

WHOLE SCHOOL RESOURCE

HIGHER LEVEL ESSAY

- **Complete Writing Guide**
- **100-Page Course Book**
- **5 Samples and Comments**
- **Line of Inquiry Guidance**
- **Links to Website Videos**

Introduction

Welcome to the HL Essay Planning Guide. We are super excited to make this resource available to students to help them write their HL essays with rich critical thinking and strong writing.

This resource has a bit of overlap with the Teacher Resource Pack with some very significant differences. We have selected five NEW sample essays that cover both literary and non-literary texts. We also have added critical lens work, outlining, and additional skill work. We think this is a perfect compliment to the Teacher Resource Pack.

First we delve into the nuts and bolts of HL Essay and explain some of the requirements. After that we move to unpack each of the criteria and offer guidance in that area before we even begin with the assessment.

The selection of texts is our next section where we go through the process of choosing the text and then actually brainstorming key themes and signature moves of our chosen text. This work can help us arrive at a clear line of inquiry.

We have added some work with critical lenses that can really help students consider how to look at their chosen text. This again, can really help you find a rich idea for your line of inquiry. Spend some time here.

The line of inquiry is the next section where we offer five sample lines of inquiry and give clear guidelines on the LOI. This is also where we invite you to write your line of inquiry.

Outlining and planning is vital for a strong HL Essay and we give a clear model from one of our sample essays before we ask you to write your outline for your HL essay..

The next three sections offer guidance on the writing including the introduction, body paragraphs and the conclusion. These sections are very rich with examples from all of our five sample essays with highlight and examiner comments. We follow up with sections on formatting the paper and several ideas for improving analysis!

We hope you enjoy this resource and find it user friendly and rich with samples and guidance. Good luck!

Dave and Andrew

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What is the HL Essay?

The Higher Level essay is a formal paper in which a student explores a line of inquiry in connection with a literary or non-literary text that they have studied in class.

As stated in the guide, the students are meant to construct a focused argument examining the work from a broad literary or linguistic aspect. Students are meant to work independently with clear guidance from their teachers.

Word count: 1200-1500 words

Nature of the task:

- Text can be literary or non-literary but must be studied in class
- Line of inquiry should be focused on a literary or linguistic aspect
- Secondary research is NOT required
- Since this is a broad literary investigation, with shorter texts like songs, poems or short stories, students should select 2-3 to work with for their chosen line of inquiry.
- Texts used for another assessment (the IO or the Paper 2) by that student cannot be used for the HL Essay

Scoring:

- HL Essay is weighted at 20%
 - There are four criteria to consider, and these are described in detail below.
-

How is the HL Essay scored?

It is critical for students and teachers to really unpack the criteria for every assessment, and HL Essay is no exception. Examiners keep all of the descriptors in mind when they arrive at a given score for that criteria. Understanding [HL Essay Criteria](#) at the outset is critical to help students understand the nature of the task and avoid the pitfall of this assessment.

Criterion A: Knowledge, Understanding, and Interpretation

This criterion centers around critical thinking and will greatly depend on the given line of inquiry AND the use of evidence to support these ideas. We want students to investigate their text thoroughly and have strong ideas throughout the paper.

As stated in the Course Guide, here are some key questions to consider:

- [How well does the candidate demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the work or text chosen?](#)

The key words here are “how well?” Students need to demonstrate keen knowledge of their text and “get at the heart” of the author’s message. Anchoring the line of inquiry around an interesting literary or linguistic perspective AND a rich idea (argument) will help!

- [To what extent does the candidate make use of knowledge and understanding of the work or text to draw conclusions in relation to the chosen topic?](#)

Drawing conclusions and discussing implications does not come easy. We need to ask students to make some inferences and really consider the deeper purpose and to look at what is not directly said in a text. This will help with implications.

- [How well are ideas supported by references to the work or text in relation to the chosen topic?](#)

How often and how well we quote our texts will often demonstrate our knowledge. Discussion should not hover over the text but should analyze references deeply.

Criterion B: Analysis and Evaluation

Of all the criteria, we feel that Criterion B is often the easiest to overlook. Students get caught up in their discussion of the text and forget that one of the most critical aspects of the task is critical analysis of authorial choices. We need to show insight and look for nuances and subtle details. Obvious and superficial analysis will not score as high so students need relevant and insightful ideas.

As stated in the Course Guide, here are some key questions to consider:

- [To what extent does the candidate analyze and evaluate how the choices of language, technique and style, and broader authorial choices shape meaning in relation to the chosen topic?](#)

We are thinking carefully about authorial choices and their effect on the readers. We are ALSO evaluating the choices for their effectiveness in communicating a clear message. Teaching students how to unpack and explore references is so important for this assessment. All analysis should keep the LOI in mind.

Criterion C: Focus and Organization

This paper is processed over multiple drafts. Organization and structure need to be tight. Students need a focused line of inquiry and an argument that is easy to follow. Paragraphing and structure also need to be clear.

As stated in the Course Guide, here are some key questions to consider:

- [How well organized, focused and developed is the presentation of ideas in the essay?](#)

The key word here is focus so we need to consider how well we are focusing on our line of inquiry. We like the wording of the LOI to be included in each topic sentence and be used frequently in analysis. We also feel that students should aim for the 1500 word count. A 1200 word paper implies that there was more to talk about. These shorter papers rarely earn top marks.

- How well are examples integrated into the essay?

This is a skill to work on for students. We like students to carefully select “snippets” of language from their works and integrate them into their writing. Practicing this in class is critical.

Criteria D: Language

Again, because this paper is processed, it’s critical for students to really take care with their language. They need precise vocabulary, varied sentence structure, formal academic register and strong readability. Careful proofreading, reading aloud and other strategies can help kids polish their writing.

- How clear, varied and accurate is the language?

Clarity of expression is critical here. Try to have students read their work aloud and have their peers also listen for clarity of ideas. Working with elevated vocabulary can be helpful but students must have a command of their language and not just use a thesaurus to come up with SAT words.

- How appropriate is the choice of register and style? (“Register” refers, in this context, to the candidate’s use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the HL essay.)

Precise terminology and formal register is needed in this paper. That said, the paper needs to be engaging and interesting to read!

Choosing Your Text

This entire process can (and should) be done in class where you can wrestle with ideas and start to make some real connections. Here is a [Text Selection, Brainstorming and Line of Inquiry Graphic Organizer](#) to use.

Step One: Selection of Texts

Before beginning the writing of a line of inquiry, we recommend you review all of the texts from your course so students can make a reasoned decision on the text for their HL Essay. All students should begin by making a menu of texts they have studied throughout the course. Here is a sample from Dave and Andrew's students:

Sample Menu of Texts Studied			
<i>Death and the Maiden</i> , Dorfman	<i>The God of Small Things</i> , Roy	<i>The Things They Carried</i> , O'Brien	Poetry of Mary Oliver
<i>Home Fire</i> , Shamsie	Poetry of Wislawa Szymborska	Cartoon BoW by Patrick Chappatte, Stephff, Laney Molnar and Zapiro	Advertising Campaigns by UNHCR, Nike, Apple, VW, and Guinness
<i>Sing, Unburied, Sing</i> , Ward	<i>13th</i> , Duvernay	Photography BoW by Phillip Jones Griffiths, Horst Faas, Sebastiao Salgado, and Pixy Liao	<i>Caliphate, Sweden</i> SVT1 2020
<i>Sizwe Bansi is Dead</i> , Fugard	<i>Woman at Point Zero</i> , El Saadawi	Speeches of MLK	<i>Breaking Boundaries</i> , Attenborough

Step Two: Brainstorm topics and concepts as well as aspects and features that come from course texts and bodies of work.

Once you have made your menu of texts, it's time to start thinking about your passions! Choose two texts and work with some of the ideas in these texts. Why two? Because this will allow you to consider your choices and perhaps realize that your initial "gut" choice might not have led to the most potent line of inquiry.

Consider the [7 Concepts](#) in addition to key points discussed in class. This step is vital before moving to the line of inquiry. For this example, we've chosen one literary and one non-literary text.

Ideas and Global Issues in My Chosen Texts	
<i>Sizwe Bansi is Dead</i> by Athol Fugard (1972)	The Apple Inventors Campaign (1980)
Identity Survival Bureaucracy Family Loyalty Dreams and Aspirations Racism and Discrimination	Revolution Innovation Hard Work Simplicity Individuality and Independence Wisdom and Intelligence
Technical/Literary Aspects in My Chosen Texts	
Avant-Garde Theater Techniques Breaking the 4th Wall Monologue Improvisation Non-Linear Structure (Framed Structure) Minimal Props/Costumes Multiple Roles for Actors Characterization of Sizwe/Styles/Buntu	Symbols of American Founding Fathers and Inventors (association) Humor Anachronism Direct Appeal to Consumer (you) Use of Subheadings Binary Opposition of Then and Now

Notice that we are brainstorming dominant topics and concepts as well as features and literary/non-literary aspects. This is because we need BOTH to form a strong line of inquiry. They are the pillars of the HL Essay.

Your Turn!

Now take some time to complete these charts for YOUR course and YOUR chosen texts. This will greatly help you arrive at a solid topic for your HL essay!

Sample Menu of Texts Studied			

Ideas and Global Issues in My Chosen Texts	
Text 1:	Text 2:
Technical/Literary Aspects in My Chosen Texts	

Using Critical Lenses

One way to help you find a rich idea or a rich argument for your chosen text is to use literary lenses or critical lenses. These lenses are ways that we can interpret literature and in turn, elevate our understanding and analysis.

Over time, literary critics have developed a range of theories or interpretive “lenses” through which they view a text while interpreting and constructing meaning. Below is a brief description of some of the more popular theories.

It is important to realize that a single text can offer a wide range of meaning when interpreted through different critical theories. You can find different answers, or “truths”, depending on the questions you ask, and the lens you look through.

Great Authors Theory:

This lens focuses on literature written by great artists whose work has stood the test of time. Even a minor work by a great author has value. What is important is to read the text closely, without being distracted about the writer’s life, or too much concern with the conditions in which the work was produced. The writer’s art is what the reader should be focused on.

Questions to ask:

- What is it about this work that makes it great? Language? Plot? Style?
 - What about the author’s entire list of works make him or her memorable?
-

Historical/Cultural Theory:

This lens uses historical and other relevant texts alongside the literary ones, in order to see more clearly the context in which the literature was produced, and to recover its history. The focus is on pre-20th century texts, often those written during the Renaissance, but also those written during the enlightenment and the 19th century.

Questions to ask:

- How is this work indicative and/or a representation of the time and place which it is set?
 - In what ways is this work influenced by the time and place it was written?
-

Moral Theory:

For this lens, literature is nothing unless it teaches its readers something, and helps them to become better people. All good literature is basically moral and uplifting. It is important to consider the themes in the texts (what aspects of the human condition are explored) to understand its moral purpose.

Questions to ask:

- What “life lessons”/“pearls of wisdom” does this work contain?
 - Are those lessons applicable to all humanity, or only certain cultures? Why?
-

Feminist Theory:

This lens argues that the “feminine” and the “masculine” are ideas constructed by our culture, and it is important to be aware of this when reading texts from periods and cultures different from our own. There might also be a focus on literature written by women, which explores the female experience of the world. This lens is interested in how women are represented in texts written by men, and how these texts display the power relations between the sexes.

Questions to ask:

- How are the females in the work treated? Are they fully independent people with their own voice, or are they subject to the influence of the patriarchy?
 - What goals/aims do the female characters have? In what ways are those goals aligned with conforming to social expression, or exploring independence?
-

Marxist Theory:

This lens uses literature to understand the class struggle at various times and in various places, and to explore the causes of conflict between the privileged and working class. It is important to relate the text to the social context of its author and the historical contexts in which it was written and read. Looking through this lens is usually on the side of the working class, and daily struggles (living conditions, mobility and identity) thrust upon them by those in power.

Questions to ask:

- What is the social/class hierarchy in the work? Who holds the power, and who are the oppressed? (owners vs. workers)
 - In what ways does the social fabric of the society contribute to this dynamic?
-

Psychoanalytic Theory:

This lens has an interest in the unconscious paying attention to what is glossed over or “repressed”. The lens looks beyond the obvious surface meaning to what the text is “really” about – the inner anxieties and motivations of the characters. There is an interest in representations of psychological states or phases in literature, and am more interested in the emotional conflicts between the characters or groups in a text rather than its own wider context.

Questions to ask:

- What repressed or subliminal thoughts may be motivating a character’s actions?
 - In what ways might a character be motivated by their id, ego and/or superego?
-

Race/Post-Colonial Theory:

This lens focuses on literature outside the white Anglo- Saxon tradition. Many postcolonial texts explore the black struggle against injustice and oppression. There is also a focus on negative portrayals of black people (and minorities in general) and their absence in most white literature. This lens also is keenly aware that Eurocentric attitudes are taken for granted, and searches in the text for cultural, regional, social and national

differences in outlook and experiences. There is also an interest in the way colonial countries and people are represented in texts by Western, and Regional, writers.

Questions to ask:

- In what ways did colonialism both benefit and impede the development and identity of the colonized nations?
 - How are minority values represented in the text (in contrast to American or Eurocentric values)?
-

Reader-Response Theory:

This lens believes that text needs to have a reader before it can mean anything. Meaning is constructed via a literary handshake between the author and the reader: 50% of it being authorial intent and 50% being reader interpretation. Using this lens involves constructing meaning from a text, filling in the gaps, making connections and predictions and seeing how far these expectations are confirmed or disappointed.

Questions to ask:

- In what ways do the reader’s experiences with and/or collide with the intentions of the author of the work?
 - What is my own reaction to the choices the characters make in a work? Would I do the same? Why or why not?
-

Application of Critical Lenses

Let’s now use a few of these lenses to examine our literary texts. Try to think about your text using 2-3 different lenses and see if it helps you arrive at some rich ideas.

Literary Text: The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy	
Literary Lens	Rich Idea
Feminist Lens	Roy criticizes the patriarchal gender norms and the unfair stigma attached to a divorced woman.
Post-Colonial Lens	Roy explores the Post-Colonial Indian identity through her many references to Western Literature and Film.

Psychoanalytical Lens	Roy explores the effects of childhood trauma on the human psyche.
Reader Response Lens	Roy's non-linear narrative allows readers to understand the interplay between the past and the present.

Your Turn!

Take a few minutes and apply a few of the critical lenses to your literary or non-literary work. See if this helps you find some interesting angles you can use to deepen your interpretation!

