

Hot Tips for Success
In the
Preliminary Standard English Course
Module 1: Area of Study

The **Area of Study** is broken into three sections. These three sections are examined in Paper 1 of the HSC. Each section is worth 15 marks and it is advised that you spend equal time on completing each section: 40mins/section. Each section examines a different set of skills.

Section 1: Responding to texts (short responses)

In this section you will be presented with several previously unseen texts. The text types could range from poetry, a web page, a feature article, an interview or dialogue, diary entries, a narrative extract or a bibliography. **You must be able to:**

- Identify the specific conventions of a wide range of visual and written techniques that are particular to that text type.
- Identify the key words in each question: What = content, How = techniques
- You need to identify the mark allocation in each question and use your time accordingly
- You will need to know the P.I.L.S formula
 - Purpose of a text
 - Intended audience of a text
 - Language or visual features used to convey meaning
 - Structural features of a text
- Apply the C.E.T formula to respond to the questions
 - Change
 - Example (and quote)
 - Technique

How we Have covered this Section in the Course

You have been presented with many opportunities as class work and as home work to develop skills for this section. Every time you are presented with a text and asked to deconstruct it by analysing the techniques and how they convey ideas of Change, you are focussing on these skills required and preparing for this section of area of study.

Texts presented in class for skill development for this section:

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Section 2: Composing

This section of the paper is the only time in the HSC English exam that you become the composer. The other 5 sections, you are the responder. The purpose of creating writing in the HSC is to display your:

- Ability to write in the nominated text type such as: a feature article, an interview or dialogue, a diary, a bibliography, a recount, a letter etc. Therefore you must know and apply the P.I.L.S formula
 - Purpose of a text
 - Intended audience of a text
 - Language techniques used to convey meaning
 - Structural features of a text
- Understanding of the concept of Change

How do I prepare for this section?

1. Decide on what type of Change interests you (refer to Area of Study rubric)
2. Establish at least two T.O.O concepts. These concepts must be flexible enough to allow you to respond in any text form.
3. Know the P.I.L.S for a variety of appropriate text forms.
4. You can be presented with a stimulus you must use such as a quote or an image. These could come from a text in section 1 or not. You may also be given no choice of text form to respond in. You may be told to write an interview OR you may be given free choice. Therefore YOU MUST BE FLEXIBLE WITH YOUR CONCEPT – DO NOT ROTE LEARN A PIECE OF WRITING.

Using Narrative as the basis for your Concept or T.O.O

What is a narrative?

A narrative is a story. Therefore a narrative concept is flexible enough for you to transform into other text types such as diaries, letters, speeches and interviews etc which also tell stories.

- Narratives are made up of 4 main elements – plot, setting, themes, characters
- The appropriate techniques you use to convey your narrative will depend on your given or chosen text form

Building a narrative for HSC English

Establish the T.O.O (this will be your concept)

This can be achieved by drawing on ideas or combinations of ideas from a wide variety of sources (stimulus) as well as your own experiences or expectations or experiences of others.

Once you have your idea or **concept** of the narrative establish whether the story is going to be character driven or setting driven (this will be determined by the type of Change you are focussing on eg change due to place = setting driven, Change in relationship = character driven. If your story is character based, the reader **MUST** have an emotional connection to them. If the story is setting based, then the reader **MUST** be able to visualise that place as though they have been there.

The story then needs to build around the focus. You must decide what techniques are appropriate to the text form you are given or chosen that allow the **focus** of your story to be conveyed effectively.

General Tips

Your concept needs a '**hook**' for **ENGAGEMENT**. You need to think – what is different about my concept to the other 60,000 stories being written by other HSC students and read by HSC markers? This can be achieved through:

- The nature of the Change
- The effective use of techniques

Stuck for ideas?

- 1) Jot down random words to do with Change
- 2) Convert them to sentences
- 3) Build them into paragraphs
- 4) Layer techniques into the paragraphs
- 5) Work with the structures of a variety of text types
- 6) Decide the style – would changing your linear style to circular style or first person to the person to add interest

Remember- writing is **PROGRESS**. Your final product is a series of corrections, inclusions, exclusions, rewrites, blood, sweat and tears.

