

# FACILITATION CONFERENCE FOR ENGLISH LANGAUGE & LITERATURE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION (ELLTA)

**VENUE:** LIRA TOWN COLLEGE **DATE:** 07<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2016

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## **WHAT DO YOU TEACH IN LITERATURE?**

Title, setting (i.e. physical, time, social), plot, characters (i.e. roles, comparing & contrasting, character appeal – which refers to the character the author wants to use for impression, dramatic appeal-which refers to the character who acts best to serve the purpose of the text), themes, techniques(i.e. languages of style-which must include effectiveness, lessons, relevance to society (i.e. let students take the text as a mirror of society), content/subject matter (i.e. what the text is about), speaker/voice (i.e. addressor/person/narrator), target audience, mechanical writing (i.e. formality in presentation-great care to taken against clichés, short forms, abbreviations, slangs etc., logical presentation.

## **SKILLS REQUIRED**

Knowledge of text, comprehension, interpretation, analysis, evaluation (e.g. which character do you like best etc.), application (i.e. relevance to society), and introduction (should show that the student knows what the question wants).

It is literary principle that there is no absolute “truth” in Literature. What one says may be true but not necessarily the absolute truth. The scientific truth of  $1+1=2$  does not exist in Literature.

## HOW DO YOU TEACH?

- Method to be appropriate to level and time.
- Be creative, innovative and resourceful (e.g. in teaching character analysis, you could choose learners to represent characters in a text. Let others in the class write about them and give what they have written. When they read before the class, it could trigger a very interesting discussion.)
- Avoid lecture method (believe in your learners).
- Identify crucial areas for practicing context questions.
- Guide learners to form presentation groups.
- Presentations by students are very effective.

## COMMON ERRORS LEARNERS MAKE

- Turning responses into narratives.
- Introducing book instead of point.
- Writing small letters for names, as well as wrong spelling of names.
- Using abbreviations, slangs, short forms etc.
- Wrong grammar e.g. “According to my understanding.....”
- Skipping lines to indicate paragraphs or to make new points.
- Sketchy responses inform of outlines, using dashes, sub titles.
- Untamed sentences (i.e. sentences without proper punctuation).
- Haphazard essay writing skills.
- Illogical, trivial, supportive ideas.
- Predominant use of past simple tense.
- Blatant factual errors (naked lies)
- Confusion of aspects of text (especially characters)
- Gross violation of authors’ intention.
- Serious lack of maturity of thought.
- Inadequate mastery of poetry and poetic devices.
- Failure to contextualize ideas and quotations.
- Application must show an “higher order” knowledge.
- Apparent lack of interest in the subject and examination.
- Poor self-expression.

## **NOTE:**

- Students who put good quotations get more marks.
- Responses should be discursive.
- Students should concisely answer the questions.
- Students who bring new ideas passed better chances.
- Avoid mistaking the question's demand e.g.
  - ✓ How does Shakespeare draw our sympathy on Antonio? = Technique.
  - ✓ How does Antonio suffer in the hand of the Merchant of Venice? = Not technique.

## **THE SCOPE OF LITERATURE AS A SUBJECT**

Literature as a subject should embrace the following:

- Development of literary skills necessary for effective text processing and interpretation.
- Inferring meanings of words from a variety of context.
- Assessing group and individual characters.
- Inferring moral and ethical values in the texts, both religious and secular.
- Judging and interpreting situations and relating them to one's real life experience.
- Distinguishing facts from opinions in texts.
- Tracing and analyzing plot and sequence (the trend of events).
- Describing the effects of a text on the readers (their responses).
- Appreciating the language and style used by the author.
- Making notes and writing summaries about the texts.
- Composing one's own texts (poems, stories and short stories)
- Interpreting context and essay questions correctly.
- Using reference texts effectively (dictionary, critical texts or study guides).

## **NOTE:**

Students who acquire and develop the above skills cannot have any problems in handling literature texts. Skills by virtue of their nature are built and developed through practice and overtime.

- The 24 questions set in O-level literature (208/1) paper vary in coverage and style.
- No two questions are the same. Each question tests different aspects of the books studied. Therefore, the skills required to tackle the questions differ.
- Prepare the learners to answer questions on all aspects of the book or poem.
- Questions can be set on the title, setting, structure, plot/story, themes, style, character relationship and character role. The writing intention and the effect of the writing on you can also be asked.
- You should prepare the learners by telling them which questions require them to apply their knowledge of characters, events and places. They should also aware of the ones that require them to analyse, discuss, comprehend, evaluate (give informed judgement) and apply what you know in the text to the real world around you.
- Learners should also prepare to give their personal response to questions that do not restrict them to textual facts. Such questions are free response questions. E.g. How does the poem affect you?, If you are ..... What would you do .....
- Some questions have more than one part or task. Respond to all parts of the question equally. They may carry equal or nearly equal marks. Do not answer the second part of the question briefly or simply make a general statement in passing. E.g. Describe the relationship between ..... and ....., What is the importance of this relationship?

To say that the relationship is important because it helps to understand the novel and you stop at that is inadequate.

## QUESTION APPROACH

### A. To what extent do you agree.....?

- State the extent on the onset.
- The extent must reflect the author's intention, impression and view.
- Prove why and how you arrive at the stand.

### B. Do you agree.....?

- Take one side / affirm stand.
- Do not contradict yourself.
- Spend more time providing reasons and evidence from the text to convince the examiner.

- Take the obvious, less controversial, probably the authors view/side.
- Take a moral stand / exercise value judgement in line with the author's intention (base on ethical/moral/religious/humanitarian values)
- Show an awareness of the other side and give reasons why it must be rejected.

### **C. Quotation questions:**

- Quoted words of the author or character.
- When they are said i.e. place them in context.
- Why the character is prompted to say them.
- What the meaning of the statement is.
- Relate the quotation to the task in the question i.e. answer the question by proving / disapproving / explaining / justifying the quotation.

### **D. Questions with the ending - “Do you find it satisfactory?”**

- Does it resolve the central conflict?
- What moral and human issues are raise / established?
- Does it satisfy our expectations as readers / an audience?
- Is it in conformity with the conventions of the writing i.e. a tragedy, comedy, satire?
- Is there poetic justice – are the good rewarded/ the bad punished (dramatic relief)

### **E. Context Questions:**

- Choose and answer the easier questions.
- Be precise and concise, give correct, accurate facts, general knowledge is not credited.
- Areas to spot out for context in the include turning points in the life of the central character.

### **F. Other essay type questions:**

- Compare: Look for similarities and differences between....
- Contrast: Set in opposition in order to bring out differences.
- Describe: Give a detailed account of.....

- Discuss: Investigate/examine by argument/debate.
- Explain: To interpret and account for....
- Illustrate: Make clear by use of concrete examples.
- Justify: Show adequate grounds for decisions or conclusions.
- Relate: Show how things are connected to each other, and to what extent they are alike, or affect each other.

**NOTE:**

A good essay has an introduction that goes straight to the task; a body that deliberately gives a detailed response to the task questions; a conclusion that recaps/summarizes the issues discussed/re-emphasizes the stand taken/states a personal opinion; and should be in the present tense.