Literary Text:	
Literary Lens	Rich Idea

The Line of Inquiry

Again be sure to use the graphic organizer for this process. Looking at good samples will also help your students.

Now that you have brainstormed the ideas AND features of our text, it's time to consider writing several lines of inquiry for our texts. Several. We need to stretch ourselves and write a few so you can pick the one you want to pursue.

Remember:

A strong line of inquiry will offer a clear literary or linguistic aspect and connect this with a rich idea.

Narrowing Down your Line of Inquiry:

One way to find your line of inquiry is to answer a series of questions. These questions can help you narrow down what text to write about, what is interesting to you, the salient ideas of the text and the moments in the text that support certain ideas. This process can be done on your own or even better with a friend or classmate. Try it out!

The Questions Starting with Ideas:

1. What is one text from the course which you enjoyed or which you loved?
2. What are several rich ideas which are explored in this text? (Aim for at least 3-4)
3. What is the idea that most resonates with you?
4. What are some moments in this text where you see this specific idea?
5. What moment in the novel or text best encapsulates this idea?
6. Can you summarize this moment? What happens? What is it about?
7. Going to the text itself, what are some signature moves made by the author at this moment?
8. How do these signature moves or choices help to emphasize this idea?

9. How can you now link the rich idea that you have chosen with a literary or linguistic perspective? In other words, how does this idea link up with the author's signature moves or choices?

The Questions Starting with Authorial Choices or Signature Moves:

1. What is one text from the course which you enjoyed or which you loved?
 2. What are some signature moves made by the author in the text? Aim for 4-5 significant features of the text. Think big here.
 3. What is the signature move that most resonates with you and has the most impact on the reader?
 4. What are several rich ideas which are explored using this move? (Aim for at least 3-4)
 5. What is the most impactful of these ideas?
 6. What are some moments in this text where you see this specific authorial choice or move?
 7. What moment in the novel or text best encapsulates this idea?
 8. Can you summarize this moment? What happens? What is it about?
 9. How can you now link this signature move to a rich idea?
-

Components of a Line of Inquiry

Let's remember that a good line of inquiry has several components:

1. Question word
2. Author
3. Text
4. Genre
5. Literary/linguistic aspect
6. Rich idea
7. Precise context

Here are some examples from our sample essays in this guide.

- How does Margaret Atwood demonstrate the logic of appropriateness manifesting itself in a totalitarian state through the character of Aunt Lydia in her novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*?

- How does Bong Joon Ho use cinematic elements in his feature film *Parasite* to convey the stark class divisions that exist in South Korean Society.
- How and to what extent does Tennessee Williams employ plastic theatre techniques to transform the audience's impressions of Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*?
- How and to what extent does Sylvia Path utilize symbols of the body, death and liberation to convey the struggles of females to find their identity in a patriarchal society?

Notice that these lines of inquiry fall nicely into one of the critical lenses that we examined in the previous section.

Line of Inquiry	Critical Lens
How does Margaret Atwood demonstrate the logic of appropriateness manifesting itself in a totalitarian state through the character of Aunt Lydia in her novel, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> ?	Marxist Lens
How does Bong Joon Ho use cinematic elements in his feature film <i>Parasite</i> to convey the stark class divisions that exist in South Korean Society.	Marxist Lens
How and to what extent does Sylvia Path utilize symbols of the body, death and liberation to convey the struggles of females to find their identity in a patriarchal society?	Feminist Lens
How and to what extent does Tennessee Williams employ plastic theatre techniques to transform the audience's impressions of Blanche in <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> ?	Reader Response Lens

Choosing the Line of Inquiry

Now we need to make a choice and decide which line of inquiry we want to work with. We wrote four lines of the inquiry above for two different texts for a reason. Now we have some good choices!

Here are some considerations for making a choice:

1. Degree of complexity/depth
 2. The richness of features for richer analysis
 3. Relevant to the text's central purpose
 4. Your own interest level
-

Your Turn!

Now take some time to craft a line of inquiry. Remember to go to your brainstorming and really think about a rich idea that you want to explore. Use critical lenses if you can, consider the literary aspect and write your line of inquiry! Be sure to highlight your LOI!

Components of a Line of Inquiry:

1. Question word
2. Author
3. Text
4. Genre
5. Literary/linguistic aspect
6. Rich idea
7. Precise context

Sample Line of Inquiry:

Title of Work: A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams (1947)	
Line of Inquiry	How and to what extent does Tennessee Williams employ plastic theatre techniques to transform the audience's impressions of Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire?

Your line of Inquiry:

Title of Work:	
Line of Inquiry	

Outlining and Planning

You can't begin to write your HL Essay until you make a plan. This is like going on a trip and not even knowing where you're stopping or what you are doing. It might sound spontaneous and romantic but this planless approach does not make for a good essay.

There are so many ways to write an outline. Our friend Lisa LOVES the MLA outline with Roman numerals and a strict format. We like boxes. Whatever approach you choose, make a plan and you'll find the writing process is EASY and fun.

The easiest way to show you is to look at a sample outline for one of our stellar essays. For the outline, we need our clearly articulated line of inquiry. Then we need to think about distinct supporting points that we can turn into paragraphs. After that we collect short textual references we call "snippets." These "snippets" are then pinned to literary or stylistic devices and attached to a rich idea. This will be the fodder for analysis!

Title of Work: A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams (1947)		
Line of Inquiry	How and to what extent does Tennessee Williams employ plastic theatre techniques to transform the audience's impressions of Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire?	
Topic #1	Audience distrust of Blanche - costume and color	
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
"daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace and ear-rings of pearl, white gloves and hat	Stage Directions Color Costume Characterization	This shows Blanche as pure and innocent and elegant and incongruous to Elysian Field.
"Her delicate beauty must avoid a strong light. There is something about her uncertain manner, as well as	Stage Directions Ambiguity Metaphor Characterization	Blanche's fragility is clearly alluded to but also the idea of moth is distasteful and not attractive.

her white clothes that suggests a moth.”		
Topic #2	Blanche a deceitful character - props	
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
“She is about five years older than Stella.”	Stage Directions Characterization Irony	The stage directions reveal the truth behind the fantasy. Shows that in the end only Blanche will be fooling herself.
“Yes, Stella is my precious little sister. I call her little in spite of the fact that she’s somewhat older than I.”	Dialogue Tone Dramatic Irony	Shows Blanche’s duplicity and unkind nature in relation to Stella. This also shows her vanity.
“I bought this adorable little colored paper lantern... Put it over the light bulb!”	Prop Color Symbol	The lantern is a major symbol of deceit and the facade that covers the truth.
Topic #3	The audience understands Blanche’s reasons for deceit	
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
“And so the soft people have got to – shimmer and glow – put a – paper lantern over the light... But I’m scared now – awfully scared”	Tone Dialogue Characterization Pathos Syntax	This shows Blanche’s desire and preoccupation with fantasy and deception.
”He tears the paper lantern off the lightbulb.”	Characterization Stage Directions Violent diction Symbolism	Stanley and Mitch’s unkind gesture to show how they violently destroy her facade.
“I don’t tell the truth. I tell what ought to be the truth.”	Dialogue Pathos Direct Tone	This shows Blanche’s internal conflict and desire for what she hopes to be true, not what is true.

Topic #4	Audience dismay at Blanche's behavior - auditory devices	
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
"The rapid feverish polka tune, the 'Varsouviana' is heard. The music is in her mind; she is drinking to escape it."	Music Sound Stage Directions Diction Characterization Alcohol Motif	This demonstrates Blanche's fragile mental state as she descends into madness and remembers Allen's death.
Topic #5	Audience pity at Blanche's downfall - costume, color, sound	
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
'It's Della Robbia blue. The blue of the robe in the old Madonna pictures.'	Costume Color Allusion	The reference to the Virgin Mary shows Blanche's longing for purity that pervades the play.
"Those cathedral bells – they're the only clean thing in the Quarter. Well, I'm going now. I'm ready to go."	Religious Allusion Characterization Death Motif Pathos	In a direct reference to death, Blanche recognizes her end and this foreshadows her eventual decline.

Note that this outline above matches one of our sample essays in this resource. Also note that not every point has THREE textual references. That is OK. The sample is stellar as it's well-organized and has many supporting details and rich ideas. All of them are in the outline!

Your Turn!

Now it's your turn to write your outline for your HL essay. Use this Graphic Organizer and collect evidence and do some rich thinking about your line of inquiry, how you can support it and how you are going to organize your essay!

Title of Work:		
Line of Inquiry:		
Topic #1		
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
Topic #2		
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
Topic #3		
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
Topic #4		
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
Topic #5		
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas

Writing the Introduction

You have a rich line of inquiry with all of the moving parts. You have the detailed outline with your points and your textual references and authorial choices. You've done some thinking and planning and now it's time to craft your essay.

The introduction is a vital component of a good essay. You need to make a good impression and offer a firm “handshake” with your reader. Show rich thinking, strong writing and most of all a clear direction for your paper.

There are many ways to write an introduction but we believe that all introduction need some essential components:

1. A creative hook that introduces the topic
2. Definition of terms (preferably with sources)
3. Context and historical background
4. The line of inquiry with the literary aspect and a rich idea.

Learning from Sample Introductions:

Let's now look at some sample introductions. Note how the students are introducing their rich ideas, giving background on their texts and offering their line of inquiry.

Sample Introduction #1:

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams (1947)

To what extent does **Tennessee Williams** employ **plastic theatre techniques** to transform the audience's impressions of **Blanche** in *A Streetcar Named Desire*?

In the early 1950s, emerging playwrights were constantly exploring non-traditional and evocative ways to communicate meaning to the audience. Moreover, Tennessee Williams coined the phrase “Plastic Theatre.” A term often interpreted as an immersive theatrical experience heightened by the combination of non-literary elements of stage production: setting, costume, lighting, props and auditory devices (Durmišević, 2018). Nevertheless, in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Williams’ employment of plastic theatre techniques is considered to support the use of literary conventions. This enables him to conjure an interchangeable shifting image of Blanche Dubois – a complex female character whose fragile sense of identity undergoes collateral damage when confronted by reality. From a high-bred woman who orchestrates her surroundings to a victim of a patriarchal society, the audience’s reaction towards Blanche undergoes a transformative act from distrust, sympathy, dismay, and pity through the employment of plastic techniques.

Examiner’s Comment: The student offers a very clear definition of “plastic theater” and offers the idea that the reader's impression of the protagonist shifts throughout the play and that these shifts are prompted through dramatic features. The student offers a clear interpretation of the main character with rich vocabulary and clear direction.

Sample Introduction #2:

Sylvia Plath Poetry

How and to what extent does Sylvia Plath utilize symbols of the body, death and liberation to convey the struggles of females to find their identity in a patriarchal society?

Sylvia Plath’s body of work epitomizes confessional poetry, wherein the tapestry of her verses intricately weaves together disparate realities and symbolic motifs wherein fragments of her own existence find poignant reflection. With broken male figures and the strains of newfound motherhood as recurrent motifs, her verses embrace womanhood in its most unadulterated essence. Given their confessional tenor, these poems serve as

portals into the very fabric of Plath's life, while simultaneously offering a broader vista into the experiences of women. Through recurring symbols like corporeal forms and chromatic hues, she forges a profound thematic tapestry of death and rebirth, poetically echoing the dark and critical sentiments that women innately possess in a male-dominated sphere.

Examiner's Comment: This student offers some critical background on Sylvia Plath as a confessional poet and mentions that these poems are personal and "confessional" but also reflect criticism that apply to all women. There is a very clear literary aspect and focus on symbols with a clear focus on female identity. The thesis in the paper is a bit less clear than the line of inquiry as "dark and critical sentiments" is a bit vague.

Sample Introduction #3:

Banksy's Artwork

How does Banksy use graffiti to subvert the role of capitalism in art culture?

Banksy is a notable figure in the modern urban art scene, anonymously leaving his mark globally since around the turn of the century, (Ellsworth-Jones). Despite his anonymity, his stencils are globally recognised and provoke widespread reactions. Ever since ancient cave paintings until following years, street art is a mode of expression, typically for opposition or rebellion. Finally, graffiti reemerged in the 1960s in Philadelphia, (Wall). Capitalism quantifies the value of artworks and measures artistic expression by its social value. Banksy's socially-minded approach in the form of contentious graffiti challenges the role of capitalism on the ownership and prestige in today's art culture through juxtaposition, intertextuality, visual metaphors and reinterpretations of artworks.

Examiner Comment: This is a very clear and focused introduction and offers a clear sense of purpose to the entire paper with the idea of the criticism of the role of capitalism in the art world as a main argument or focus. Banksy is identified and his body of work explained. Then the student offers a line of inquiry with a listing of his main authorial choices.

Sample Introduction #4:

Parasite by Bong Joon Ho

How does **Bong Joon Ho** use **cinematic elements** in his feature film *Parasite* to convey the **stark class divisions that exist in South Korean Society**.

In the critically acclaimed film *Parasite*, helmed by the visionary director **Bong Joon-ho**, a plethora of artistic techniques capture and accentuate the stark disparities between social classes. The **narrative** centers around the relentless pursuit of upward mobility by a destitute family, who cunningly maneuver their way into affluent employment at all costs. This gripping thriller revolves around the intricate interplay between two contrasting families: the poverty-stricken Kims and the opulent Parks. Throughout the film, viewers are enraptured by the mesmerizing exploration of **social stratification in Korean society**. **Bong Joon-ho** masterfully employs **dynamic camera movements, meticulously crafted mise-en-scene, and seamless editing** to vividly portray the **palpable dichotomy that exists between these distinct social strata**.

Your Comment:

- What do you notice about this introduction?
- How do they frame the paper?
- How do they offer some background on the film and the director?

Sample Introduction #5:

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

How does **Margaret Atwood** demonstrate the **logic of appropriateness** manifesting itself in a **totalitarian state** through the **character** of Aunt Lydia in her novel, "The Handmaid's Tale"?

Margaret Atwood's speculative novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986), constructs the state of Gilead to demonstrate how totalitarian states weaponise the 'logic of appropriateness' to justify their suppression of individual reason. Atwood demonstrates that tyrannical enforcers emphasize the importance of 'appropriateness' so as to prioritize rule-driven behavior over morality. Totalitarian states are therefore able to manufacture uniformity of human behavior, by certifying that institutional rules take precedence over individual reason. This view is partially driven by Atwood's context – a feminist voice retaliating against the rise of conservative Reaganism in the 1980s. Atwood utilizes the character of Aunt Lydia – a living embodiment of Gilead's propaganda – to demonstrate this subconscious enforcement of the 'logic of appropriateness', and how such rules must be anchored in the identities of the enforcers. Specifically, Lydia's unique speech patterns, emotionally manipulative manner and personal leadership qualities aptly present how the 'logic of appropriateness' manifests itself within a totalitarian state.

