Literature Essay Technique

GCSE English Literature • Grades 3–8

WORKED SOLUTIONS

Name: worked example Class: _____ Total: 68 / 68

Show all your working. Marks are given for correct method as well as the final answer.

1. Write down the first thing to do with an essay question, before planning anything. **[2 marks]**

> *How does the writer present the relationship between power and guilt?*
> Write about: how the relationship is presented; the methods the writer uses.

here: relationship, power, guilt
answering a question you were not asked caps your mark

Answer: underline the focus words

2. Explain what a thesis statement is. **[2 marks]**

it goes in the introduction and is proved by the essay

Answer: a one-sentence argument that answers the whole question

3. Write a thesis statement for the question shown. **[3 marks]**

> *How does the writer present the relationship between power and guilt?*
> Write about: how the relationship is presented; the methods the writer uses.

The writer presents power and guilt as inseparable:
every gain in one produces the other.
a thesis can be disagreed with -- that is what makes it one

Answer: an arguable claim, not a description

4. Explain why *In this essay I will discuss…* is a weak opening. **[2 marks]**

start with the argument itself

Answer: it announces the essay instead of arguing

5. Write down the four parts of a good literature paragraph. **[4 marks]**

point: what this paragraph argues
evidence: a short embedded quotation
analysis: what the WRITER is doing, and why
link: back to the thesis

Answer: point, evidence, analysis of method, link to the question

6. Explain what it means to embed a quotation. **[2 marks]**

The narrator's hands are never quite clean.

Answer: to fit it inside your own sentence

7. Rewrite this so the quotation is embedded: *The writer shows guilt.* ***His hands were never quite clean.*** **[3 marks]**

Guilt clings to a man whose hands are never quite clean.

Answer: ____ *fold the quotation into the sentence* ____

8. Explain why a short quotation is usually better than a long one. **[3 marks]**

a long quotation eats time and earns nothing by itself
a three-word quotation leaves room to explore one verb

Answer: ____ *you can analyse individual words in it* ____

9. Explain what it means to *zoom in* on a word. **[3 marks]**

pick the most loaded word in your quotation
ask what else it could have been, and why it was not

Answer: ____ *to analyse one word's connotations in detail* ____

10. Write down what to do in a closed-book exam if you cannot remember an exact quotation. **[3 marks]**

when he refuses to look at his own hands
precise reference still earns evidence marks

Answer: ____ *refer precisely to the moment instead* ____

11. Write down three methods a NOVELIST uses that a poet may not. **[3 marks]**

also: pacing, foreshadowing, shifts in setting

Answer: ____ *narrative voice, chapter structure, dialogue* ____

12. Write down three methods a POET uses. **[3 marks]**

also: caesura, stanza length, rhythm, volta

Answer: ____ *form, rhyme, enjambment* ____

13. Explain why *the writer uses a metaphor* on its own earns nothing. **[3 marks]**

the mark is for what the method DOES to the reader
and why the writer chose it here

Answer: ____ *naming a method is not analysing its effect* ____

14. Explain the difference between a character and a construct. **[3 marks]**

writing the writer presents him as rather than
he feels shows you know it is authored
this single habit lifts a band

Answer: ____ *a character is made by a writer to do a job* ____

15. Explain what context means in a literature mark scheme. **[3 marks]**

not a biography of the writer
not a history lesson bolted on at the end

Answer: ____ *ideas the text engages with, used to illuminate it* ____

16. Explain why a separate context paragraph usually scores badly. **[3 marks]**

context must explain the WRITING
weave one sentence into the paragraph it belongs to

Answer: ____ it is not connected to the analysis____

17. Rewrite this into usable context: *The book was written in 1847 when women had few rights.* **[3 marks]**

Writing when a woman's property became her
husband's, the writer makes her refusal to marry
an act of open defiance rather than mere preference.

Answer: ____ link the fact to the writer's choice____

18. Plan a full paragraph for the question shown.

How does the writer present the relationship between power and guilt? Write about: how the relationship is presented; the methods the writer uses.

(a) Write your point and choose your evidence. **[3 marks]**

point: power is shown to cost more than it gives
evidence: never quite clean

(b) Write the analysis and the link. **[4 marks]**

The adverb quite withholds the absolution
the character is reaching for: he is almost, but never
entirely, free of what he has done.
link: so the writer ties every gain in power to a
permanent stain of guilt

Answer: ____ point + short quotation ; zoom in, then link to the thesis____

19. A student writes: *The character feels really guilty which shows he is a bad person. This is shown by the quote.*

(a) Identify three weaknesses. **[3 marks]**

1. treats him as a real person, not a construct
2. no actual quotation is given
3. bad person is judgement, not analysis

(b) Rewrite it to a grade-7 standard. **[4 marks]**

The writer presents guilt as inescapable: the
narrator's hands are never quite clean,
and that quite denies him the absolution
he is reaching for.

Answer: ____ no construct, no quotation, no analysis____

20. An essay is worth 30 marks and you have 45 minutes.

(a) Work out a sensible time plan. **[3 marks]**

5 minutes planning
35 minutes writing
5 minutes checking spelling and punctuation

(b) Explain why three developed paragraphs usually beat five rushed ones. **[3 marks]**

the mark scheme rewards DEVELOPED analysis
a rushed paragraph states a point and stops
three paragraphs that zoom in and link will out-score five
that only identify

Answer: ____ 5 / 35 / 5 ; depth is what the bands reward____

Free to print and use at home or in class. Please do not re-host or sell. Written by Hampstead Tuition Centre from the published exam specifications.