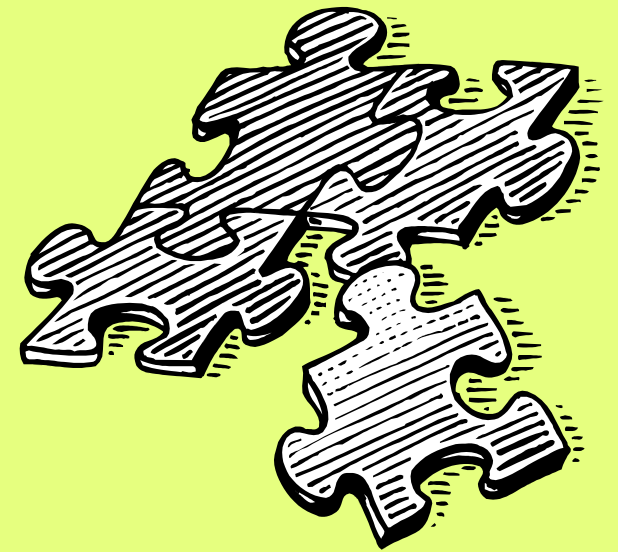


Have I  
Understood  
The Question?



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Support and Equity Services  
Student Facilitator (Study Skills)  
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January 2005

Acknowledgements:  
McLaughlin, J (2001) EDIBLE ENGLISH,  
Edible Publishing, Evans Head.

NEW WORDS  
And  
Their meanings

**A**  
**SIMPLE EXPLANATION**  
**of**  
**Frequently used**  
**Action words**  
**in Assignment**  
**ESSAY QUESTIONS.**

## **Analyse**      *An-a-LISE*

### **What**

- Assessment terminology
- To break a subject or topic down and identify it's individual components, investigating the relationship between them and drawing out and relating implications and conclusions.

### **When**

- *Analyse a poem* means you need to look at and discuss all the different parts and features (be they language , structure, imagery, etc) and come to a conclusion about its overall purpose and meaning.

### **Why**

- A way of asking "What do you know?" and "What do you think?". It requires you to **apply** the knowledge you have gained to a particular text.

## **Argument**      *AH-gue-ment*

### **What**

- NOT two people screaming at each other.
- IS a series of points with supporting evidence that attempts to persuade or convince another of a statement, idea or opinion.

### **When**

- Used in essays, editorials and letters to the editor, telemarketing ads (*and not only this, but that...*), closing statements in a court of law, and any other time when one party is trying to convince another party of the validity of their claims.

- The outline should be presented in an easy-to-read format. Consider sub-headings and dot-points. You will need a major heading at the top to show that it's an outline for... The sub-headings should flow in a logical manner. Group common ones together; for instance, all the props and materials needed would naturally go together.
- What you need to remember is that it is an OUTLINE. Although there should be details about all possible aspects of the project, you need to present your material clearly and concisely, without a lot of waffle. You are not writing the interview itself.

## **Summarise**

### **What**

- Assessment terminology.
- Express concisely, the relevant details.

### **When**

- You are usually asked to *summarise a plot or summarise the key points that a writer may have made*. This means exactly as it says. Only tell the important bits of the plot. Don't get into a lot of detail unless that detail is extremely important to how the story pans out.
- Concisely, in no more than two paragraphs, tell what the story is about. OR concisely, in no more than two paragraphs, convey the key points that a writer has made.

### **Why**

- This type of question assesses how well you can determine what is important to an issue or event. Some students include lots of information that, ultimately, is quite irrelevant to the story or issue being discussed. When asked to summarise, think about the importance of each point that you would like to include.

## Outline

### What

- Assessment terminology.
- Sketch in general terms;
- Indicate the main features of.