Your Comment:

- What do you notice about this introduction?
 - How do they frame the paper?
 - How do they offer some background on the film and the director?
-

Your Turn!

Now it's time for you to write your introduction to your HL Essay. Remember to craft the introduction carefully, give much needed background information on your text and offer some development on your rich idea. Then end with a clear statement that echoes your line of inquiry! Highlight your paragraph when you are done. Be sure to remember:

1. A creative hook that introduces the topic
2. Definition of terms (preferably with sources)
3. Context and historical background
4. The line of inquiry with the literary aspect and a rich idea.

The Introduction
Line of Inquiry:

Literary/Stylistic Features

Author/Reader Relationship

Rich Idea

Writing the Body Paragraphs

The body paragraphs are where you make your money when it comes to the HL essay. This is where you develop your argument, show rich thinking and unpack authorial choices in detail. Again, there is no one formula for writing a body paragraph but we'd like to suggest some key components:

1. A clear topic sentence with the **topic** and a **rich idea**
2. Clear **textual references** that are embedded in our sentences.
3. Labeling of **literary or stylistic features** and a discussion of their effects.
4. Discussion of the **author/audience** (reader) relationship.
5. Links to the **line of inquiry**
6. **Transition words and phrases.**

Remember to consult your outline as you write your body paragraph and use frequent references to the text that you have listed there. Strive to really unpack the literary features and show rich thinking. We'll offer you some suggestions for ways to expand analysis in later sections of this guide.

Examining Sample Body Paragraphs

Let's turn our attention to some sample body paragraphs from our sample essays. Note that these paragraphs come from the five sample essays that we are using for this guide and they match the introductions from the previous section.

Sample Body Paragraph #1:

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams (1947)

To what extent does **Tennessee Williams** employ **plastic theatre techniques** to transform the audience's impressions of **Blanche** in *A Streetcar Named Desire*?

In the opening scene, Williams' use of costume and lighting influences the audience to have conflicting impressions of Blanche. Initially, she is presented to the audience as an outcast; an upper-class woman, whose countenance is incongruous to the boisterous setting of New Orleans. Her choice of clothing suggests that she is a woman from a wealthy upbringing as she "is daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace and ear-rings of pearl, white gloves and hat...". The prominence of white in Blanche's costume symbolizes her Southern Puritan roots; a chaste angel whose divinity is refined by wealth. Moreover, the colour white has an intrinsic link to the eponymous characterization of Blanche. Since Blanche means white in French, the significance of the colour further accentuates the necessity for her to adhere to her given name through the choice of clothing. Following this, however, Williams presents Blanche as needing to avoid a strong light by associating her physical appearance to an insect. "Her delicate beauty must avoid a strong light. There is something about her uncertain manner, as well as her white clothes that suggests a moth." The pristine, white costume in which Blanche presents herself in is juxtaposed by the metaphorical comparison to a moth – an insect which the audience may perceive as repulsive. Like a debilitating moth under a strong light, Blanche is attracted to light, despite how it can damage her physical countenance. Moreover, William's use of light to exploit Blanche's identity is a motif throughout the play which foreshadows later events. Thus, based on the presentation of Blanche in the opening scene, the dichotomous transformation from an affluent woman to an inferior moth leads the audience to initially distrust Blanche.

Examiner's Comment: The topic sentence clearly establishes where in the play the writer is looking and also what dramatic features they will be focusing on. The main idea of the audience's impression of Blanche is clear and a wide variety of dramatic features are used with very good detailed references. A strong paragraph.

Sample Body Paragraph #2:

Sylvia Plath Poetry

How and to what extent does **Sylvia Plath** utilize **symbols** of the body, death and liberation to convey the struggles of females to find their identity in a patriarchal society?

This **motif** of emptiness and powerlessness as well the lack of female identity is further displayed in "Tulips" where Plath **symbolizes** her body as "**a pebble**" (15). Pebbles, unlike rocks, are small, tiny, and smooth; carried by rivers, and swayed by motion's desires. Like pebbles women are meant to be small and fragile, unable to change the currents of men's desires, surrendering to them as that is the expectation. By equating herself to a pebble, **the speaker** reinforces the deadliness of being controlled. **The speaker** is "**nobody**", "**scared and bare**" to the hands of doctors, signifying she is empty, dead like a corpse as the society she lives in slowly kills her (5; 25). The **internal rhyme** of "**scared and bare**" helps to emphasize the connection between vulnerability and fear. Similarly, nature and color are tied to form a negative **symbol** in "Tulips" where **Plath** connects red and tulips as an evil entity. Although **the speaker** does not consume these tulips, their presence sends "**a dozen red lead sinkers round [her] neck**" in a similar fashion to the berries in "Ariel" which cast **dark hooks**" (42: 11-12). In both, **color** is used to emphasize nature's deadly qualities. The berries control and hurt her through "**hooks**", whilst the tulips use "**sinkers**" to weigh **the speaker** down and hurt her. Red and black are often representative of death and anger, both emotions Plath feels as she is subject to **rules by the patriarchal society women live in**.

Examiner's Note: This is the second body paragraph and there is a subtle transition using the word "This" in the topic sentence which connects to the early idea in the previous paragraph. The textual references are reduced to short nuggets but they are very well analyzed and explored in terms of their symbolism. Perhaps expanding to use more literary features would elevate this analysis. A good body paragraph focusing on one of Plath's poems.

Sample Body Paragraph #3:

Banksy's Artwork

How does Banksy use graffiti to subvert the role of capitalism in art culture?



Figure 1: *This'll look nice when it's framed* (2010)

The non-excludability of graffiti is used to undermine the institutionalization of art through striking juxtaposition in the text and image. *This'll look nice when it's framed* in Figure 1, appeared on Valencia Street in San Francisco in 2010, displaying a black and white stencil of a boy beside a spray painted message "This'll Look Nice When It's Framed" in red, (Farooq). The text refers to how currently the value of art is determined by authorities of powerful statuses instead of the public. The word choice of "nice" is vague and subjective, indicating the unreliability of authorities such as galleries and critics to determine the value of artworks. Moreover, the informal register, abbreviating "This'll" and "it's" and the over-simplified "nice", taunts the formal environment of art institutions. The disorganized vibrant red text is surrounded by splatters of red paint, reminiscent of blood. The shocking and gruesome image may suggest the detriment of art culture under capitalism. The messy red font is juxtaposed with the neat stenciled boy. The boy is covered in black, only exposing his expression. The emphasized dissatisfaction on the boy's face is supported by his closed body language, his apprehensive hands brought together. The use of a young boy appeals to the public's pathos, evoking guilt. This is

because the expected naivete of children is subverted by the mature criticisms of capitalism. The contrast of the disorderly text in an informal register and the clean design of the displeased boy undermines the limited perspective of “art” being confined within a frame. Concurrently, graffiti as a form of expression directly contradicts the text. The use of in situ, on the exterior of a building wall, unable to be framed ironically did not make the artwork less valuable, if not, its accessibility allowed greater discussions and reaction to the artwork, (Farooq). Furthermore, the vibrant red large text and the stenciled boy on a public wall, attracts attention. Banksy’s criticisms of the privatization of art reaches a larger audience in a way private institutions are unable to. The bluntness of Banksy’s graffiti and the bold contrasts in text, image and color available to a non-excludable public mocks the formal institutionalization of artworks.

Examiner Comment: For visual texts like political cartoons, advertisements, graphic novels and films, we feel it is essential to integrate the visuals into the paper itself rather than leaving them in an appendix or even worse omitting them. Readers need to see what you are talking about! This paragraph focuses on Figure 1 and analyzes it very carefully with close attention to many artistic features. The student uses close analysis of the boy but also the text to connect with a rich idea about the non-excludability of art and the formal institutionalization of artwork.

Sample Body Paragraph #4:

Parasite by Bong Joon Ho

How does Bong Joon Ho use cinematic elements in his feature film *Parasite* to convey the stark class divisions that exist in South Korean Society.



Figure 3: (14:24)

Bong Joon Ho's meticulous arrangement of **mise-en-scene** further contributes to the tangible separation between these disparate social strata, thereby emphasizing their stark differences. **Mise-en-scene**, defined as the deliberate arrangement of scenery and stage properties, becomes a strategic tool harnessed by Bong Joon-ho to effectively communicate the contrasting social classes present within the film. The artistic choice of deliberate division is particularly pronounced in **Figure 3** where a subtle visual separation is created by **the presence of a glass barrier**. Within this composition, **the mother of the Park family is positioned on one side of the glass, while Ki-woo Kim is situated on the other**. We also see a subtle **line of symmetry** that divides the frame and places **Ki-Woo and the housekeeper on the left with the Park matriarch on the right** to emphasize the social divide. The **positioning and blocking** for the **characters** in **Figure 3** also helps to underscore a compelling dynamic among them. **The mother of the Park family is depicted asleep, while the son of the Kim family patiently awaits her attention, and an employee awakens the mother from her slumber**. The mother of the Park family is shown in a state of relaxation, oblivious to her duty of conducting a job interview with the son of the Kim family. This striking **contrast** in **positioning and body language** underscores how individuals of a higher social class possess the luxury of leisure and leisurely pursuits, while those from the lower class are constantly engaged in laborious work. The scene accentuates the dichotomy of social class, where the Parks enjoy the privilege of idleness while the Kims tirelessly toil. In this context, the slumbering Park mother not only symbolizes her lack of employment, but also serves as a **representation** of her detachment

from the struggles and responsibilities that burden the Kim family. Additionally, the disparity in the availability of resources is exemplified through the Park family's ownership of a yard, a luxury unattainable to the Kims due to its exorbitant cost. By **juxtaposing** her leisurely repose with the Kims' diligent efforts, **Bong Joon Ho** effectively portrays **the discrepancy between their respective social classes**.

Your Comment:

- What do you notice about this body paragraph?
- How well does the topic sentence establish the focus?
- How well do they use references to their chosen scene (Figure 3)?
- How well do they keep an eye on the cinematic elements?
- How do they consider the line of inquiry?

Sample Body Paragraph #5:

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

How does **Margaret Atwood** demonstrate **the logic of appropriateness manifesting itself in a totalitarian state** through the **character** of Aunt Lydia in her novel, "The Handmaid's Tale"?

The distinct **syntax** of Aunt Lydia's **dialogue** also identifies how **rule-driven behavior** manifests itself within Gilead. **Atwood** frequently uses **declarative sentences** within Aunt Lydia's discourse, "**He did not make you that way. He made you different. It's up to you to set the boundaries. Later you will be thanked.**" (Atwood, 1986, p. 55). The authoritative **tone** of these claims is elevated through the use of **truncated sentences**, compelling her subordinates to act in accordance with these expectations. In addition, the **repetition** of the **personal pronoun "you"**, identifies how Aunt Lydia's use of a **direct address** when speaking to a wider audience, assists in convincing members of Gilead to fulfill the obligations expected of them. This is achieved through the intimacy Aunt Lydia fosters with her audience through directly speaking to them, **making the rules of Gilead appear legitimate and subsequently followed**. This **manifestation of rule-driven behavior** is

further supported through Atwood's use of anastrophe, "Ordinary, is what you are used to," (Atwood, 1986, p. 43) and "For the generations that come after, it will be so much better," (Atwood, 1986, p. 171), Atwood's choice to amend Aunt Lydia's dialect into an unusual grammatical word order makes her remarks appear profound and wise. This establishes credibility for both Aunt Lydia as a character and the embedded rules of Gilead, appealing to logos of the audience she is speaking to.

Your Comment:

- What do you notice about this body paragraph?
- How well does the topic sentence establish the focus?
- How well do they use references?
- How well do they keep an eye on the literary features?
- How do they consider the line of inquiry?

Your Turn!

Now it's your turn to write a body paragraph. Go to your line of inquiry and your outline. Find the evidence you need and consider the topic for your paragraph. Now you are ready to write. Keep the following components in mind when writing your body paragraph.

1. A clear topic sentence with the topic and a rich idea
2. Clear textual references that are embedded in our sentences.
3. Labeling of literary or stylistic features and a discussion of their effects.
4. Discussion of the author/audience (reader) relationship.
5. Links to the line of inquiry
6. Transition words and phrases.

Body Paragraph: Topic:

Line of Inquiry:

Writing the Conclusion

We think the conclusion is as important as the introduction (Well, almost) and it's important that you end with a strong impression. So many students run out of gas at the end or just spend time summarizing their content. Instead, try to synthesize your information and think outwards and end with a flourish!

Basic Components:

As you write your conclusion, keep the following components in mind:

1. Restatement of the thesis or argument
2. Synthesis of the paper without rehashing the main ideas. AVOID summarizing main ideas.
3. Extension beyond the texts to a wider context. Answer the question, "So What?"
End with a flourish!

Remember that we are not here to rehash our content. We're here to show additional thinking and perhaps consider the "so what?" to our paper. How does this relate to the human condition in some way? What is the deeper implication of reading your text in this way? Where else do you see these ideas? By thinking about these questions, we can arrive at something interesting to leave our readers with.

Examining Sample Conclusions:

Just like before, sometimes it's easiest to learn by looking at some strong samples. Notice how each of the model essays ends with something interesting to say.

Sample Conclusion #1:

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams (1947)

To what extent does Tennessee Williams employ plastic theatre techniques to transform the audience's impressions of Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*?

In conclusion, Williams is effective in employing plastic theatre techniques to constantly manipulate the audience's understanding of Blanche's transformative identity in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. From suspicion to sympathy and dismay to pity, a paraphernalia of emotions is heightened by costumes, lighting, and non-diegetic sound to create an emotive play. Ultimately, Williams has envisioned a tragic story of a fading southern belle, clinging on to her last threads of hope; unable to face the truth nor communicate honestly.

Examiner Comment: This is a nice concise conclusion that reiterates the line of inquiry and main features. Then we see the range of emotional responses from readers as covered in the paper. Lastly, the writer reflects on the character and her nature.

Sample Conclusion #2:

Sylvia Plath Poetry

How and to what extent does Sylvia Plath utilize symbols of the body, death and liberation to convey the struggles of females to find their identity in a patriarchal society?

