesis statement (one-sentence answer) for: 'How does the writer present the storm?' [2]

13. Offer two possible interpretations of 'crept' in 'a thin line of light crept across the floor'. [2]

14. Why should a conclusion not simply repeat the introduction? [2]

4. Before you hand it in

'In this quote it shows that the storm is dangerous.'
Name the word and what it suggests: 'The verb "devoured" suggests the waves are a hungry predator, which conveys the storm's danger.'

Dropping a long quotation in on its own line with no comment
Embed short quotations into your own sentence and always follow them with analysis: 'The writer describes the waves "devoured" the pier, which…'

Writing a conclusion that just repeats the introduction word for word
Draw your points together and answer the question directly, perhaps adding what the writer's choices reveal about the text whole.

Writing about the text in the past tense: 'Shakespeare presented Macbeth as…'
'Shakespeare presents Macbeth as…': the text does its work every time it is read.