### When

- The most common usage of this in English is when you're asked to *Provide an outline of a TV/Radio interview/program about...*
- You need to consider:
  - What is the purpose of this interview/program?
  - Where and when the interview will take place.
  - Will it take place in more than one venue?
  - Who will be involved? Is there only one interviewee or will you have a panel of guests?
  - If you've been given the general topic (may be an area of study), what aspect or issues will you address? Will you refer to other texts, either written by the interviewee or related to the topic?
  - What are some sample questions that you might ask, and what are the expected responses? (These are just possible answers and you could jot them down in point form).
  - Do you need any additional film clips/sound effects?
  - How long will the interview/program take?
  - Who is your intended audience and what timeslot will be appropriate?
  - Considering the intended audience, what would be the most appropriate radio/TV station for this interview?
- The point from all of the above is that you are considering all the possible aspects of the assignment (in this case, a radio/TV interview).

- In most essays, you are presenting an argument. It could be that a text is particularly well-written, or that the use of lighting has enhanced a film, or text demonstrates a theme or idea (for instance, consumerism). Most of the time, one side of the argument is sufficient. Be aware, though, that if you are asked to "discuss" something, you need to present BOTH sides (that is, the arguments FOR and the arguments AGAINST), and reach a conclusion. See **discuss**.

### Why

- If you want to convince someone of something, you need to calmly mount a case logically, step-by-step, with good reason and supporting evidence of why you are right. The worst thing you can do is be slap-dash and "all-over-the-place" with your reasoning. This makes you sound illogical and irrational.

## Compare *Kom-PAIR*

### What

- Assessment terminology.
- Show how things are similar.
- Usually linked with **contrast**, which means "see how things are different". Eg, *Compare and contrast...*

### When

- *Compare two poems by the same poet.* In order to do this, you would need to look at BOTH their similarities and differences in structure (verse size, rhythm and rhyme patterns), themes (or the purpose of the poet), use of language and techniques (sound and image devices), etc. The stress is on the similarities, so you would mention BRIEFLY the differences between the poems, and give detailed analysis of their similarities.

- *Compare the novel with the film.* Again, you would need to look at BOTH the similarities and differences (the story may be the same, but it is told in a different chronology, for example; or the theme has been adjusted slightly), briefly mention the differences and give detailed analysis of the similarities.

### Why

- This style of question is actually doing you a favour by giving you something solid with which to demonstrate your knowledge of the structures and techniques used by the composer. This differs from just asking you to **analyse** a poem, where you would have to find as many techniques as possible in only one poem.

## Contrast KON-TRAHST

### What

- Show how things are different or opposite.
- The opposite of **compare**. In fact, usually the two are requested together. Eg *Compare and contrast this with that.*

### When

- If you're asked to *contrast two texts* (be they poems, plays, novels, extracts), you need to, very briefly, consider their similarities and then, IN GREAT DETAIL, discuss their differences. These differences may be in:
  - their structure (one's a newspaper report, the other is a play);
  - the choice of language (colloquial/formal; subjective/objective);
  - the ideas expressed (one is "for" something; the other is against).
- You need to consider as many differences as possible, sort them into some kind of order and give a thorough analysis of not only WHAT the differences are, but HOW they impact on meaning and what the effect is.

## Literary Criticism

### What

- The word "criticism" here often confuses people as it has such a negative image.
- The term should be "literary analysis" because literary criticism refers to the analysis of a text. The analysis could show that the text is excellent and the composer is a genius. The reviewer has still, technically criticised the text.
- Criticism involves close examination of a text to determine its purpose; how the composer has attempted to achieve his/her purpose, utilising what techniques and devices; and how successful the composer is in achieving this purpose.
- In order to develop good skills in literary criticism, the responder needs to know and understand:
  - the techniques and devices employed in the creation of a text and why they are utilised;
  - the effects of different structures and formats involved;
  - how language choice has influenced the text and the meaning derived from it;
  - possible ways in which the composer could have conveyed his/her meaning more concisely or expressively.
- See **Deconstruction**.

