

Topic 9

TN9

Writing is writing is writing

Learning objectives

On completion of this topic, students should know that the same three Assessment Objectives (AOs) underpin all writing tasks. The form, style, audience and purpose for which students are asked to write may differ but the principle of applying their skills to meet the Assessment Objectives remains the same, whatever the task. The same writing Assessment Objectives apply to both the English and English Language specifications. The only difference is that in the English specification, they are known as AO3 and in the English Language specification they are known as AO4. The basics skills of writing such as using clear paragraphs, selecting words, sentences and other devices should be adhered to.

Lesson notes

Students should be introduced to the writing Assessment Objectives:

- Communicate clearly and imaginatively, using, adapting and selecting vocabulary appropriate to task and purpose in ways that engage the reader.
- Organise information and ideas into structured and sequenced sentences, paragraphs and whole texts, using a variety of linguistic structural features to support cohesion and overall coherence.
- Use a range of sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect with accurate punctuation and spelling.

It is initially advisable to break these AOs down to a simpler format so that students of all abilities are able to understand and apply them. In simple terms, the Assessment Objectives can be presented as follows:

- Communicate your ideas clearly. Use your imagination to interpret the question. Select interesting vocabulary. Get the reader or audience interested.
- Use paragraphs and sentences that link together logically to organise your work. Use linguistic structures to help put your text together effectively.
- Be purposeful in your selection of sentences and how you put them together. Spelling and punctuation must be accurate.

Introduction Explain the planning process to students, with the aid of IS9. Show them how to order and structure their plans by doing simple things such as labelling the bubbles once they have filled in the planning.

Exercise 1 Use student answers to direct back to a term used in the Assessment Objectives or skills. For example, if they find a ‘good word’ you could refer to it as **extensive vocabulary**.

Exercise 2 Encourage students to find as many examples as they can to fill the table. They may find structure harder to define or identify so it may be worth having the text enlarged on a printout or up on the board so they can ‘picture’ the structure and paragraphs.

Exercise 3 When students are writing up their answers encourage them to check off the skills they are using in a copy of the table.

Differentiation *This work may be differentiated for lower ability students by shortening the table or cutting out the relevant skills you wish the students to address and placing them in an envelope. The latter is helpful where there are kinaesthetic learners. They could put each skill back in the envelope as they use it in their answer.*

Plenary Getting students used to Assessment for Learning strategies paves the way to them becoming independent learners.

PowerPoint slides

The Assessment Objectives and Exercises 1–3 are provided on the accompanying PowerPoint slides for this topic.

Suggested timing

Introduction	10 minutes
Exercise 1	5 minutes
Exercise 2	15 minutes
Exercise 3	20–25 minutes
Plenary	5–10 minutes

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IS9

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You will have to produce two pieces of writing for the controlled assessment tasks and two in response to the examination questions. Writing is assessed positively: you do not lose marks for getting things ‘wrong’, but you only gain marks for meeting the assessment criteria for writing.

Writing skills that you need to show are:

- clearly identifying form, style, audience and purpose
- using paragraphs and other devices to structure your work
- selecting words and sentences that have an effect on your intended audience
- engaging the reader’s interest

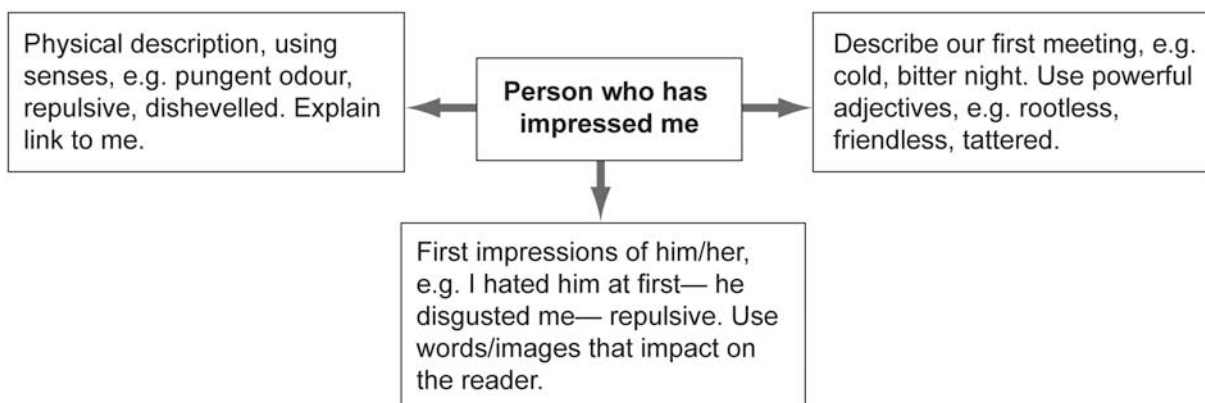
The better thought out your response, the more likely you are to achieve a good grade.