A Checklist for Section 2

Concept of change – T.O.O

- Have I covered all aspects of the T.O.O formula?
- Which order of these will be the most effective?
- Which of these aspects is the focus of my writing?
- Is my knowledge of Change being conveyed effectively to the marker and is it obvious to the marker?

Techniques

Have I used this opportunity to show the marker I know how to use and why to use?

- Sentence length variation to create pace or lack of
- Integrated dialogue
- A narrative voice – 1st, 2nd, 3rd or a combination
- Sensory Imagery
- Flashbacks
- Motifs
- Foreshadowing
- An Unpredictable ending/beginning
- Tension
- Irony
- Paradox
- Juxtaposition
- Satire
- Humour – subtle, black etc.
- Using character or setting as an extended metaphor
- Mood/tone/atmosphere

Section 3: Responding to literature

So what is it?

You need to think about section 3 in the following way:

- The section 3 is about **Change**.
- The set text is just one of millions of stories about Change.
- In preparation for this section, you will read and view a lot of texts about Change but there could and will be subtle differences about the topic and how it is represented.
- You will need to be able to draw conclusions about texts that have the same ideas of the same triggers or the same obstacles or the same outcomes as well as all the differences about the texts.
- You will need to be able to discuss and analyse **how** (techniques) the composers of all these texts try to show us their meaning or ideas about Change.
- As a critical responder (someone who deconstructs texts and ideas and doesn't passively accept or doesn't think too much about what they read or view) you will need to assess, evaluate and discuss the intended impact or the personal impact or effect this text has on the responder or you personally.

HSC Feedback 2008 – *Hot Tips*

1. **Better scripts were able to contextualise the text.**

This means students understood the context of the text – its social, political, historical origins as well as the contextual comments the text makes about society, politics or history.

2. **The script has to have a clear intention when answering the question.**

This means you must answer the question asked as well as having a strong hypothesis or thesis.

3. **Better responses were: skilful, based on relevant detailed textual knowledge and be confident and thorough. Sophistication, deep insight or a high degree of creativity in Standard English will be rewarded in the high band.**

How to Deconstruct and Respond to Texts in Section 3 Using Formulas

Formula 1: Narratives – *THE BIG FIVE* (deconstructing narratives)

Plot – (content – about Change)

Setting – (where the Change takes place)

Themes/Meaning – (link to Change)

Characters – (who is affected by Change)

Techniques – (the tools the composer uses to help us understand their ideas of Change)

Formula 2: Poetry – *3M* (deconstructing poetic texts)

Matter: - the content of the poem linked to Change

Meaning: - the deeper level (theme/meaning) – linked to Change

Method: - the techniques used by the poet to help us understand their ideas about Change

Formula 3: T.O.O (selection of content)

T = Trigger – What starts the process of Change?

O = Obstacles – What challenges are faced?

O = Outcome(s) – *What is the result of Change taking place?*

Formula 4: S.E.E (Paragraph structure/scaffold)

S = Statement (=topic sentence) – What is your hypothesis, thesis, focus of your paragraph that addresses, attacks or engages the question? (including techniques)

E = Example(s) – what are you selecting from the text to support your statement?

E = Evidence – Textual details that elaborate on the example(s) and support you statement

S = Summative Sentence

How to Spot Quality Related Material?

When looking for texts that contain aspects of Change keep in mind the following:

- All the variants of Change (refer to your synonym list)
- Think *variety of text forms* – our set text is poetry, therefore you need to look for other text types that present Change in different ways (techniques) – the more variety – the more marks.
- Think about the techniques the composer has used to tell us about Change. If it is a song – use lyrical techniques, if a film – use cinematic techniques, a narrative – use narrative techniques.
THE TECHNIQUE MUST SHOW US AN ASPECT OF Change
Choose a text that you are familiar with – it is easier to deconstruct it if you already know it.

