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Group 1: English

IOC revision summary

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- Your individual oral commentary should be based upon roughly 40 lines of text (this could be taken from anywhere in the text).
- 20 minutes of planning time.
- 10 minutes speaking (including 3 minutes of questions).
- All HL students have an additional 10-minute discussion based on one of the other works studied in part 2. The advice below refers only to the first part of the IOC, which SL students also complete.
- Worth 15% of your overall grade.
- All IOCs are recorded.
- Remember, for those higher marks, you are expected to identify not only what is in the lines, but also what is *between the lines* and *behind the lines*. Keep in mind the writer's art, craft and skill.
- You need to recognise and note down three or four key ideas about the passage/poem and expand on them through other aspects of your commentary. What you say about content, interpretation, tone, pace, form, syntax, contrast, tension, poetic/literary devices will all link back in some way and illuminate your central ideas.
- What is interesting about the extract? Put it into context and relate it to the rest of the work/other poems. In this way, the IOC is different from the written commentary. Are the ideas, plot, purposes of the author, key moment identified, linked to other moments in the text or to other poems? Does it take us backwards or forwards to another scene? Does it anticipate, foreshadow or echo other incidents?
- Try to visualise it. Where are we? Who is there? Why? What is the relationship between them? Has the author confined the characters for some reasons: in a room, a car? Why? What relationship does the setting have with the action?
- How does the extract work? Describe the effects on the reader but also explains how they are achieved. Remember to be precise and concise. Examiners have to listen to many tapes. Make your delivery impassioned and interesting to listen to. Let your tone of voice suggest personal engagement.
- This is not a 10-minute chat about the extract. It has to sound like a well thought-out analysis.
- How does this particular extract contribute to the work as a whole? Does it illuminate any of the following: theme (character and state of mind, emotions revealed or developed, technical mastery, something revealed/concealed, conflict/tensions); plot (relationships, a problem created or resolved, issues explored, writer's choice/attitude/overview)?

- Note any breaks in the passage such as a change of place, attitude, tone, speaker, direction, language, imagery or purpose. Look at the use of language (verbs, adverbs, adjectives, pronouns, abstract nouns). Look at the balance between narration and dialogue, irony and sincerity, setting and characters, characters' voices, narrator's voice, and writer's voice. Which lines carry the key emotions in the passage?
- Avoid hesitation and repetition (but some hesitation is allowed).
- Don't let your tone of voice rise at the end of sentences —it sounds as if you are uncertain about the points you are making. Don't say 'like' every 5 seconds. Don't begin every other sentence with 'Also' and avoid saying 'This shows'.
- Lead the examiner carefully through the commentary, but do not go through it line by line. Sound as if you know exactly where you are going and why. Never paraphrase. Never make an observation unless you are going to follow it through with a point.
- Make sure you sound interested.

A recent examiner's report said:

In no more than a handful of the 180 commentaries I marked was there any evidence that the candidates were genuinely engaged in a process of discovery, analysis and synthesis of what had been discovered, and in no more than one or two could the candidate have been described as taking any pleasure in the exercise.

It is good to see that fewer candidates are offering line-by-line analyses, but this has been replaced too often by randomness and generalisation. A number of candidates promise a structure of sorts — normally a rather haphazard list of items to be covered — but even when this has been followed (which is only sometimes the case), little sense of a coherent reading emerges. Rather than dissecting the extract, candidates are hacking it apart, then tossing the bits — literary devices, themes, characters, diction — randomly at the examiner.

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