Planning your writing

Planning is one of the most important parts of the writing process. It enables you to organise your answer, ready for when you write it up. The writing Assessment Objectives also require you to organise and structure your answers. Planning can be in the form of bullet points, mind-maps, thought bubbles, flow charts etc. With practice, you will learn to develop methods that suit both the way you think and the task you are working on. The more prepared you are, the more successful you will be.

Example of planning

Describe someone you know well personally who has made an impression on you. Explain why he or she is important to you.



The answer below illustrates how the points in this plan can be made into a full answer.

The gaunt, shabby attire, I had once found repulsive, was something I had now grown accustomed to. The pungent odour that lingered permanently on this unkempt, dishevelled soul made me wince, only occasionally, with disgust. Arron was now no more financially stable than he was then, but nonetheless, this parasite of society and I were now firm friends.

Looking back, three long, interminable years to when we first met, outside on the damp, soggy pavement, he sat there, almost planted, like a badly-constructed snowman, with a tattered, brown coat that was his only shelter from the bitterly cold night. My first real encounter with this rootless, friendless, homeless man was to change my life forever.

As I lost consciousness into a confused world of distorted appearance and reality, somehow, this grimy figure crawled nearer; almost surreptitiously, had it not been for his apparent discomfort. His reeking breath repulsed me; yet his presence was strangely comforting. A smile lit up his almost piano-like teeth, deepening the etched lines in his weary face. In the lonely solitude of this dark night, he was my only companion. A nonchalant world walked by, uncaring, unforgiving. Why? I felt abandoned and alone in the deafening silence and yet Arron was there. He was always there...

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WS9

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Exercise 1

Underline two things you find interesting in the example answer on IS9 and explain why they made an impact on you.

Exercise 2

Fill in the table providing evidence from the example on IS9 of each of the following skills that embody the Assessment Objectives.

Skill	Evidence
Thoughtful and imaginative viewpoint	
Clear focus on topic — engaging	
Well-structured ideas	
Awareness of form, style, audience and purpose	
Not necessarily a narrative	
Crafted language, extensive vocabulary, figurative language, e.g. literary devices, power verbs	

Skill	Evidence
Variety of sentence types/lengths	
Well-linked paragraphs	
Range of punctuation	
Use of senses	

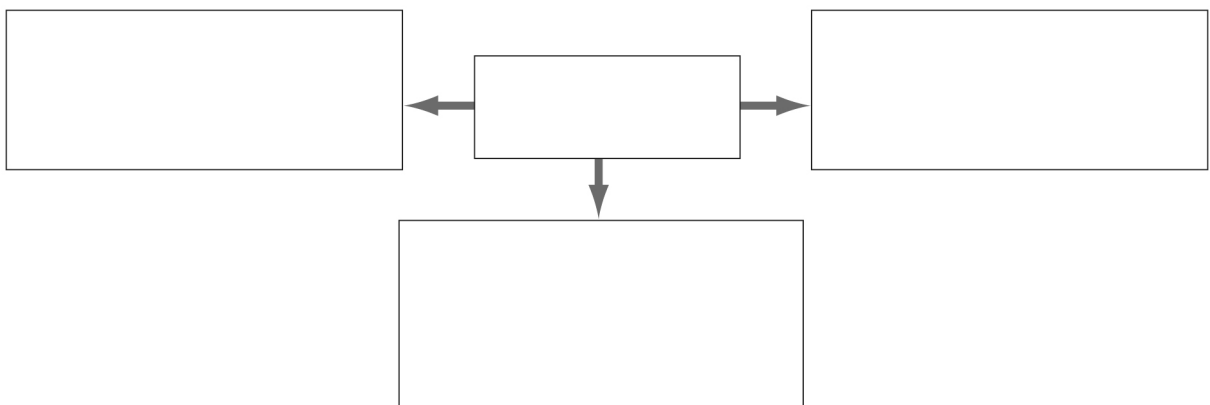
Exercise 3

Describe a special place that you know well and that has made a lasting impression on you.

In answering this question, you are now going to put together all the skills you have gone through in this topic so far.

Stage 1: planning

Plan your answer/initial thoughts in the bubble diagram below.



Stage 2: evidence

Fill in the table below as you draft your answer. Make sure you have a good example of each skill to include in your answer.

Skill	Evidence
Thoughtful and imaginative viewpoint	
Clear focus on topic — engaging	
Well-structured ideas	
Awareness of form, style, audience and purpose	
Not necessarily a narrative	
Crafted language, extensive vocabulary, figurative language, e.g. literary devices, power verbs	
Variety of sentence types/lengths	
Well-linked paragraphs	
Range of punctuation	
Use of senses	

Stage 3: writing

Now write your answer.

Plenary

Swap your answer with a partner's and mark it, identifying evidence of the skills listed in the table. Award one mark for each skill, each time it is demonstrated.

Identify the skills your partner needs to improve the most. If you can, give an example of how they can be improved.

Extension work

- Describe your dream world, planning and writing up everything independently.
- Mark your work and set targets for yourself.
- Substitute other things you could describe into the question and practise planning different answers under timed conditions. Allow ten minutes for planning each answer.
- Try learning the skills you need to demonstrate in your answers so you can list them quickly, ready to use in an exam.