### When

- Literary criticism usually refers to analysis of written texts, as opposed to visual, aural or film.
- When you are asked to "*Analyse a poem and discuss whether the poet has been successful in achieving his/her purpose*", you are involved in literary criticism.

### Why

- This is the perfect question for allowing students to be in control of their own learning. The directions taken are governed by the interest of the student. Six students can investigate the same topic and, due to their different personalities and interests, come up with six different “takes” on the topic. This is GREAT! Too often in the past, only one reading of a situation/issue has been taught. All other voices/opinions have been **silenced**.
- Remember that intelligence is not how much information you keep in your head. It’s knowing where to go to find the information you need. Good investigative skills enhance your intelligence.

### Why

- This is a great way to find out how imaginative you are, how much you know about the composer or topic under discussion, and how well you understand the format you are designing.

### Why

- Assess the extent of your understanding about the composition and purpose of texts, and how meaning is affected by changing aspects of the text (structure, language, layout, form).

### Critical Thinking

#### What

- NOT being negative and putting a “downer” on everything.
- Refers to the ability to deconstruct, **analyse** and **appreciate** a text. This means, pull it apart and see each of the techniques and features with which the text is created; assess the effectiveness of each of these components; comment on what’s great and what’s not-so-great.
- A person with excellent critical thinking skills is a HUGE value to society. He/she can sort through the chaff to find the wheat, and assist in creating a process to turning that wheat into bread.

#### Why

- If you can’t think critically (and make up your own mind about things), then you have to accept everything you are told. Most students seem to like to argue and express an opinion, so obviously they’re on the way to being very adept at this skill. The trick is to develop the background knowledge with which to analyse, together with good reasoning skills, and be able to support your ideas in a logical manner.

## Define De-FINE

### What

- Assessment terminology.
- State the meaning of and identify essential qualities.

### When

- Be careful here! If you are asked to **define alliteration**, you are NOT merely being asked to say “repetition of a consonant sound in words with close connection”. You are also expected to give examples and state the possible purpose of utilising alliteration. In other words, what effect does its utilisation have? Giving too simplistic an answer will cost you dearly.
- If you are asked to define water, you need to not only give its chemical composition (H<sub>2</sub>O), but also the qualities that, together, differentiate it from other compounds. For instance, *its liquid at room temperature, has a pH of 7, boiling temp, freezing temp, etc.*

### Why

- Another way of asking “What do you know?” and “How much do you know?”
- Bit of a clue here: look at how many lines they give you to answer and how many marks are being given. This will give you a clue as to how many qualities they are looking for.

## Investigate In-VEST-e-gayt

### What

- Assessment terminology.
- Plan, inquire into and draw conclusions about.

### When

- Used primarily in research assignments.
- When you are asked to “investigate” something, the first thing you need to do is PLAN. This requires brainstorming all possible aspects of the topic, and all possible sources for information.
- Once you’ve done this, you need to gather as much information as you can. Ask questions of the information you are gathering. Take care. Recently a student wanted to investigate the discovery of the ark on Mt Ararat. She consulted six different web-sites and considered that she had double-checked her material. Unfortunately, all six sites came from the same organisation. She didn’t really have a second opinion, at all.
- The important thing to remember is that, usually, your beliefs about a topic are changed by the information and perspectives you gain from your research. You must approach your research with an open mind.
- You need to organise your material in a logical manner. How you do this will depend upon your topic AND the information you have gained.
- You then need to reach a conclusion about the issue about which you have been asked. This could be a series of small conclusions about specific parts of the issue, or it could be a broad conclusion that incorporates all the mini-issues. Again, depends upon the topic and what you have been able to discover.

## Identify Eye-DENT-ee-figh

### What

- Assessment terminology.
- Recognise and name.

### When

- The most common use of this term in an English question would be *Identify the visual features of blah, blah, blah* or *Identify the techniques used by the poet...*
- You need to be able to pick out techniques or the features, describe and name them and, perhaps (depending upon the number of marks allocated to the question), state WHY they have been used.