Across her poetry, Sylvia Plath has been able to create a voice for women, showcasing the deepest thoughts held by those who are often told to remain silent. Through the symbols of bodies and color, the themes of death and rebirth are developed to signify the obstacles women face. Nature, representative of society, is twisted and dark, as men belittle her and make her an accessory. Along with imagery and diction, Plath uncovers the hidden feelings of suicide that trouble women after being subjugated and reduced to empty bodies, whose identity's value is worthless. Plath ends this by revealing the most powerful weapon women own: their femininity. Her poetry offers readers a vision of how women can empower themselves, create change and seek equality. Although more work needs to be done, Plath's poetry is a window into the history of women, and the undeniable future in which women will "eat men like air".

Examiner Comment: This conclusion effectively synthesizes the paper and covers the main symbols used in the paper to communicate a message about female identity and the struggle for a voice in a patriarchal society. The final line of the paper is excellent using a small quotation (very famous) by Plath to end with a serious flourish! Interesting to note that this is also the title of the HL Essay.

Sample Conclusion #3:

Banksy's Artwork

How does Banksy use graffiti to subvert the role of capitalism in art culture?

Banksy confronts the value of graffiti art as he condemns the commodification of art in capitalist systems and promotes its democratization for viewers and creators. To evoke a change in the art industry, Banksy juxtaposes art styles, uses in situ and textual support to highlight the marginalization of graffiti. He uses allusions, intertextuality, visual metaphors and semiotics to indicate the irony and hypocrisy of how art is evaluated by established art institutions. Banksy's bold criticisms and shocking visuals, offers a socially-minded perspective on the art industry evoking interest and critical questioning of how art is disseminated. Furthermore, due to Banksy's anonymity, fame and money do not interfere in his ability to create art and convey messages. The uncensored freedom of expression of street art permits Banksy to use it as a tool to urge viewers to reevaluate the capitalistic culture surrounding art.

Examiner Comment: We like the overarching idea surrounding the criticism of the art world and how Banksy's art is used to challenge the commodification of art. This is the central rich idea and is reiterated well in the conclusion. The idea of art stimulating change is a powerful one and a good "so what?" for this paper.

Sample Conclusion #4:

Parasite by Bong Joon Ho

How does **Bong Joon Ho** use **cinematic elements** in his feature film *Parasite* to convey the **stark class divisions that exist in South Korean Society**.

In conclusion, **Bong Joon-ho** employs various **film techniques** beyond mere dialogue to accentuate **the disparities between social classes** depicted in "Parasite." Through **deft camera movements, meticulous mise-en-scene, and artful editing**, the director skillfully communicates the profound differences in economic status experienced by the two families. The analysis conducted throughout this essay has shed light on how the camera effectively captures these disparities through deliberate movement, how meticulously framed shots maintain a distinct separation between the families, and how editing techniques aid in facilitating the audience's comprehension of the underlying motivations.

Your Comment:

- What do you notice about this conclusion?
- How well does the conclusion synthesize the information?
- How do they consider the line of inquiry?
- Does the paper end with a flourish?

Sample Conclusion #5:

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

How does **Margaret Atwood** demonstrate the **logic of appropriateness manifesting itself in a totalitarian state** through the **character** of Aunt Lydia in her novel, "The Handmaid's Tale"?

To conclude, **Atwood's** exploration of rule-driven behavior within *The Handmaid's Tale* demonstrates how **the 'logic of appropriateness'** manifests itself within a totalitarian

state. This is achieved through the means of Aunt Lydia's **character**, particularly her **speech, manner and personal qualities** which convey how the expected rules of an institution become socially embedded through submission. The combination of these constituents alongside her enforcing role within Gilead, demonstrates how **this logic of rule-driver behavior is at the core of any totalitarian state**. In this way, **Atwood** relates the human experience as one in which institutions can suppress individual reason.

Your Comment:

- What do you notice about this conclusion?
 - How well does the conclusion synthesize the information?
 - How do they consider the line of inquiry?
 - Does the paper end with a flourish?
-

Your Turn!

It's time for you to end your HL essay with some strong writing. Once you have written your introduction, body paragraphs, you are reading to tie things together and make that final impression.

As you write, remember the essential components of a conclusion:

1. **Restatement of the thesis or argument**
2. **Synthesis** of the paper without rehashing the main ideas. **AVOID** summarizing main ideas.
3. **Extension** beyond the texts to a wider context. Answer the question, "So What?"
End with a flourish!

The Conclusion

Line of Inquiry:

Revising and Formatting

Once you have a completed draft ready for submission, it is so important for you to critically look at your work and make revisions. Below are some suggestions for doing just that!

Step One: Highlighting - Making a copy and highlighting your work. Light it up!

We love highlighting our work when we are done. Why? By highlighting we see areas where we might improve. Our highlighting addresses the criteria directly. No shortcuts here. Make a copy with google docs or cut and paste another copy in your application of choice. Then get to highlighting.

Here are our categories for highlighting:

1. Literary or Stylistic Features
2. Textual references
3. Author/Audience-Reader Relationship
4. Line of Inquiry/Rich Idea
5. Transitions

Applying the Highlighting Protocol

Here's another sample body paragraph from one of our sample HL Essays. Note how we use the highlighting protocol.

Sample Body Paragraph:

To overcome these limitations, Plath's poetry uses powerful symbols of female empowerment and even liberation. The societal pressures on women begin to eat up Plath, as women feel powerless.. What begins as a suicidal wish, morphs into liberation. In

"Ariel", as Plath's body becomes tied to the horse, she succumbs to its suicidal nature until she unpeels, "white", letting go of the "dead hands, dead stringencies", or societal pressures to become the woman they want her to be (19; 21). Her body peeling symbolizes her change into purity, as Plath realizes she can let go of these norms and become a woman under her own conditions, purely herself. Metaphorically, rebirth is equal to liberation from societal rules, as the speaker understands she will never follow them, so she chooses to make her own. The theme of rebirth is also in "Tulips", stating "I am a nun now, I have never been so pure" as society has "swabbed [her] clear of [her] loving association", meaning that she has been stripped by these rules so frequently, her innermost layer is pure as it represents the piece of her identity that has not been subjugated or destroyed by the male-dominated world (28; 24). The allusion to a "nun" here, with clear religious connotation, also shows the speaker's rejection of all things male. This rebirth is power for Plath, just as it is for other women, who use their purest self to create permanent change. In addition, this sentiment is displayed in "Lady Lazarus" where Plath warns men, "Beware. Beware." as she "rise[s] with [her] red hair" to "eat men like air" (80-81; 83-84). These symbolic images of the female rising from the ashes and metaphorically eating men as easily as a person breathes helps to underscore the tone of female strength, anger and empowerment. Red, although tied to the theme of death through blood, changes and begins to symbolize courage and confidence. Purity is white, power is red, and together, these colors combine to form pink, the epitomized color representative of femininity. Society has made Plath's femininity – her personality, her body - a symbol of inferiority, yet these very attributes gave her power, and her new hair gave her the courage to be a woman of power, defying the societal role she has been given.

Examiner Comment: Clearly this is a rich paragraph focusing on symbols of female empowerment and liberation. There is strong attention to Plath's choices, however the reader is left out of much of this discussion. There is a wide variety of poetic elements used and good use of textual references.

Your Turn!

Notice how these comments can easily be made because of our highlighting protocol. Try it out on your own writing and make revisions to your HL Essay!

Step Two: Making Revisions

After you've highlighted, it's time to work on some revisions. We like the STAR acronym to consider ways that we can improve our writing. This is a great time to really look at your word count and use the STAR strategy accordingly!

Substitute (weak verbs or adjective, overused words, dead words)

Take Out (repetition, unimportant words)

Add (detail, analysis, features, description)

Rearrange (sequence, logic, order)

Step Three: Self Evaluation using the criteria

Once you are finished with the paper, take a minute to self-evaluate using the criteria. This is a critical way for you to really examine your work and consider strengths and areas for growth.

Criteria	Key Questions	5-Band Descriptors
A. Knowledge, Understanding and Interpretation	<p>How well does the candidate demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the work or text chosen?</p> <p>To what extent does the candidate make use of knowledge and understanding of the work or text to draw conclusions in relation to the chosen topic?</p>	<p>There is excellent knowledge and understanding of the work or text shown through the essay and a persuasive interpretation of their implications in relation to the chosen topic.</p> <p>References to the work or text are well-chosen and effectively support the candidate's ideas in relation to the chosen topic.</p>

	How well are ideas supported by references to the work or text in relation to the chosen topic?	
B. Analysis and Evaluation	To what extent does the candidate analyze and evaluate how the choices of language, technique and style, and/or broader authorial choices shape meaning in relation to the chosen topic?	The essay demonstrates a consistently insightful and convincing analysis and evaluation of textual features and the author's broader choices in relation to the chosen topic.
C. Focus, Organization, and Development	How well organized, focused and developed is the presentation of ideas in the essay? How well are examples integrated into the essay?	The essay is effectively organized and cohesive. The line of inquiry is well developed. Supporting examples are well integrated into the structure of the sentences and paragraphs.
D. Language	How clear, varied and accurate is the language? How appropriate is the choice of register and style?	Language is very clear, effective, carefully chosen and precise, with a high degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are effective and appropriate to the task.

Step Four: Formatting the paper

This last step is so important before you submit. Work on the presentation of your paper and make it shine. Some suggestions for formatting:

1. Make a title page with a title, clear line of inquiry, and word count.
2. Put the line of inquiry on the top of the first page as well.
3. Number the pages.
4. Use 1 ½ spacing and 12 pt. Font.
5. Include a Works Cited page.
6. Make it a PDF and check the PDF for glitches.

Skill work: The Magic Sentence

The magic sentence shows that you understand the link between the techniques and the writer's ideas. You need to show that you understand the role of the writer. You will also need to develop ideas and include specific examples. Magic sentences make a great start to a strong paragraph. Authors **DELIBERATELY** choose techniques because they feel they are the most effective way of teaching us about life/messages which go beyond the text.

Requirements of HL Essay:

A. Understanding and Interpretation - a convincing and insightful interpretation of larger implications and subtleties of the text.

B. Analysis and Evaluation - an insightful and convincing analysis of textual features and/or authorial choices.

Pitfalls of Analysis:

1. Failure to label features
2. Omitting the author
3. Weak analysis of how feature shapes meaning

Enter the magic sentence!

WRITER + VERB + TECHNIQUE + PURPOSE + IDEA

Benefits of the Magic Sentence:

1. The magic sentence shows that you understand the link between the techniques and the writer's ideas.
2. You will show that you understand the role of the writer.
3. You will develop rich ideas and link to specific features.
4. Magic sentences make a great start to a strong paragraph.
5. Authors **DELIBERATELY** choose techniques because they feel they are the most effective way of teaching us about life/messages which go beyond the text.

Sample Magic Sentences

Written about *Death and the Maiden* by Ariel Dorfman Scene 1 (See annotated Passage on next page)

WRITER + VERB + TECHNIQUE + PURPOSE + IDEA = MAGIC SENTENCE

WRITER	VERB	TECHNIQUE	PURPOSE	IDEA
Dorfman	introduces	stage directions	to show	Paulina's sense of unease and fear as she awaits the arrival of her husband.
Ariel Dorfman	uses	the setting and time of day	to create	a feeling of uncertainty, isolation and tension.
Dorfman	builds	the set	to show	Paulina's desire for escape and her sense of loneliness and fear of the real world.
Dorfman	develops	Paulina's character	to illustrate	The trauma that victims of political violence and sexual abuse endure and the psychological aftermath.
Ariel Dorfman	constructs	the plot	to establish	The dynamic and tense confrontation between victim and victimizer and the precarious middleman.
The playwright	creates	dialogue	to reflect	The tension in the marriage and the lack of trust between Paulina and Gerardo
The playwright	inserts	props (such as the gun)	to convey	The threat of violence and the paranoia of those recovering from an oppressive regime.
Dorfman	utilizes	sounds (such as the sea and the faraway car)	to represent	Mystery and uncertainty and the fear of the unknown.
The playwright	describes	lighting (the moonlight and the dim lamp)	to evoke	A feeling of unease or mystery or perhaps to connect to the theme of the elusiveness of truth.
Dorfman	reveals	an atmosphere (of fear)	to establish	The idea that post-dictatorship societies have lingering traumatic effects from the time of oppression and violence.

Skill work: Linger and Level Up

To “linger” means staying in one place longer than expected. We often tell students to linger in a moment to expand their analysis and interpretation. Doing this can help you “level up” your overall performance while discussing nuances and showing insight.

Remember, you cannot “linger and level up” all the time, but we feel that doing this periodically during analysis is important to reach higher mark bands and show deep thinking. Let’s follow the steps below and learn to say more and clarify our ideas.

Step 1: Articulate a main claim.

We need to read carefully and demonstrate we’ve understood the literal meaning of a text. These “main claims” must support a larger thesis or argument. Let’s look at an example of a main claim from *The Things They Carried* by Tim O’Brien.

Tim O’Brien depicts Mary Anne Belle as a savage **to show that** war transforms soldiers and breaks their innocence.

Step 2: Find textual evidence to support the claim.

Once we have a “rich idea,” it’s time to find good textual evidence to support our ideas. Remember to use “snippets” of quotes rather than long sentences.

“She was part of the land. She was wearing her culottes, her pink sweater, and a necklace of human tongues. She was dangerous. She was ready for the kill.”

In “Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong,” O’Brien **uses** the phrase “necklace of human tongues” to show the savagery of Mary Anne.

Useful verbs: shows, depicts, presents, uses, utilizes, exhibits, introduces

Step 3: Analyze craft.

This is the time to identify and “pin” an authorial choice to the snippet and explain how they shape meaning.

This serves as a strong symbol and demonstrates she has abandoned her pure and innocent demeanor and converted into something much more sinister.

Step 4: “Linger” and offer nuances and insight.

Don’t rush to move on! We need to periodically stay in one moment and continue expanding our ideas. Let’s linger.

By juxtaposing the “tongues” with the “culottes” and “pink sweater,” readers can easily see the stark contrast between the woman she once was and the woman she has become. This creates an ominous mood and shocks the reader.

Useful verbs: highlights, conveys, communicates, illustrates, portrays, connotes

Step 5: “Level Up” and discuss further implications.

Let’s keep going and see if we can read between the lines and stretch our interpretation.