A VERY Basic Essay scaffold – A non integrated approach

Introduction (*outlines the question, your texts and composers, your techniques and your angle/hypothesis/thesis on Change*)

- contextual statement – hypothesis/thesis/direction
- restate question
- title of texts and composers
- techniques used to convey Change

Body (*make a statement, provide examples and evidence, use quotes and link to question*)

- Topic sentence – text 1 (title and composer's name) and technique 1
- Example from a text about Change
- Analysis of the technique used to convey Change (**including quotes of the techniques**)
- *Summative sentence – sums up point and links information to question also reinforces your hypotheses or thesis

* (see notes on general tips)

Repeat body paragraph scaffold for every text discussed or a second technique in the same text

Conclusion (*outlines your texts and composers, your techniques and your understanding of Change*)

- restate question
- title of texts and composers
- techniques discussed to show Change
- contextual statement about belonging based on a common thread/hypothesis/thesis of your approach of your texts

A VERY Basic Essay scaffold – An integrated approach

Introduction and conclusion scaffolds are the same as a non integrated approach.

The difference with this approach is that instead of the focus of the paragraph being text based – it becomes the aspect of Change based. You will find that you will need probably two paragraphs at least for adequate discussion and analysis of each focus.

Body (*make a statement, provide examples and evidence, use quotes and link to question*)

- Topic sentence – theme or aspect of Change that is common in both texts. This could be two set texts OR a set text and related material (title and composer's name) and technique 1
- Examples from texts about Change
- Analysis of the techniques used to convey Change (**including quotes of the techniques**)
- Your summative in sentence becomes a link to the next paragraph where you will continue your analysis

The paragraph that ends the discussion/analysis of the theme or aspect of Change required a summative sentence that sums up point and links information to question also reinforces your hypothesis or thesis.

General Essay Hot Tips

Getting Started

- Selection of texts should be based on several considerations:
 1. Whether the text appeals to you on a personal level
 2. Your knowledge/understanding of the text
 3. How well this text will allow you to satisfy the rubric and marking criteria

Number three is the most important. Sometimes you will need to sacrifice the text you 'like'; if it does not satisfy the rubric and marking criteria or doesn't allow you to compare or contrast.

- Map out your texts – a) text type, b) aspect of Change, c) techniques used to examine the variety – if there is not enough variety make – change your choices
- Always get your ideas down first – worry about structure and language second
- Once your ideas are down – start to organise using scaffold

Language

- Use synonyms to label/identify and collate examples of the Change that takes place
- Avoid personal language
- Use an elevated vocabulary
- Use the language of the question in your topic and summative sentences
- The composer is not your mate – first and surname or surname only, NEVER their first name. You should always address the composer by full name in introduction, and then you can use variety eg: the poet, the composer, the writer, the author etc.

Scaffolds/structures

- The order of mentioned texts and techniques in the introduction is the order they should appear in the body paragraphs
- Quotes should be of the sample of the technique you are analysing that reveals/highlight/reinforces the Change (**this also ensures that you remain focused on analysing the techniques and how they convey the aspect of Change rather than retelling content**)
- Integrating your quotes is more sophisticated. The structure of your sentence should allow you to remove the quote marks and the sentence should make sense with the quote
- As a general rule in a non integrated essay – one paragraph = 1 technique of one text, knowing that you will need to discuss more than one technique per text you will need to take a second or third paragraph. These paragraphs become groupings or couplets and therefore you can cleverly alter your topic sentences (because you are using the same text) to use comparative or contrasting language eg:
 1. 'The composer continues this idea of transformation in the 'poem' and in doing so uses 'technique'
 2. In contrast to ..., ... feels ... in the poem ... This is shown through 'technique';
- Always check you are answering the question (this should be evident if your scaffold is right – topic and summative sentences)
- Draft, draft and redraft

Value Adding

You will need to continually ask yourself "What has this information I have just written shown the marker? Is it something new? (**value added**) or is it the same as something else I have written therefore not adding value to my response?"

- Vocabulary – elevated vocabulary, metalanguage
- Essay scaffold
- Variety of techniques – variety of text forms – variety of types of Change
- Variations of language and structure in topic and summative sentences eg:
 1. The **tender** handling of the relationship between conveys...
 2. Without **condemning** the character the composer reveals a weakness in her exposing her.....