### Why

- A good “recollection” type question. Assesses how many facets or aspects of a subject or topic you can remember and recognise when needed. A nifty way of remembering a series of points is useful for this sort of question. For example, using **mnemonics**.
- In poetry, you are after Sound, Image and Structure.  
Sound breaks down to **Alliteration, Assonance, Onomatopoeia, Rhyme** and **Rhythm**.  
Image breaks down to **Simile, Metaphor, Personification, Anthropomorphism**.  
  
If you’ve got a nifty way of remembering these techniques, you can peruse a poem, looking for them.
- Similarly in Science, *identify the distinctive features of (blank)* might require you to have categories for analysing (blank). If it’s a tree you might need to look at Leaves, Root System, Bark, Germination and Flowers, and then the components of each of these broad categories.

## Deduce Ded-YUSE

### What

- Assessment terminology.
- Draw conclusions.
- Use all information given (use **layout**, graphics, **language**, structure) to make assessments and conclusions.
- Use the information provided in a text which may be superficial, to gain more insight or information.
- See **Context**.

### When

- We do this a lot when we are looking at any text. For instance, unless the writer is hitting us over the head with a sledgehammer, most of the time we are deducing his/her purpose from the information that is included, the voice of the writer (tone/ attitude); the layout and graphics included. We are making a deduction.
- Similarly, we might be looking at a painting or photograph and deducing its meaning from the items which have been included and how they are placed in relation to each other.  
See **Composition**.
- In Science, we may be given certain data and asked to deduce possible outcomes in an experiment using that data and what we know about scientific method.

### Why

- In an exam question, the examiner is attempting to find out what you know, not only as facts, but as possibilities.
- In a day-to-day living, we use deduction to answer questions we have about people, situations, etc, when we aren’t being told explicitly. See **Body Language**.

## **Demonstrate** DEM-on-STRAYT

### **What**

- Assessment terminology.
- Show by example.

### **When**

- Usually, this is a question for Science or Design & Technology, although most of English assessment tasks are implicitly asking you to “demonstrate your knowledge”.
- *Demonstrate the writer’s excellent use of language in this poem.* In order to answer this, you need to think about language technique (figurative language, sentence structure, vocabulary) and find examples from the poem. What you are then going to argue is that the writer has used a, b, and c, give examples from the text and show how this is a really great thing (in other words, created a wonderful, vivid effect and served the writer's purpose well).

### **Why**

- This is a classier version of “What do you know?”. It’s classier because you are given the opportunity to TEACH, while behaving like a sales person.
- Be confident in your approach. Pretend that you’re demonstrating all the wonderful features of the fridge or you-beaut vegetable peeler.
- Remember to highlight the benefits of whatever you are asked to demonstrate.

## **Describe** Dess-KRIBE

### **What**

- Assessment terminology.
- Provide characteristics and features.
- See **Description**.

## **Genre** JON-ra

### **What**

- Pronounced *jon-ra*.
- Basically, means type, kind or group.

### **When**

- In film, genres include any group of films that have similar styles, themes, structures, settings, costumes, set design and include:
  - Westerns
  - Horror
  - Detective
  - Gangster
  - War
  - Musical/Musical Comedy.
- Films can also be classified under genres of:
  - Documentary
  - Experimental
  - Animated.
- Novels and films can often be classified under the genres of:-
  - Romance
  - Fantasy
  - Science Fiction
  - Adventure
  - Gothic Fairy Story
  - Horror
  - Mystery.

### **Why**

- It makes discussion easy if we can lump certain types of narratives or films together under one name and discuss them as a whole. If we are familiar with the characteristics of genre, saying one word is the equivalent of describing a whole set of features.

## Why

- This sort of question assesses how well you can APPLY the knowledge you have gained. You may have studied a whole set of techniques (be they imagery, rhythm, lighting). How well can you apply the knowledge you have gained to a text provided?

## Extract            Eks-STRAKT

### What

- Assessment terminology.
- Choose relevant and/or appropriate details.