From these phrases, we can infer that Mary Anne has lost her humanity and descended into madness. Perhaps this is O’Brien’s ultimate message: humans risk losing their innocence in war, thus exposing our animalistic tendencies.

Try some of these phrases to reach for further implications and insight:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This phrase implies that... ○ The reader can imply that... ○ The author suggests that... ○ While not stated, the author hints that... ○ The implications are clear: (...). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The reader can deduce that... ○ Readers can infer that... ○ Readers can conclude that... ○ The audience reasons that... ○ While not overtly stated, we can infer that...
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Step 6: Put it together and highlight the writing.

Tim O’Brien depicts Mary Anne Belle as a savage **to show that war transforms soldiers and breaks their innocence.** **O’Brien** uses the phrase “**necklace of human tongues**” to show the savagery of Mary Anne. This serves as a strong **symbol** and demonstrates she has abandoned her pure and innocent demeanor and converted into something much more sinister. By **juxtaposing** the “**tongues**” with the “**culottes**” and “**pink sweater,**” **readers** can easily see the stark **contrast** between the woman she once was and the woman she has become. This creates an ominous **mood** and shocks the **reader**. From these phrases, **we can infer that** Mary Anne has lost her humanity and descended into madness. Perhaps this is **O’Brien’s** ultimate message: **humans risk losing their innocence in war, thus exposing our animalistic tendencies.**

Your turn!

Find a passage or key moment in your text to practice lingering and leveling up. Write one developed chunk writing that attaches itself to a line of inquiry. Try to use our models to help move you forward.

Step 1: Articulate a main claim.

We need to read carefully and demonstrate we've understood the literal meaning of a text. These "main claims" must support a larger thesis or argument.

Sample	Your Writing
Tim O'Brien depicts Mary Anne Belle as a savage to show that war transforms soldiers and breaks their innocence.	

Step 2: Find textual evidence to support the claim.

Once we have a "rich idea," it's time to find good textual evidence to support our ideas. Remember to use "snippets" of quotes rather than long sentences.

Sample	Your Writing
<p><i>"She was part of the land. She was wearing her culottes, her pink sweater, and a necklace of human tongues. She was dangerous. She was ready for the kill."</i></p> <p>O'Brien uses the phrase "necklace of human tongues" to show the savagery of Mary Anne.</p>	

Useful verbs: shows, depicts, presents, uses, utilizes, exhibits, introduces

Step 3: Analyze craft.

This is the time to identify authorial choices and explain how they shape meaning.

Sample	Your Writing
This serves as a strong symbol and demonstrates she has abandoned her pure and innocent demeanor and converted into something much more sinister.	

Step 4: “Linger” and offer nuances and insight.

Don't rush to move on! We need to periodically stay in one moment and continue expanding our ideas.

Sample	Your Writing
By juxtaposing the “tongues” with the “culottes” and “pink sweater,” readers can easily see the stark contrast between the woman she once was and the woman she has become. This creates an ominous mood and shocks the reader.	

Useful verbs: highlights, conveys, communicates, illustrates, portrays, connotes

Step 5: “Level Up” and discuss further implications.

Let’s keep on going and see if we can read between the lines and stretch our interpretation.

Sample	Your Writing
<p>From these phrases, we can infer that Mary Anne has lost her humanity and descended into madness. Perhaps this is O’Brien’s ultimate message: humans risk losing their innocence in war, thus exposing our animalistic tendencies.</p>	

Try some of these phrases to reach for further implications and insight:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This phrase implies that... ○ The reader can imply that... ○ The author suggests that... ○ While not stated, the author hints that... ○ The implications are clear: (...). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The reader can deduce that... ○ Readers can infer that... ○ Readers can conclude that... ○ The audience reasons that... ○ While not overtly stated, we can infer that...
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Step 6: Put it together and highlight the writing.

Nice work! Let’s copy and paste our sentences and see our rich thinking.

Highlighting protocol:

Rich idea

Textual reference

Authorial choice

Author/reader relationship

Sample Essay #1: A Streetcar Named Desire (1947)

Realism, Magic and the Truth

To what extent does Tennessee Williams employ plastic theatre techniques to transform the audience's impressions of Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*?

IB Language and Literature: Higher Level Essay

Word Count: 1496

To what extent does Tennessee Williams employ plastic theatre techniques to transform the audience's impressions of Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*?

In the early 1950s, emerging playwrights were constantly exploring non-traditional and evocative ways to communicate meaning to the audience. Moreover, Tennessee Williams coined the phrase "Plastic Theatre." A term often interpreted as an immersive theatrical experience heightened by the combination of non-literary elements of stage production: setting, costume, lighting, props and auditory devices (Durmišević, 2018). Nevertheless, in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Williams' employment of plastic theatre techniques is considered to support the use of literary conventions. This enables him to conjure an interchangeable shifting image of Blanche Dubois – a complex female character whose fragile sense of identity undergoes collateral damage when confronted by reality. From a high-bred woman who orchestrates her surroundings to a victim of a patriarchal society, the audience's reaction towards Blanche undergoes a transformative act from distrust, sympathy, dismay, and pity through the employment of plastic techniques.

In the opening scene, Williams' use of costume and lighting influences the audience to have conflicting impressions of Blanche. Initially, she is presented to the audience as an outcast; an upper-class woman, whose countenance is incongruous to the boisterous setting of New Orleans. Her choice of clothing suggests that she is a woman from a wealthy upbringing as she "is daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace and ear-rings of pearl, white gloves and hat...". The prominence of white in Blanche's costume symbolizes her Southern Puritan roots; a chaste angel whose divinity is refined by wealth. Moreover, the color white has an intrinsic link to the eponymous characterization of Blanche. Since Blanche means white in French, the significance of the color further accentuates the necessity for her to adhere to her given name through the choice of clothing. Following this, however, Williams presents Blanche as needing to avoid a strong light by associating her physical appearance to an insect. "Her delicate beauty must avoid a strong light. There is something about her uncertain manner, as well as her white clothes that suggests a moth." The pristine, white

costume in which Blanche presents herself in is juxtaposed by the metaphorical comparison to a moth – an insect which the audience may perceive as repulsive. Like a debilitating moth under a strong light, Blanche is attracted to light, despite how it can damage her physical countenance. Moreover, William's use of light to exploit Blanche's identity is a motif throughout the play which foreshadows later events. Thus, based on the presentation of Blanche in the opening scene, the dichotomous transformation from an affluent woman to an inferior moth leads the audience to initially distrust Blanche.

Subsequently, the impression of Blanche being a deceitful figure is further established through the combination of contradictory statements and the manipulation of props. In the opening scene, stage commentary from Williams is considered as Blanche is revealed to be older than her sister, "She is about five years older than Stella." On the contrary, in Scene Three, Blanche lies about the age disparity between her and Stella to Mitch, "Yes, Stella is my precious little sister. I call her little in spite of the fact that she's somewhat older than I." Blanche contradicts the previous statement being made about her as she deflects her dialogue by declaring herself as younger than Stella. Nevertheless, the societal value over youth can be observed as a significant factor which encourages Blanche to be devious. Consequently, the duplicity of Blanche's behavior is further exacerbated as she manipulates her surroundings through the consideration of props, "I bought this adorable little colored paper lantern... Put it over the light bulb!". The paper lantern symbolizes the veneer that Blanche hides beneath. In an imperative tone, Blanche commands Mitch to place the prop of disguise over the light bulb; a vulgar, naked weapon which threatens to expose Blanche's fabricated identity when it emits light. Hence, through stage commentaries and the choices of props, the audience views Blanche as a manipulative figure – a puppet master who controls and plays around with light to satisfy her own desire of gaining men.

However, as the play progresses and the reasons for Blanche's deceitful actions are revealed, the audience's feelings towards Blanche transforms from mistrust to sympathy. Moreover, Williams considers literary elements to emphasize the necessity of light in Blanche's life. In Scene Five, Blanche confesses to Stella of her elusive

attempt of trickery, “And so the soft people have got to – shimmer and glow – put a – paper lantern over the light... But I’m scared now – awf’ly scared.” The syntax of Blanche’s dialogue evokes her anxious temperament as the prominent use of hyphens and ellipses accentuates how she is afraid of losing her seductive magic. Nevertheless, the lexical field of light, ‘shimmer’ and ‘glow’ symbolizes the necessity to maintain relevance in society; to be noticed by men when under the spotlight. Although light acts as a coping mechanism for Blanche, the attempt of a paper lantern to obscure the intensity of the light demonstrates the struggle in hiding her real age. Subsequently, the fabrication of Blanche’s youthful façade threatens her chance of marital stability. When Mitch discovers Blanche’s age as, “He tears the paper lantern off the lightbulb.”, Blanche retaliates with, “I don’t tell the truth. I tell what ought to be the truth.” The admittance of Blanche’s sycophantic act of deceit is revealed as she implores to Mitch how she does not want to portray her real identity. Instead, the high modality of ‘ought’ emphasizes how she has convinced herself to create her own apocryphal narrative as a way of escaping from reality. Therefore, the audience’s sympathy towards Blanche heightens as Williams’ use of lighting and props is justified through Blanche’s confessional dialogue; portraying her as a victim who is attempting to adapt to a chauvinistic society by evading reality and substituting it with her own imagination.

Following on, the audience’s shifting reactions towards Blanche are further manipulated by Williams’ employment of auditorial devices. As the play transcends, the audience’s dismay is stricken by the revelation of Blanche’s past – tormented by death and guilt. In Scene Nine, Blanche’s marginal state of inebriation is depicted as the rapid pace of the polka music occurs, “The rapid feverish polka tune, the ‘Varsouviana’ is heard. The music is in her mind; she is drinking to escape it...”. The severity of Blanche’s crippling mental state is demonstrated to the reader through the non-diegetic sound of the feverish polka tune. The specific polka tune, ‘The Varsouviana’ is a Polish dance folk tune that marks both the death and the revelation of Allan’s homosexual identity. While Allan is the former lover of Blanche, the adjective, ‘feverish’ denotes a temperamental illness which is inherent in the trademark polka tune that is played in Blanche’s mind, implying how Blanche’s trauma of death takes a detrimental toll on her mental health.

Hence, the audience's dismay towards Blanche's encroaching insanity is marked by the end of the frantic polka tune; a reminder of her mourning past which forces her to slip into insanity.

Finally, towards the end of the play, the audience begins to pity Blanche as this is facilitated by Williams' choice of costume and auditory device. In the last scene, Blanche makes one final attempt to restore her aristocratic roots, which are such an integral part of her identity. Before plummeting to her downfall, Blanche presents herself as a woman of dignity when she elaborates on the color of her jacket, "It's Della Robbia blue. The blue of the robe in the old Madonna pictures." The choice of costume by Williams is significant. Della Robbia is known to be an Italian Renaissance sculptor. Hence, the intertextual reference from Blanche highlights her attempt to preserve her roots of high aristocracy as well as implying to the reader that she still has cultivated taste in the arts. The Madonna's blue robe, in addition, implies Blanche's final façade as a pure, virginal figure since the Madonna is a biblical allusion to Virgin Mary. Furthermore, Blanche's departure is alluded to as a classic tragedy through the employment of non-diegetic sounds. Before Blanche placidly surrenders to the Doctor, she hears the sinister toll of the bell, "Those cathedral bells – they're the only clean thing in the Quarter. Well, I'm going now. I'm ready to go." Blanche interprets the cathedral bell as 'clean' which alludes to purity, holding unattainable values of faith. On the other hand, the tolling of the bells also symbolizes death; Blanche's willing acceptance to surrender to her doom. Thus, through the representation of costumes and diegetic sound, the audience commences to feel remorse towards Blanche's tragedy.

In conclusion, Williams is effective in employing plastic theatre techniques to constantly manipulate the audience's understanding of Blanche's transformative identity in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. From suspicion to sympathy and dismay to pity, a paraphernalia of emotions is heightened by costumes, lighting, and non-diegetic sound to create an emotive play. Ultimately, Williams has envisioned a tragic story of a fading southern belle, clinging on to her last threads of hope; unable to face the truth nor communicate honestly.

Word Count: 1496

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Examiner's Scores and Comments: 20/20

Criterion A: Knowledge, understanding and interpretation 5 out of 5

- How well does the candidate demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the work or text chosen?
- To what extent does the candidate make use of knowledge and understanding of the work or text to draw conclusions in relation to the chosen topic?
- How well are ideas supported by references to the work or text in relation to the chosen topic?

This is an outstanding discussion of how reader perception of the protagonist changes throughout the course of the play. There is rich detail from the play and the evidence clearly offers key support for each point in the line of inquiry. There is a nuanced and detailed understanding of the complexity of Blanche.

Criterion B: Analysis and Evaluation: 5 out of 5

- To what extent does the candidate analyze and evaluate how the choices of language, technique and style, and broader authorial choices shape meaning in relation to the chosen topic?

An excellent analysis of the play with superb analysis of features with a close eye on how these choices shape the audience's perception of Blanche. Rich understanding of theater and dramatic elements as well

Criterion C: Focus, organization and development 5 out of 5

- How well organized, focused and developed is the presentation of ideas in the essay?
- How well are examples integrated into the essay?

Outstanding focus and clear progression of ideas throughout the paper. Clear transitions and clear topic sentences. References are well integrated. The ideas are very coherent and the argument is cogent as well.

Criterion D: Language 5 out of 5

- How clear, varied and accurate is the language?
- How appropriate is the choice of register and style? ("Register" refers, in this context, to the candidate's use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the HL essay.)

Very well written with sharp use of language and a clear academic register. Good variety of sentence structure. Good sophistication of vocabulary.

Sample Essay #2: Sylvia Plath Poetry (1965)

“Eating Men Like Air”

How and to what extent does Sylvia Plath utilize symbols of the body, death and liberation to convey the struggles of females to find their identity in a patriarchal society?

HL Essay

Word Count: 1459

How and to what extent does **Sylvia Plath** utilize **symbols** of the body, death and liberation to convey **the struggles of females to find their identity in a patriarchal society**?

Sylvia Plath's body of work epitomizes confessional poetry, wherein the tapestry of her verses intricately weaves together disparate realities and symbolic motifs wherein fragments of her own existence find poignant reflection. With broken male figures and the strains of newfound motherhood as recurrent **motifs**, her verses embrace **womanhood** in its most unadulterated essence. Given their confessional tenor, these poems serve as portals into the very fabric of Plath's life, while simultaneously offering a broader vista into the experiences of women. Through recurring **symbols like corporeal forms and chromatic hues, she forges a profound thematic tapestry of death and rebirth**, poetically echoing the dark and critical sentiments that women innately possess in a **male-dominated sphere**.