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AS9

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Exercise 1

Example: *The gaunt, shabby attire, I had once found repulsive, was something I had now grown accustomed to. The pungent odour that lingered permanently on this unkempt, dishevelled soul made me wince, only occasionally, with disgust.*

- The piece begins in an unusual manner with a description of clothes. ‘Gaunt’ is a word we would normally associate with the way someone looks.
- The use of the word ‘occasionally’ is really successful in this phrase as one can infer that previously the speaker or narrator had been disgusted by the smell more often and has now become used to it and can see past this and sees Arron as a person, a human being.

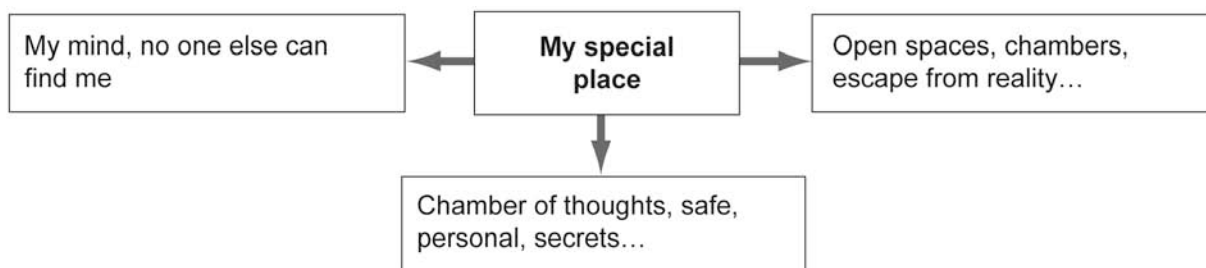
Exercise 2

Skill	Evidence
Thoughtful and imaginative viewpoint	Image of a homeless man — more imaginative than a best friend or someone more ‘ordinary or expected’
Clear focus on topic — engaging	Reference to Arron throughout in interesting ways
Well-structured ideas	All paragraphs link together
Awareness of form, style, audience and purpose	Clear awareness of form, style, audience and purpose, with the focus on someone who has made an impression
Not necessarily a narrative	There is a good selection of description so this does not turn into a typical story, e.g. ‘like a badly-constructed snowman...’
Crafted language, extensive vocabulary, figurative language, e.g. literary devices, power verbs	‘piano-like teeth’, ‘interminable’, ‘surreptitiously’

Variety of sentence types/lengths	<p>'My first real encounter with this rootless, friendless, homeless man was to change my life forever.'</p> <p>'A nonchalant world walked by, uncaring, unforgiving.'</p>
Well-linked paragraphs	<p>The first paragraph tells us what Arron is like at present, ending with the reference to the firm friendship with Arron. The second paragraph shows a shift in time, back to the past and explains the reasons for this friendship, the link between them is logical.</p>
Range of punctuation	. , ; ? —
Use of senses	<p>'pungent odour', 'damp, soggy pavement', 'deafening silence', 'A smile lit up his almost piano-like teeth, deepening the etched lines in his weary face.'</p>

Exercise 3

Stage 1: planning



Stage 2: evidence

Skill	Evidence
Thoughtful and imaginative viewpoint	A room in mind, not a real room — refer to chambers
Clear focus on topic — engaging	Make different references to how the chambers work — reader will not be expecting this
Well-structured ideas	All paragraphs link together
Awareness of form, style, audience and purpose	Style can be formal with slight informality when getting 'lost' in the chambers — no slang though, e.g. it's a great place, bit like a mini-holiday...
Not necessarily a narrative	Make sure I describe, not tell a story
Crafted language, extensive vocabulary, figurative language, e.g. literary devices, power verbs	I have a precious chamber in my mind which keeps all my thoughts safe...like a bedroom with no door...
Variety of sentence types/lengths	There are rooms called chambers everywhere. I go there at different times: when I am a little sad; when I am lonely; when I am mixed up; even when I have something to celebrate!
Well-linked paragraphs	Special place, unusual place, precious chambers — in place...
Range of punctuation	. , ; ? —
Use of senses	Fragrance — smell, cool breezes — touch

Stage 3: writing

This is my special place. My only place; where no one can find me. My mind is the place where I escape to when things get too much for me.

It is a very unusual kind of place, full of great open spaces so that I can escape from reality. There are rooms called chambers everywhere. I go there at different times: when I am a little sad; when I am lonely; when I am mixed up; even when I have something to celebrate! It's a bit like a 'mini holiday' although sometimes it only lasts for a few seconds. Sometimes, it lasts for only a single, solitary second, in a moment passing in time. I treasure this sanctuary; this place of safety.

I have a precious chamber in my mind which keeps all my thoughts safe when I do not want to share them with anyone. Although it's not always easy, it's still a great place to be and I would choose it anytime. I am enthralled by it. Its fragrance refreshes me and its cool breezes caress my problems, looking for answers. It's like a bedroom but with no door. My secret garden...