

INTERMEDIATE 2 ENGLISH

A quick reminder of the course -

Your examination grade is based on the following:

- The Close Reading paper worth 40%
- The Critical Essay paper worth 40%
- The Writing Folio worth 20%

CLOSE READING

This exam lasts for one hour. There is one passage to read and the total number of marks for the paper is 30.

The questions fit into the following three codes:

- U - UNDERSTANDING -- these questions are testing your understanding of WHAT is in the text
- A - ANALYSIS -- these questions assess whether you have grasped HOW meaning has been conveyed
- E - EVALUATION -- these questions expect comment on HOW WELL meaning has been conveyed

* Evaluation questions **always** include analysis.

The great and ineffable exam makers are also kind enough to tell you **how many marks** each question is worth. The U/A/E coding, combined with the number of marks, gives an clear indication of how to respond to a question and how much you might be expected to write in your answer.

GETTING STARTED

Always look at any *italicised* writing at the start of the passage. This is given by the exam board and may prove useful in helping you appreciate the writer's point of view, or just understanding the passage more easily.

THE QUESTIONS

What follows is a brief summary and set of guidelines. If there is anything you are not sure of, ask your endlessly wonderful teacher to go over it. See also the section 'Self Help'.

I. UNDERSTANDING

Own Words

- Always try to answer in your own words -- you need to prove that you have understood the vocabulary. If you aren't sure what the word means, look at the context for clues.
- You do not have to write in sentences. Bullet points are your

speed-writing friends! Try writing a bullet point for each mark.

Context

The context of something is what surrounds it, its setting if you like. When you are asked to derive the meaning of a word or an expression from its context, you need to look at what surrounds that word or phrase in the passage. Your answer should offer a meaning for the word or the phrase and then an explanation of how someone might have been able to work out --even guess! -- the meaning from what was round about it.

Link

These questions test not just your understanding of meaning but also the structure of the sentence, -- so it can be both an Understanding and an Analysis type of question! You will be asked to show how the sentence joins two paragraphs together. What you have to do is pick out some word(s) from the sentence that refer back to what was said in the previous paragraph, then pick out some other word(s) that refer to what follows in the next paragraph. You will be quoting from the sentence as well as summarising what has been said.

Summary

Here you will be asked to list or sum up all of the points that have been made in a given section or paragraph. You need to show the examiner that you have understood what has been said as well as perhaps identifying the particular point of view that the writer has taken (e.g. being for or against a particular idea)

2. ANALYSIS

Any Analysis question means that you have to take something apart and show how and why it has been put together in that particular way. Before you even begin to answer an Analysis question, you have to be sure that you fully understand what is being asked -- and that is usually something about what the writer was trying to achieve. You need to be able to identify then technique that has been used as well as the effect that it has on you as a reader (you do not always have to approve of what has been done; if it does not work for you, then you are quite at liberty to say so -- just as long as you can back this up and say WHY it does not work for you). Make sure you read the question carefully before you start!

Structure

These questions look at how sentences have been put together, how they have been built. They are not simply about what the sentence means!! Take a good look at the sentence; is there anything unusual about it? Think about the following...

- The length of the sentence
- The type of sentence it is
- The punctuation that is used
- Are there patterns within the sentence?
- Is there anything unusual about the word order used in the sentence?

The length of the sentence --

- Is it longer or shorter than those around it?

- Does it stand out for this reason?

The type of sentence that it is --

- Is it a statement? (e.g. It was very quiet)
- Is it a question? (e.g. Was it quiet?)
- Is it an exclamation (e.g. Isn't it quiet!)
- Is it a command? (e.g. Be quiet!)
- Is it a minor sentence? (e.g. He went into the room. (a statement) Total quietness. (a minor sentence)

Each of these types of sentence is used to create a particular effect.

- The statement is generally found in narrative or factual writing
- The question may be to try to involve the reader more directly in the subject
- The exclamation is designed to suggest shock or surprise
- The command is found in instructions or perhaps in advertising or persuasive writing
- The minor sentence omits the verb to create a dramatic effect, often in a tense situation. It can also be used to create a closer bond with the reader by being more informal.

Punctuation

- Comma -- used to separate a number of things on a list, or to create a pause in a lengthy sentence -- the pause might be there to create impact too.
- Inverted commas -- are usually used for a quotation but can also be used for the titles of books, plays, films, television programmes etc. You may also find a writer using them because he wants to suggest that he is not taking something too seriously.
- Colon -- mostly used to introduce a list or perhaps a quotation,

but it can also be used to introduce an explanation of a point that has been made.