Plath utilizes her body as a **symbol** to convey **male dominance and the disempowerment and objectification of females**. In a world where women are valued for their curves and skin, Plath conversely uses bodies as **symbols** of purity and change. This is evident in "Ariel", where Plath's body is connected to that of her horse. The line "**How one we grow**" indicates a change, a unity, between women and the reckless (5). The horse, often associated with male power, is thus subverted to connect to women and their desire for freedom. **Plath**, like other women, feels restrained by the confines of gender norms that reduce women to simple accessories. **Plath's** poetry often criticized that rather than being valued for who they are as a people, women are bodies, empty vessels. This reduction causes women to lose their identity which leads to an unstable psyche, where the lack of identity leads to chaos and even disintegration. As Ariel carries her farther into the forbidden forest, **the speaker's** unity with Ariel is representative of death. This is highlighted when she is "**suicidal, at one with the drive**", as Ariel takes her away to her end (29). The **theme** is further reinforced by the "nigger-eye berries" she tastes (10-11). **Black symbolizes** suicide, as the **diction** creates a sense of danger and harm. This continues by the "**black sweet blood mouthfuls**" meaning that the berries she just ate are deadly, stripping her of life - represented by blood. killing her body (13). The paired **symbols** of

color and body, tied with the gory **imagery**, highlight the speaker's suicidal wish. Suicide stems from women's inability to be independent, as the system prevents them from gaining any masculine traits such as courage, bravery, or resilience. This is reinforced by **the speaker** succumbing to the "**god's lioness**", a phrase emphasizing Ariel's fearlessness; a quality **Plath** does not have, nor can own, as an example of women falling under the leadership of those with stronger characters like men (4).

This **motif** of emptiness and powerlessness as well the lack of female identity is further displayed in "Tulips" where Plath **symbolizes** her body as "**a pebble**" (15). Pebbles, unlike rocks, are small, tiny, and smooth; carried by rivers, and swayed by motion's desires. Like pebbles, women are meant to be small and fragile, unable to change the currents of men's desires, surrendering to them as that is the expectation. By equating herself to a pebble, **the speaker** reinforces the deadliness of being controlled. **The speaker** is "**nobody**", "**scared and bare**" to the hands of doctors, signifying she is empty, dead like a corpse as the society she lives in slowly kills her (5; 25). The **internal rhyme** of "**scared and bare**" helps to emphasize the connection between vulnerability and fear. Similarly, nature and color are tied to form a negative **symbol** in "Tulips" where **Plath** connects red and tulips as an evil entity. Although **the speaker** does not consume these tulips, their presence sends "**a dozen red lead sinkers round [her] neck**" in a similar fashion to the berries in "Ariel" which cast **dark hooks**" (42: 11-12). In both, **color** is used to emphasize nature's deadly qualities. The berries control and hurt her through "**hooks**", whilst the tulips use "**sinkers**" to weigh **the speaker** down and hurt her. Red and black are often representative of death and anger, both emotions Plath feels as she is subject to **rules by the patriarchal society women live in**.

The desire to break free of patriarchy and male dominance is further explored in "Lady Lazarus" in which Plath dies, again and again, living multiple lives. Lazarus **symbolizes** her ability to come back to life, a clear **allusion** to the Biblical figure who was raised from the dead. This **symbol** brings another layer to the theme of death to women. Women are not only valued for their bodies, but those bodies lack an identity. This creates a suicidal yearning for death as noted in "Ariel", yet once that is achieved, women come back and are subject to further subjugation. In "Lady Lazarus", each of Plath's suicides end

the life of her body, yet she comes back "the same, identical woman", meaning her body is a simple vessel, holding the same emptiness, again and again (34). When she dies, she comes back, condemned to the same fate, regardless of ten years passing. This emphasizes that gender norms have not changed, but rather worsened. An example to depict this is Plath's third life, where she returns to be showcased to "the peanut-crunching crowd", as the men "shove in to see" her become bare, as if her body's purity is a show (Line 26-27). This colloquial phrase connected to the motif of voyeurism and the male gaze and the clear objectification of women. Her purity is thus displayed to men to symbolize her rebirth as her psyche changes from suicidal to peaceful.

To overcome these limitations, Plath's poetry uses powerful symbols of female empowerment and even liberation. The societal pressures on women begin to eat up Plath, as women feel powerless.. What begins as a suicidal wish, morphs into liberation. In "Ariel", as Plath's body becomes tied to the horse, she succumbs to its suicidal nature until she unpeels, "white", letting go of the "dead hands, dead stringencies", or societal pressures to become the woman they want her to be (19; 21). Her body peeling symbolizes her change into purity, as Plath realizes she can let go of these norms and become a woman under her own conditions, purely herself. Metaphorically, rebirth is equal to liberation from societal rules, as the speaker understands she will never follow them, so she chooses to make her own. The theme of rebirth is also in "Tulips", stating "I am a nun now, I have never been so pure" as society has "swabbed [her] clear of [her] loving association", meaning that she has been stripped by these rules so frequently, her innermost layer is pure as it represents the piece of her identity that has not been subjugated or destroyed by the male-dominated world (28; 24). The allusion to a "nun" here, with clear religious connotation, also shows the speaker's rejection of all things male. This rebirth is power for Plath, just as it is for other women, who use their purest self to create permanent change. In addition, this sentiment is displayed in "Lady Lazarus" where Plath warns men, "Beware. Beware." as she "rise[s] with [her] red hair" to "eat men like air" (80-81; 83-84). These symbolic images of the female rising from the ashes and metaphorically eating men as easily as a person breathes helps to underscore the tone of female strength, anger and empowerment. Red, although tied to the theme of death

through blood, changes and begins to **symbolize** courage and confidence. Purity is white, power is red, and together, these **colors** combine to form pink, the epitomized color **representation of femininity**. Society has made Plath's femininity – her personality, her body - a **symbol** of inferiority, yet these very attributes gave her power, and her new hair gave her the courage to be **a woman of power, defying the societal role she has been given**.

Across her poetry, **Sylvia Plath** has been able to create a voice for women, showcasing the deepest thoughts held by those who are often told to remain silent. Through the **symbols** of bodies and color, the **themes** of death and rebirth are developed to signify the obstacles women face. Nature, representative of society, is twisted and dark, as men belittle her and make her an accessory. Along with **imagery** and **diction**, **Plath** uncovers the hidden feelings of suicide that trouble women after being **subjugated and reduced to empty bodies, whose identity's value is worthless**. **Plath** ends this by revealing the most powerful weapon women own: their femininity. Her poetry offers readers a vision of how **women can empower themselves, create change and seek equality**. Although more work needs to be done, Plath's poetry is a window into the history of women, and the undeniable future in which women will **"eat men like air"**.

Word Count: 1459

Works Cited

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Examiner's Scores and Comments: 19/20 7

Criterion A: Knowledge, understanding and interpretation 5 out of 5

- How well does the candidate demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the work or text chosen?
- To what extent does the candidate make use of knowledge and understanding of the work or text to draw conclusions in relation to the chosen topic?
- How well are ideas supported by references to the work or text in relation to the chosen topic?

A very strong literary focus and a clear line of inquiry that is clearly explored. The interpretation of Plath's work shows a very strong understanding. Excellent coverage of several poems showing a strong command of Plath's work

Criterion B: Analysis and Evaluation: 4 out of 5

- To what extent does the candidate analyze and evaluate how the choices of language, technique and style, and broader authorial choices shape meaning in relation to the chosen topic?

The analysis is clear and shows some insight. There could be more nuance in the discussion, so top score on this criterion was not achieved.

Criterion C: Focus, organization and development 5 out of 5

- How well organized, focused and developed is the presentation of ideas in the essay?
- How well are examples integrated into the essay?

A good focused argument with a clear eye on the use of symbols and how they are used to show female identity. Good focused topic sentences and a clear focused and cogent argument. Excellent integration of quotations.

Criterion D: Language 5 out of 5

- How clear, varied and accurate is the language?
- How appropriate is the choice of register and style? ("Register" refers, in this context, to the candidate's use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the HL essay.)

Excellent writing with advanced vocabulary and a well written paper. Highly academic and sophisticated.

Sample Essay #3: Banksy Artwork

Graffiti vs. Greed

How does Banksy use graffiti to subvert the role of capitalism in art culture?

HL Essay IB Language and Literature

Word Count: 1392

How does Banksy use graffiti to subvert the role of capitalism in art culture?

Banksy is a notable figure in the modern urban art scene, anonymously leaving his mark globally since around the turn of the century, (Ellsworth-Jones). Despite his anonymity, his stencils are globally recognised and provoke widespread reactions. Ever since ancient cave paintings until following years, street art is a mode of expression, typically for **opposition or rebellion**. Finally, graffiti reemerged in the 1960s in Philadelphia, (Wall). Capitalism quantifies the value of artworks and measures artistic expression by its social value. Banksy's socially-minded approach in the form of contentious graffiti **challenges the role of capitalism on the ownership and prestige in today's art culture** through **juxtaposition, intertextuality, visual metaphors** and reinterpretations of artworks.



Figure 1: *This'll look nice when it's framed* (2010)

The **non-excludability of graffiti** is used to undermine the institutionalization of art through striking **juxtaposition** in the text and image. *This'll look nice when it's framed* in Figure 1, appeared on Valencia Street in San Francisco in 2010, displaying a black and white stencil of a **boy beside a spray painted message "This'll Look Nice When It's Framed"** in red, (Farooq). The text refers to how currently the value of art is determined by authorities of powerful statuses instead of the public. The **word choice** of "**nice**" is vague and subjective, indicating the unreliability of authorities such as galleries and critics to

determine the value of artworks. Moreover, the informal register, abbreviating “This’ll” and “it’s” and the over-simplified “nice”, taunts the formal environment of art institutions. The disorganized vibrant red text is surrounded by splatters of red paint, reminiscent of blood. The shocking and gruesome image may suggest the detriment of art culture under capitalism. The messy red font is juxtaposed with the neat stenciled boy. The boy is covered in black, only exposing his expression. The emphasized dissatisfaction on the boy’s face is supported by his closed body language, his apprehensive hands brought together. The use of a young boy appeals to the public’s pathos, evoking guilt. This is because the expected naivete of children is subverted by the mature criticisms of capitalism. The contrast of the disorderly text in an informal register and the clean design of the displeased boy undermines the limited perspective of “art” being confined within a frame. Concurrently, graffiti as a form of expression directly contradicts the text. The use of in situ, on the exterior of a building wall, unable to be framed ironically did not make the artwork less valuable, if not, its accessibility allowed greater discussions and reaction to the artwork, (Farooq). Furthermore, the vibrant red large text and the stenciled boy on a public wall, attracts attention. Banksy’s criticisms of the privatization of art reaches a larger audience in a way private institutions are unable to. The bluntness of Banksy’s graffiti and the bold contrasts in text, image and color available to a non-excludable public mocks the formal institutionalization of artworks.



Figure 2: *Portrait of Basquiat being welcomed by the Metropolitan Police* (2017)

Banksy's commentary about how art institutions hypocritically treat street art is shown through intertextuality. In 2017 a *Portrait of Basquiat being welcomed by the Metropolitan Police* was spray painted outside the walls of the Barbican in London prior to the opening of a retrospective exhibition of Jean-Michel Basquiat taking place inside, (Morby). In Figure 2, a reinterpretation of Basquiat's 1982 *Boy and Dog in a Johnnypump* in which the main figures of an abstract, vibrantly colorful man and a dog is copied from the original, (Indrisek). Intertextuality is reliant on the knowledge of Basquiat's roots in urban art, having started small in the streets of New York to his rise to global prominence throughout his short career, (Gray) (Carrigan). Banksy's signature stencils of two police officers, a motif in Banksy's works, positioned at either side of Basquiat's figure "welcoming" him by searching and interrogating him. Banksy's precise graffiti style is redolent of the restriction and intolerance of police officers towards graffiti. This emphasizes Basquiat's polychromatic unrestrained forms, suggesting the suppression of street art. Basquiat's free lines and colorful forms juxtaposes with Banksy's neat black and white stencils. The combination of contrasting styles further highlights the reverence Basquiat is receiving when his artwork is framed and curated unlike his and Banksy's start on the street. Banksy powerfully uses intertextuality in situ to accentuate the situational irony and the hypocrisy of art culture.



Figure 3: *Graffiti Removal* (2008)

The combination of varied art styles in Banksy's street art allows layered interpretations of the function and value of graffiti within art culture. *Graffiti Removal* in Figure 3 illustrates the stencil of a British council worker jet spraying 'graffiti' off a wall, ("Graffiti Removal by..."). Although anomalous to Banksy's black and white stencils of people, the flamboyant orange high visibility vests is a clear symbol for British council workers. The 'graffiti' is executed in a cave painting style, in a faint and muddy color scheme mimicking the weaker pigmented and rudimentary art tools. The outlined, stenciled and brightly-coloured British council worker stylistically contrasts with the muted and subdued cave painting style. The juxtaposition of the two styles, the stencil art and the cave paintings, fundamentally one and the same, emphasizes the ironic banning of one and the reverence of the other. The allusion and the use of cave paintings as a visual metaphor for another form of urban art is a critique of government intervention and the censorship of art. The preposterous act of cleaning off the cave painting clearly transmits the importance of graffiti, devoid of motivations of profitability and social connections, to passersby. Banksy demonstrates that street art is an unfiltered record of our present in which voices are not excluded for the future to leave behind. The mix of art styles are juxtaposed yet are also visual metaphors, suggesting similarities. Banksy indicates the irony of the distinction between the art styles by historical significance to determine the value of art by established capitalist systems within the creative industry.



