



Ten things that make examiners weep

Understanding what examiners want is essential to gaining maximum marks in your literature in translation essay, so make sure you understand the chief examiner's report for the subject. Examiners are fair, and mark positively. However, you can also view them a little differently...

Exam context



The literature in translation essay consists of four distinct stages (Box 1), and you have to do each of these stages for every text you study. The essay is marked by IB examiners and accounts for 25% of your final grade. It is therefore essential that you spend sufficient time on it to get the best grade you can.

Questions and activities



Hyperbole is extreme exaggeration done for dramatic effect. It often contains an element of truth but is not intended to be taken entirely seriously.

Read the ten guidelines and underline anything that you think is hyperbolic. What serious point is being made? How would you rewrite these so that the main point is retained but the exaggeration is taken out? What has been gained? What has been lost?

Box | The four stages

- The interactive oral:** a short discussion of about 40 minutes focusing on the context of the text you are studying.
- The reflective statement:** a 400-word statement that has as its title: 'How was your understanding of the cultural and contextual considerations of [title of text] developed through the interactive oral?'
- The supervised study:** an essay written under timed conditions (of between 40 and 50 minutes) in which you respond to three 'prompts' provided by your teacher.
- The essay:** this should consist of no more than 1500 words. It must have:
 - your name and candidate number on every page
 - the title on the first page
 - page numbers
 - every quotation referenced as a footnote. In the first instance, you should give full bibliographical details; thereafter, it is sufficient to use 'ibid p.34' etc.
 - a bibliography of works used
 - a word count at the end
 - at least 1.5 line spacing and 12-point font

1

...are pathologically fussy — they pick up on every spelling mistake, misplaced apostrophe and errant semi-colon. They hate titles that are not italicised and bibliographies that are inaccurate. They count the words and use software that detects plagiarism.

2

...explode at generalisations, 'all-women-at-the-time-were...' statements, essays that write about context rather than text.

3

...go green if you use the word 'theme' as if it means 'something that happens in the text'.

4

...weep as they deduct marks because your essay looks bad: uneven paragraphing, no candidate number, no page numbers, not 1.5 line-spaced, cover sheet not filled in properly.

5

...loathe introductions that do not attack the question, do not give it shape and direction immediately and do not reassure them that this is a task that can be answered in 1500 words — not one that can only be scraped in 1500 words.

6

...spit venom if you do not recognise the fact that you are writing about literature and appreciate the writer's choices in shaping what they have written.

7

...scorn essays that try to find 'messages'.

8

...despair when confronted by the language of twenty-first century adolescents: characters who are 'patronising', show no 'respect', are 'emotional', 'really' anything or 'obviously' anything else.

9

...call their friends and laugh at you when they realise you have not proof-read your work allowed [sic], only read it silently on a screen.

10

...are so powerful that they award you 25% of your final English mark. That's 1% for every 60 words.

Literature in translation examiners...

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