- Semi-colon -- this separates longer phrases within a list in a sentence, or it can be used to join two ideas together, ideas which could be expressed as separate sentences but are too closely linked to be separated by a full stop.
- Single dash -- used to add extra information about a point that has been made
- Pair of dashes -- the writer might use these or might use a pair of brackets and they contain extra information on a given point. You should be able to take out of the sentence what is between the dashes or brackets and the sentence will still make sense
- Ellipsis -- is a row of dots (....) which allows a sentence to trail off, as though there might be more that could be said

Sentence patterns --

- Inversion -- this means changing the normal word order, so that what might normally be at the beginning of a sentence could be left to the end. It is done to create impact
- Repetition -- this is where words or even whole phrases are repeated within the sentence, again to create impact
- Climax -- the building up of ideas in ascending order with the most important one being kept to the last
- Anti-climax -- again building up the ideas in ascending order but the (anticipated) most important one never happens, which creates a feeling of deflation
- Sentence length -- (referred to also in Understanding) You need to look at the lengths of the sentences around the given sentence as well as the sentence itself. Be on the lookout for contrasts.

REMEMBER A question on sentence structure is NOT about meaning!!! You MUST discuss how the sentence has been put together and the impact of that. The best marks are awarded for answers that focus on the effect of the structure within the given context.

Imagery

Questions on imagery are exploring the way in which a writer has put a picture, or image, into your head. There are many different techniques that writers use, but it is not enough that you simply name the technique in your answer. You have to show the effect that the writer was trying to achieve. When writing about imagery, you will identify the technique and go on to explain the literal meaning of the words as well as the picture that it creates in your head.

Some terms you should know.....

- Simile - This is a comparison of two things which will ALWAYS involve the use of the words 'as' or 'like' - for example " my brother is as greedy as a pig when it comes to chips"
- Metaphor - This is also a comparison but this time one thing is said to BE the thing it is compared to - for example " my brother is a pig when it comes to chips"
- Personification - this is where a thing, or an object is described as though it was a human being - for example - " the sun came creeping in through the curtains"
- Onomatopoeia - this is where a word sounds like the thing that it represents - for example - " feet **squelching** through mud, **meowing** of cats, **booming** of guns

Word Choice

Despite the fact that each and every word will have been chosen by the writer, there are likely to be questions that explore specific examples and you will be required to explain why you think these particular words have been used -- i.e. the effect that they have. In answering these questions you might have to think about the **connotations** of certain words, that is, the ideas that come into your head when you think of that word. For example, the word 'dove' is associated with -- or has connotations of -- peace

Tone

Many candidates find this difficult. You should try to imagine how something might be said, the tone of voice that might be used. There is a huge range of possibilities but some that you might be expected to meet in the exam are...

- Humour
- Anger
- Sarcasm
- Uncertainty etc.

When answering a question on tone, you need to be able to show how it has been achieved and this will involve looking at the word choice, the structure and type of sentence(s) used, as well as any imagery.

3. EVALUATION

Remember that any question on Evaluation requires that you also offer some analysis. It is simply not enough to say that something has been well or badly done! You must provide the evidence to support your point of view. To do this you need to comment on the techniques that might have been used -- imagery, word choice, sentence structures etc etc. -- as well as the impact that these have had on your reading. In Evaluation answers, you may well find that you have to use quotations from the passage, but make sure that you also comment, offering your perspective on the effectiveness of the technique or feature you have identified.

SELF HELP

- READ !!!! Make sure that you are reading regularly. One of the best things you can read to help with Close Reading is a newspaper, but it has to be one of the quality newspapers such as The Scotsman, The Glasgow Herald, The Independent etc. If you look at Past Papers, you will see that many of the extracts have been taken from these newspapers. Reading them on a regular basis will help you get to grips with the kind of language that they use.

- Practice Papers are available from bookshops or online. They are the real key to effective preparation because you learn how to respond to the questions (they do follow patterns!) and knowing what is expected helps to relieve some of the stress.
- Firth and Ralston *How to Pass Intermediate 2 English* has a section on Close Reading with worked examples
- Dr. Susan MacDonald *English : Developing Skills in Textual Analysis : Intermediate 2 / Higher* contains work specifically on poetry, but is useful practice for the development of your confidence in analysis .
- www.BBCbitesizeScotland