Figure 4: *Show me the Monet* (2005)

Anti-establishment and the ruin caused by consumerism within art culture is conveyed through the reinterpretation of a classic artwork. At Banksy's own exhibition *Crude Oils: A Gallery of Re-mixed Masterpieces, Vandalism and Vermin* in 2005, among other quintessential artworks, he modified Claude Monet's iconic Japanese bridge paintings. *Show Me the Monet* is an unconventional approach to graffiti unlike Banksy's stencils in public spaces, ("When Banksy 'Remixed'..."). Furthermore, *Show me the Monet* is uncharacteristic in Banksy's body of work due to the bright colors, lack of outlines and lack of negative spaces. In Figure 4, the artwork is executed in oil paint in Monet's impressionist style. Intertextuality is vital in interpreting the addition of semiotics. Monet's progressive approach of revealing the flaws in his sublime landscapes aligns itself with the radical and socially-minded nature of street art. Banksy "vandalized" Monet's painting to express the flaws in the art industry. The use of symbols, the cone and the two upturned shopping carts, are universally recognised and associated with consumers and businesses. The stark color contrast of the opposite vibrant reddish orange cone and shopping cart parts with the green of nature emphasizes the unnatural and polluting integration of the two. The gold framing of this artwork suggests that the big businesses are responsible for the environmental damage and the commodification of art. This

subverts the preconception that graffiti artists are the ones vandalizing and harming the planet, (“BANKSY | SHOW ME...”). The title itself, a play on words, substituting “money” with “Monet”, alludes to money and its power in the art industry. Banksy undermines the art industry by demonstrating the damage produced by art establishments adding symbols of pollution to an artwork greatly praised and framed by said institutions.

Banksy confronts the value of graffiti art as he condemns the commodification of art in capitalist systems and promotes its democratization for viewers and creators. To evoke a change in the art industry, Banksy juxtaposes art styles, uses in situ and textual support to highlight the marginalization of graffiti. He uses allusions, intertextuality, visual metaphors and semiotics to indicate the irony and hypocrisy of how art is evaluated by established art institutions. Banksy's bold criticisms and shocking visuals, offers a socially-minded perspective on the art industry evoking interest and critical questioning of how art is disseminated. Furthermore, due to Banksy's anonymity, fame and money do not interfere in his ability to create art and convey messages. The uncensored freedom of expression of street art permits Banksy to use it as a tool to urge viewers to reevaluate the capitalistic culture surrounding art.

Word Count: 1392

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Examiner's Scores and Comments: 18/20

Criterion A: Knowledge, understanding and interpretation **5 out of 5**

- How well does the candidate demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the work or text chosen?
- To what extent does the candidate make use of knowledge and understanding of the work or text to draw conclusions in relation to the chosen topic?
- How well are ideas supported by references to the work or text in relation to the chosen topic?

Very good exploration of Banksy's work with a clear eye on the commercialization of art. The references to the works were numerous with clear discussion. Excellent discussion of the implications of the art and its purpose.

Criterion B: Analysis and Evaluation: **5 out of 5**

- To what extent does the candidate analyze and evaluate how the choices of language, technique and style, and broader authorial choices shape meaning in relation to the chosen topic?

Outstanding analysis with very good insight into the authorial choices and how these shape meaning. Excellent range of features with very detailed discussion pertaining to the line of inquiry.

Criterion C: Focus, organization and development **4 out of 5**

- How well organized, focused and developed is the presentation of ideas in the essay?
- How well are examples integrated into the essay?

Good overall focus in the line of inquiry. At times it was less clear in terms of the paragraphing and how these help to support an overall argument.

Criterion D: Language **4 out of 5**

- How clear, varied and accurate is the language?
- How appropriate is the choice of register and style? ("Register" refers, in this context, to the candidate's use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the HL essay.)

Clear academic register. At times, the language or word choice seemed like the writer was trying too hard to be sophisticated. Some small errors with word usage. 4 is the best fit here.

Sample Essay #4: *Parasite* by Bong Joon Ho (2019)

Savage Inequalities

How does Bong Joon Ho use cinematic elements in his feature film *Parasite* to convey the stark class divisions that exist in South Korean Society.

HL Essay

Word Count: 1489

How does **Bong Joon Ho** use **cinematic elements** in his feature film *Parasite* to convey the **stark class divisions that exist in South Korean Society**.

In the critically acclaimed film *Parasite*, helmed by the visionary director **Bong Joon-ho**, a plethora of artistic techniques capture and accentuate the stark disparities between social classes. The **narrative** centers around the relentless pursuit of upward mobility by a destitute family, who cunningly maneuver their way into affluent employment at all costs. This gripping thriller revolves around the intricate interplay between two contrasting families: the poverty-stricken Kims and the opulent Parks. Throughout the film, viewers are enraptured by the mesmerizing exploration of **social stratification in Korean society**. **Bong Joon-ho** masterfully employs **dynamic camera movements, meticulously crafted mise-en-scene, and seamless editing** to vividly portray the **palpable dichotomy that exists between these distinct social strata**.

Bong Joon Ho's camera movement and camera angle serve as a visual narrator, skillfully guiding the viewer's perspective throughout a scene. In the hands of directors like **Bong Joon-ho**, **camera movements** become a powerful storytelling tool, infusing their cinematic creations with a professional and captivating quality. **In Figure 1**, we see the masterful utilization of a **low angle** as it frames **the mother figure within the Kim family knitting on the ground while her daughter lays in the fetal position**. The **body language, mise en scene and camera angle** work together to communicate a message about the Kim family's social status. With her lack of a job and impoverished status, the deliberate choice of a **low angle**, wherein the camera tilts downward, astutely **symbolizes** her diminished social and economic standing. Through this intentional **visual composition**, **Bong Joon-ho** adeptly accentuates **the stark disparity between her and the rest of society**.



Figure 1 (2:01)



Figure 2: (21:32)

Conversely, the deliberate choice of a **high camera angle** to depict the matriarch of the affluent Park family as seen in **Figure 2** fosters a profound sense of elevation, visually conveying her elevated status in both physical and societal realms. As the **camera** gazes up towards her protectively holding her delicate lap dog, a clear **symbol** of opulent wealth in itself, the audience is made acutely aware of the **prevailing hierarchy within Korean society**, wherein she occupies a position of indisputable superiority vis-à-vis the Kim family. Through these **contrasting camera angles**, **Bong Joon-ho** thus aptly captures the **nuanced dynamics of social class divisions**, forging a palpable visual contrast between the

privileged elite and the marginalized underclass. The judicious use of a **high angle** serves as a **visual metaphor**, effectively **symbolizing** the verticality of social hierarchies, highlighting the yawning chasm between the affluent and the impoverished. The **framing** of the Park family frequently employs upward tilts, as **Bong Joon Ho** positions the camera to gaze up at them, effectively conveying their **commanding power and elevated status**. It becomes evident that wealth bestows individuals with a multitude of opportunities, thus engendering a societal reverence that results in being looked up to. Conversely, the Kim family finds themselves subjected to a **condescending gaze, symbolized** by the **downward camera angles**. This artistic choice poignantly illustrates how **those belonging to lower economic classes are often regarded as lesser individuals**.



Figure 3 (14:24)

Bong Joon Ho's meticulous arrangement of **mise-en-scene** further contributes to the **tangible separation between these disparate social strata**, thereby emphasizing their stark differences. **Mise-en-scene**, defined as the deliberate arrangement of scenery and stage properties, becomes a strategic tool harnessed by **Bong Joon-ho** to effectively communicate **the contrasting social classes** present within the film. The artistic choice of deliberate division is particularly pronounced in **Figure 3** where a subtle visual separation is created by **the presence of a glass barrier**. Within this composition, **the mother of the Park family is positioned on one side of the glass, while Ki-woo Kim is situated on the other**. We also see a subtle **line of symmetry** that divides the frame and places **Ki-Woo and**

the housekeeper on the left with the Park matriarch on the right to emphasize the social divide. The **positioning and blocking** for the **characters** in **Figure 3** also helps to underscore a compelling dynamic among them. **The mother of the Park family is depicted asleep, while the son of the Kim family patiently awaits her attention, and an employee awakens the mother from her slumber.** The mother of the Park family is shown in a state of relaxation, oblivious to her duty of conducting a job interview with the son of the Kim family. This striking **contrast** in **positioning and body language** underscores how individuals of a higher social class possess the luxury of leisure and leisurely pursuits, while those from the lower class are constantly engaged in laborious work. The scene accentuates **the dichotomy of social class**, where the Parks enjoy the privilege of idleness while the Kims tirelessly toil. In this context, the slumbering Park mother not only symbolizes her lack of employment, but also serves as a **representation** of her detachment from the struggles and responsibilities that burden the Kim family. Additionally, the disparity in the availability of resources is exemplified through the Park family's ownership of a yard, a luxury unattainable to the Kims due to its exorbitant cost. By **juxtaposing** her leisurely repose with the Kims' diligent efforts, **Bong Joon Ho** effectively portrays **the discrepancy between their respective social classes.**



Figure 4 (35:54)

Bong Joon Ho's masterful **mise en scene** is also seen In **Figure 4** as yet another visual division manifests between the mother of the Park family and the daughter from the Kim family. This division is **symbolically** represented by **the wall positioned between them**, reinforcing their disparate social statuses. Throughout this particular scene, the two **characters** do not overlap, emphasizing the unbridgeable gap that exists between their respective social classes. While sharing the same physical space on a daily basis, the notion of belonging to opposite social classes remains inconceivable within their contrasting realities. These poignant examples of economic division, expertly conveyed through the artful use of **mise-en-scene**, serve to reinforce **the prevailing themes of social and economic inequality** within the film. **Boon Joon Ho** strategically directs the audience's attention to these specific scenes, aiming to underscore the stark contrast between the leisurely lifestyles enjoyed by the upper class and the relentless toil endured by the working class.



Figure 5 (1:54:50)



Figure 6: (1:54:58)

Lastly, Bong Joon-ho's adept utilization of editing techniques and camera work underscore the stark disparity between social classes in *Parasite*. Throughout the film, there are numerous instances where the editor employs rapid cuts, fragmenting the scenes into swift, dynamic sequences, thereby heightening the palpable tension within the film. One particularly striking example unfolds at a party where the Park family's son faints, and the Kim family's daughter is tragically stabbed. Within this climactic scene, an individual who has spent their entire life confined within a sheltered bunker meets their demise, collapsing onto a set of car keys. As the father of the Park family attempts to retrieve the keys from beneath the lifeless body, he instinctively covers his nose, repulsed by the pungent odor as seen in Figure 5. This motif of smell to show the disgust those in the upper classes feel for the less privileged runs throughout *Parasite*. This simple gesture triggers a cascade of flashbacks for the father of the Kim family, reminding him of the discrimination and contempt he and his family have endured at the hands of the wealthy elite. The editing deftly transitions back and forth from a close-up of Mr. Park to a close-up of Mr. Kim (Figure 6), meticulously capturing their facial expressions in intricate detail. This strategic use of editing serves to juxtapose the contrasting experiences of the impoverished and affluent classes within the film, highlighting their divergent realities.

This **rapid cross cutting of close-up shots** helps to **foreshadow** Mr. Kim's breakdown and his profound sense of injustice resulting from the unjust treatment he and his family have endured as members of the lower social and economic class. The Park family, with their abundant resources, enjoys the privileges of good hygiene, a sprawling garden, and hired employees. In stark **contrast**, the Kim family's humble abode was ravaged by a storm, forcing them to spend a night in a gymnasium without access to basic amenities such as a shower. This contrast further underscores **the harsh discrepancy in treatment based solely on the possession of wealth.**

In conclusion, **Bong Joon-ho** employs various **film techniques** beyond mere dialogue to accentuate **the disparities between social classes** depicted in "Parasite." Through **deft camera movements, meticulous mise-en-scene, and artful editing**, the director skillfully communicates the profound differences in economic status experienced by the two families. The analysis conducted throughout this essay has shed light on how the camera effectively captures these disparities through deliberate movement, how meticulously framed shots maintain a distinct separation between the families, and how editing techniques aid in facilitating the audience's comprehension of the underlying motivations.

Word Count: 1489

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Examiner's Scores and Comments: 17/20

Criterion A: Knowledge, understanding and interpretation 4 out of 5

- How well does the candidate demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the work or text chosen?
- To what extent does the candidate make use of knowledge and understanding of the work or text to draw conclusions in relation to the chosen topic?
- How well are ideas supported by references to the work or text in relation to the chosen topic?

A clear line of inquiry with good discussion of the film. The moment in the film helped to support the line of inquiry. The overall understanding was very good but more elevated discussion of implications and nuances needed for higher bands.

Criterion B: Analysis and Evaluation: 4 out of 5

- To what extent does the candidate analyze and evaluate how the choices of language, technique and style, and broader authorial choices shape meaning in relation to the chosen topic?

Very good analysis of cinematic features and how they shape meaning. More depth of discussion needed for the top band. Good range of features but analysis sometimes a bit obvious.

Criterion C: Focus, organization and development 5 out of 5

- How well organized, focused and developed is the presentation of ideas in the essay?
- How well are examples integrated into the essay?

Good overall structure with a clear focus and clear supporting ideas. Good progression of ideas with a cogent argument.

Criterion D: Language 4 out of 5

- How clear, varied and accurate is the language?
- How appropriate is the choice of register and style? ("Register" refers, in this context, to the candidate's use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the HL essay.)

Good writing with clear use of language. The vocabulary could be more elevated in places to reach the top band.

Sample Essay #5: *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood

Rules and their Followers

How does Margaret Atwood demonstrate the logic of appropriateness manifesting itself in a totalitarian state through the character of Aunt Lydia in her novel, “The Handmaid’s Tale”?

Language and Literature Higher Level Essay

Word count: 1500 words

How does Margaret Atwood demonstrate the logic of appropriateness manifesting itself in a totalitarian state through the character of Aunt Lydia in her novel, “The Handmaid’s Tale”?

Margaret Atwood’s speculative novel, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1986), constructs the state of Gilead to demonstrate how totalitarian states weaponise the ‘logic of appropriateness’ to justify their suppression of individual reason. Atwood demonstrates that tyrannical enforcers emphasize the importance of ‘appropriateness’ so as to prioritize rule-driven behavior over morality. Totalitarian states are therefore able to manufacture uniformity of human behavior, by certifying that institutional rules take precedence over individual reason. This view is partially driven by Atwood’s context – a feminist voice retaliating against the rise of conservative Reaganism in the 1980s. Atwood utilizes the character of Aunt Lydia – a living embodiment of Gilead’s propaganda – to demonstrate this subconscious enforcement of the ‘logic of appropriateness’, and how such rules must be anchored in the identities of the enforcers. Specifically, Lydia’s unique speech patterns, emotionally manipulative manner and personal leadership qualities aptly present how the ‘logic of appropriateness’ manifests itself within a totalitarian state.