### When

- You've got to pull the "guts" out of something, leaving all the "filler" bits. You do this all the time when you're asked to take notes on something. You just write down the important bits and forget all about the waffle. You've got to do the same thing in an assessable question.
- *Extract the factual details in...* You would need to go over the passage VERY carefully, deciding what was fact and what was opinion. You would then need to clearly state the factual components of the text. This may be in point-form, full sentences or a sustained piece of writing. It will depend upon the question and how much space you're given.

## When

- You're usually asked to "describe a setting" or "describe a character", (although there are other possibilities). What do students do wrong?? They limit themselves.
- If you're asked to describe a character, don't give three physical characteristics (name, age and hair colour) and finish. Give a DETAILED descriptions:
  - Family; background;
  - where does he/she live
  - Is he/she generous, kind, thoughtful, intelligent, clever, charismatic, talkative, aggressive?; tall/short; fat/thin; blonde/auburn/brunette?TIP: Create a glossary of words you can use to describe some one: physical features (dimples, tattoos, scars, as well as height/weight/labouring); personality and past-times (sports/hobbies); likes and dislikes (we know a lot about someone who doesn't like broccoli).
- When describing a setting, consider more than just the buildings. What about landmarks, unusually shaped trees, the sounds (wind, water, wild-life); the "feel" or "vibes" of the place (peaceful and tranquil, energetic and exciting, mysterious and eerie).
- Open up your mind and see what ideas come floating on through. You'll be amazed at what your imagination will come up with.
- Remember in English, there are two types of "describe". One is asking you to come up with a descriptive piece totally from your imagination.
- The other is asking you to list the qualities of a preconceived character from a text.
- With the first, read **Characterisation** and write your description with a little sophistication.
- With the second, brainstorm EVERYTHING you know about the character and make sure you include it all, in an organised manner.

## Why

- To find out what you know and how cogently (now, there's a great word- means convincingly, forcibly or compellingly. You can use that often!!) you can write.
- In subjects other than English, "describe" has a similar meaning to **define**, so refer to this as well.

## Explain      Eks-plane

### What

- Assessment terminology.
- Relate cause and effect.
- Make the relationship between things evident.
- Provide why and/or how.

### When

- When I teach "explain", I stress the WHY. This question asks you not only the WHAT or the HOW, but also the WHY.
- For instance, *Explain the witch hunts in Salem in 1972*. You need to start with WHAT were the witch hunts and then detail HOW and WHY they occurred.

### Why

- This question asks you to demonstrate how well you understand all the issues/events/reasons behind some occurrence.

## Essay      ESS-SAY

### What

- A structured piece of writing which explains, persuades or discusses a particular topic.
- Comprises three parts: an introduction, a body (where the explanation/argument occurs) and the conclusion where the ideas espoused in the body are linked and resolved.

## When

- Students are often asked to write essays to demonstrate their knowledge of a topic/issue. Essays are an extended response to a question, as opposed to short-answer questions.
- Essays are often published in newspapers. Hugh McKay writes essays on an aspect of modern society in The Sydney Morning Herald.
- Books of essays, all about a particular subject, are often published and are available in book stores. Currently, there is a book of essays about aspects of being male on the best-seller list.

### Why

- As mentioned, they provide an opportunity to provide an extended answer to a question and demonstrate detailed knowledge about a subject or text.

## Examine      EGGS-am-en

### What

- Assessment terminology.
- Inquire into.

### When

- *Examine the use of....Or Examine the Techniques used by...*
- Basically, you have to read/view/listen to the text very closely and determine all the times the composer has used or employed the specific technique.
- Having done so, you then need to be able to explain clearly all the instances in which the technique has been used, why you think the composer has used it and what effect its use has had.
- This is a much more difficult question than most students imagine. Usually, they give very brief answers. My suggestion is to pretend you're a forensic scientist going over a corpse for clues. Be thorough and question everything.