The fundamental importance of ‘appropriateness’ over individual reason is first demonstrated through Aunt Lydia’s unique diction patterns and grammatical structures, influencing the Handmaids into uniform adherence to Gilead’s punitive rules. Offred observes Aunt Lydia as someone “in love with either/or” (Atwood, 1986, p. 18), noting the frequent use of conjunctions in her speech. Aunt Lydia reminds her subjects that having a separate room is “not a prison but a privilege,” (Atwood, 1986, p. 18) and that both “freedom to and freedom from” (Atwood, 1986, p. 34) exists. Atwood’s use of conjunctions in Aunt Lydia’s speech highlights the correspondence between both elements, but places emphatic weight on the latter, advocating it as the preferable alternative. Through reframing the Handmaids’ perception of their situation, obligations and expectations within this totalitarian state appear rightful, facilitating the ‘logic of appropriateness’.

The distinct syntax of Aunt Lydia’s dialogue also identifies how rule-driven behavior manifests itself within Gilead. Atwood frequently uses declarative sentences within Aunt

Lydia's discourse, "He did not make you that way. He made you different. It's up to you to set the boundaries. Later you will be thanked." (Atwood, 1986, p. 55). The authoritative tone of these claims is elevated through the use of truncated sentences, compelling her subordinates to act in accordance with these expectations. In addition, the repetition of the personal pronoun "you", identifies how Aunt Lydia's use of a direct address when speaking to a wider audience, assists in convincing members of Gilead to fulfill the obligations expected of them. This is achieved through the intimacy Aunt Lydia fosters with her audience through directly speaking to them, making the rules of Gilead appear legitimate and subsequently followed. This manifestation of rule-driven behavior is further supported through Atwood's use of anastrophe, "Ordinary, is what you are used to," (Atwood, 1986, p. 43) and "For the generations that come after, it will be so much better," (Atwood, 1986, p. 171), Atwood's choice to amend Aunt Lydia's dialect into an unusual grammatical word order makes her remarks appear profound and wise. This establishes credibility for both Aunt Lydia as a character and the embedded rules of Gilead, appealing to logos of the audience she is speaking to.

Beyond distinct speech patterns, Atwood uses Aunt Lydia's emotionally manipulative manner to reinforce the importance totalitarian states place on 'appropriateness' rather than individual morality. Offred references Aunt Lydia's voice as "pious" (Atwood, 1986, p. 124), "condescending" (Atwood, 1986, p. 124) and containing "smug authority" (Atwood, 1986, p. 128). These adjectives label Aunt Lydia as a prominent figure, with the ability to exert influence, through her patronizing manner. Aunt Lydia's "pious" tone which Atwood refers to reflects her criticism of religious fundamentalism - demonstrating how religion can be weaponized within a totalitarian regime, to uphold the utmost power over individual rights. This manifestation of Aunt Lydia's innate character is reinforced through Offred ruminating upon Aunt Lydia's address, "She is rich in pauses, which she savors in her mouth." (Atwood, 1986, p. 124). This certifies the 'logic of appropriateness', whereby the rules of this institution are both followed and exempt from justification, due to being imposed by a superior being who wields her supremacy with great satisfaction.

The 'logic of appropriateness' is also recognised through another part of Aunt Lydia's manner, her emotive disposition in relation to life in a pre-Gileadean society. When alluding to recreational sex Aunt Lydia's voice "tremble with indignation," (Atwood, 1986, p. 124). Atwood's use of an aggrieved tone illustrates Aunt Lydia's judgment upon the function of sex in society, by denouncing it in its entirety, unless for the purpose of procreation. The resentment entrenched in her manner facilitates the 'logic of appropriateness', whereby the foundations of Gilead appear appropriate, as they provide an alternative to this seemingly desolate past. Aunt Lydia's manner on this matter reverberates through society, evident through the repeated references to the opening biblical epithet (Genesis, 30:1), "Give me children, or else I die," (Atwood, 1986, p. 71) (Atwood, 1986, p. 99). Aunt Lydia's emotive manner has led to this uncritical societal acceptance of the value of procreation, identifying how rules within this institution are followed as they appear rightful and legitimate.

This emotive manner is encountered again when Aunt Lydia draws parallels between seeing a woman and rape through the metaphor, "To be seen - to be seen - is to be - her voice trembled - penetrated." (Atwood, 1986, p. 39). Atwood's authorial choice of using em dashes implies that Aunt Lydia may be stammering or taking pauses during her delivery. This stresses the matter to be of grave concern which works to enforce the practices within Gilead. This is demonstrated through the way the Handmaids present themselves in the public sphere, "She stands in silence, head down." (Atwood, 1986, p. 38). This combination of visual and auditory imagery certifies how Aunt Lydia's emotive manner coerces the Handmaids through fear to believe that only "a scrap of face, my chin and part of my mouth," (Atwood, 1986, p. 38) is permissible to be seen. Yet, the Handmaids are forced to partake in habitual sexual intercourse regardless of their public conduct, a contradiction to Aunt Lydia's directive of subservience. Whilst appearing incongruous to one's individual reason, Aunt Lydia's apprehensive manner warrants the embedded procedures of Gilead as appropriate. This compels individuals to abide by Gileadean principles rather than follow their individual reason, credited to Aunt Lydia's character.

Finally, Atwood illustrates how Aunt Lydia's personal qualities assist in enforcing the 'logic of appropriateness' on subordinates. Physically, Aunt Lydia is not a second-degree relative to any of the Handmaids, although her role as a matriarch is persistent. Yet, Atwood purposefully grants her this endearing title, "Aunt" due to the sense of familiarity it evokes. This validates the 'logic of appropriateness', whereby the rules of this institution are preserved, owing to the sense of trust incited by her physical title. The epilogue confirms this authorial choice, whereby the names of all matriarchs were "derived from commercial products available to women in the immediate pre-Gilead period, and thus familiar and reassuring," (Atwood, 1986, p. 321). Accordingly, the logic of rule-driven behavior manifests itself in response to the sense of trust insinuated by Aunt Lydia's name, a distinguishing physical quality of character.

Aunt Lydia's social qualities, particularly her leadership also perpetrate the importance of rule-driven behavior within a totalitarian state. The subjugating metaphor Offred uses when describing a fellow handmaid, "one of Aunt Lydia's pets," (Atwood, 1986, p. 37) iterates how Aunt Lydia's leadership approach involves making the Handmaids subordinate to herself. This power imbalance within her social interactions is further acknowledged when Offred recognises "We are hers to define." (Atwood, 1986, p. 124). The use of the personal pronoun, "we" has connotations of inclusivity, which is preceded by "hers", implying possession and power. Therefore, Atwood establishes a dichotomy between the Handmaids as a collective and Aunt Lydia's solitary power. This demonstrates the 'logic of appropriateness' manifesting itself within this totalitarian state, through Aunt Lydia's social influence, centered around dominion and control. Her autocratic reign on the Handmaids results in the automatic following of rules, as their position of subjugation offers no other alternative.

A final quality of Aunt Lydia's character that compels the Handmaids to accept the rulings of Gilead is her cautionary demeanor. Offred recalls her hitting their "backs or feet or bums or arms lightly, just a flick, a tap," (Atwood, 1986, p. 204). Atwood's use of polysyndeton demonstrates Aunt Lydia's perception that each part of the body is of equal insignificance through their separation by use of a conjunction, denoting her hostility.

Furthermore, the repetition of “or” in close succession also indicates the frequency in which these undertakings occur. Yet, the lexical field of fragility that follows through the adverb “lightly” and the verbs “flick and tap” pacifies her aggressive nature. These qualities of Aunt Lydia’s character serve as a warning to the Handmaids, through implying that retributive punishment is feasible. Accordingly, the qualities which make up Aunt Lydia’s character demonstrate how action in Gilead is driven by rules of expected behavior, as opposed to reason.

To conclude, Atwood’s exploration of rule-driven behavior within *The Handmaids Tale* demonstrates how the ‘logic of appropriateness’ manifests itself within a totalitarian state. This is achieved through the means of Aunt Lydia’s character, particularly her speech, manner and personal qualities which convey how the expected rules of an institution become socially embedded through submission. The combination of these constituents alongside her enforcing role within Gilead, demonstrates how this logic of rule-driver behavior is at the core of any totalitarian state. In this way, Atwood relates the human experience as one in which institutions can suppress individual reason.

Examiner's Scores and Comments: 18/20

Criterion A: Knowledge, understanding and interpretation 4 out of 5

- How well does the candidate demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the work or text chosen?
- To what extent does the candidate make use of knowledge and understanding of the work or text to draw conclusions in relation to the chosen topic?
- How well are ideas supported by references to the work or text in relation to the chosen topic?

Very good understanding of the novel with a very good discussion of the character. Very good understanding of the implications of the novel.

Criterion B: Analysis and Evaluation: 4 out of 5

- To what extent does the candidate analyze and evaluate how the choices of language, technique and style, and broader authorial choices shape meaning in relation to the chosen topic?

Very good analysis of features and how they shape meaning. Some insight but more nuanced analysis needed for higher bands.

Criterion C: Focus, organization and development 5 out of 5

- How well organized, focused and developed is the presentation of ideas in the essay?
- How well are examples integrated into the essay?

Good focused argument in the line of inquiry and nice focus on a character and how they show the "logic of appropriateness"

Criterion D: Language 5 out of 5

- How clear, varied and accurate is the language?
- How appropriate is the choice of register and style? ("Register" refers, in this context, to the candidate's use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the HL essay.)

Excellent use of language with clear register and an appropriate level of vocabulary. A joy to read.

THE HL ESSAY STEP BY STEP

Use this resource after you have finished reading over this guide. Make a copy of [this google doc](#) and paste into a Google Doc. Work through each step and try to build your best HL Essay. Each step is bookmarked to take you to that section.

Step One: [Choosing your Text](#)

Take some time to complete these charts for YOUR course and YOUR chosen texts. This will greatly help you arrive at a solid topic for your HL essay!

Sample Menu of Texts Studied			

Global Issues and technical aspects: Now spend some time brainstorming the global issues for two of your texts.

Ideas and Global Issues in My Chosen Texts	
Text 1:	Text 2:

Technical/Literary Aspects in My Chosen Texts	

Step Two: Apply the [Critical Lenses](#).

Take a few minutes and apply a few of the critical lenses to your literary or non-literary works. Try this process with TWO texts. See if this helps you find some interesting angles you can use to deepen your interpretation!

Literary Text 1:	
Literary Lens	Rich Idea

Literary Text 2:	
Literary Lens	Rich Idea

Step Three: [The Line of Inquiry](#).

Now take some time to craft a line of inquiry. Remember to go to your brainstorming and really think about a rich idea that you want to explore. Use critical lenses if you can, consider the literary aspect and write your line of inquiry! Be sure to highlight your LOI!

Components of a Line of Inquiry

1. Question word
2. Author
3. Text
4. Genre
5. Literary/linguistic aspect
6. Rich idea
7. Precise context

Sample Line of Inquiry:

Title of Work: A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams (1947)	
Line of Inquiry	How and to what extent does Tennessee Williams employ plastic theatre techniques to transform the audience's impressions of Blanche in <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> ?

Your line of Inquiry:

Title of Work:	
Line of Inquiry	

Step Four: [Outlining](#)

Now it's your turn to write your outline for your HL essay. Use this Graphic Organizer and collect evidence and do some rich thinking about your line of inquiry, how you can support it and how you are going to organize your essay!

Title of Work:		
Line of Inquiry		
Topic #1		
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
Topic #2		
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
Topic #3		
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
Topic #4		
Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas
Topic #5		

Snippet	Techniques	Rich Ideas

Step Five: [The Introduction](#)

Now it's time for you to write your introduction to your HL Essay. Remember to craft the introduction carefully, give much needed background information on your text and offer some development on your rich idea. Then end with a clear statement that echoes your line of inquiry! Highlight your paragraph when you are done. Be sure to remember:

1. A creative hook that introduces the topic
2. Definition of terms (preferably with sources)
3. Context and historical background
4. The line of inquiry with the literary aspect and a rich idea.

The Introduction
Line of Inquiry:

Literary/Stylistic Features

Author/Reader Relationship

Rich Idea

Body Paragraph #2: Topic -

Line of Inquiry:

Body Paragraph #3: Topic -

Line of Inquiry:

Body Paragraph #4: Topic -

Line of Inquiry:

Step 7: Writing [the Conclusion](#)

It's time for you to end your HL essay with some strong writing. Once you have written your introduction, body paragraphs, you are reading to tie things together and make that final impression.

As you write, remember the essential components of a conclusion:

1. **Restatement of the thesis or argument**
2. **Synthesis** of the paper without rehashing the main ideas. **AVOID** summarizing main ideas.
3. **Extension** beyond the texts to a wider context. Answer the question, "So What?"
End with a flourish!

The Conclusion
Line of Inquiry:

Step Eight: Lingering and Leveling Up

To “linger” means staying in one place longer than expected. We often tell students to linger in a moment to expand their analysis and interpretation. Doing this can help you “level up” your overall performance while discussing nuances and showing insight.

Try some of these phrases to reach for further implications and insight:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This phrase implies that... ○ The reader can imply that... ○ The author suggests that... ○ While not stated, the author hints that... ○ The implications are clear: (...). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The reader can deduce that... ○ Readers can infer that... ○ Readers can conclude that... ○ The audience reasons that... ○ While not overtly stated, we can infer that...
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Step Nine: [Highlighting](#)

We love highlighting our work when we are done. Why? By highlighting we see areas where we might improve. Our highlighting addresses the criteria directly. No shortcuts here. Make a copy with google docs or cut and paste another copy in your application of choice. Then get to highlighting.

Here are our categories for highlighting:

1. Literary or Stylistic Features
2. Textual references
3. Author/Audience-Reader Relationship
4. Line of Inquiry/Rich Idea
5. Transitions

Step Ten: [Revising](#)

After you've highlighted, it's time to work on some revisions. We like the STAR acronym to consider ways that we can improve our writing. This is a great time to really look at your word count and use the STAR strategy accordingly!

Substitute (weak verbs or adjective, overused words, dead words)

Take Out (repetition, unimportant words)

Add (detail, analysis, features, description)

Rearrange (sequence, logic, order)

Step Eleven: [Formatting](#)

This last step is so important before you submit. Work on the presentation of your paper and make it shine. Some suggestions for formatting:

1. Make a title page with a title, clear line of inquiry, and word count.
2. Put the line of inquiry on the top of the first page as well.
3. Number the pages.
4. Use 1 ½ spacing and 12 pt. Font.
5. Include a Works Cited page.
6. Make it a PDF and check the PDF for glitches.