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UPDATED TO 2022 SYLLABUS

CAIE IGCSE  
**ENGLISH**  
**LANGUAGE (0500)**

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SUMMARIZED NOTES ON THE THEORY SYLLABUS

## 1. Directed Writing

### 1.1. Reading the question and understanding the prompt

1. Read the instructions
2. Read the question. Identify:
  1. Role - who am I as the writer?
  2. Audience - who is reading what I have written?
  3. Format - is this an article, speech, letter or interview?
    1. What are the structural features that need to be included? i.e. heading
  4. Topic - what is the focus of the two bullet points?
  5. Strong Voice - what is the purpose of the writing?

### 1.2. Reading and annotating the text

1. Identify the relevant information according to what was given in the question.
  1. Highlight and annotate the text. Label what you find.
  2. You must clearly identify points under TWO different POV

### 1.3. Planning your response

1. Extract the points and map it out according to the question. Choose the best points to include in your answer. It is NOT THE QUANTITY to how many points from the text you include (3-5 per section of the question is enough). You need to focus on the QUALITY of the points taken that you are able to develop well with details and personal thought.
2. Plan the structure - the order of how you would like to address the question. At IGCSE the question will give you the structure and flow of how you should write your answer.
  1. Point, detail, development and evaluation must be included.
  2. **Evaluation** is emphasized for directed writing, which makes it different from a reading response. Some ways to produce evaluations can be by asking the following questions:
    1. Are there alternatives to the solutions/suggestions provided by the text?
    2. What can be learnt or improved upon from examples in the text?
    3. What are some arguments against the ones in the text?

4. Which arguments are more important? Weigh the options against the stakeholders involved. For example, a proposition to start school 2 hours later. The stakeholders are:

1. Students
2. Teachers
3. Parents

3. Be as organized as possible at this stage. Check your plan to ensure that you have everything you need to write in the answer.

### 1.4. Writing your Answer

1. Refer to your plan to make sure you do not deter away from what you are *supposed* to write about.
2. In essence, transfer and expand what you have in your plan to the answer sheet in complete and well-structured sentences and paragraphs.
3. With a clear plan, there is no need to rush; therefore, you can focus on using good handwriting and ensuring that all the mechanics of spelling, punctuation and sentence structure can be applied correctly.

## 2. Descriptive Writing

### 2.1. General: Do's and Don'ts

DOs	DONTs
These pieces are mostly written in present tense to give a sense of immediacy.	Don't start a description and then turn it into a narrative.
Safer to base your description over an actual memory or experience.	Don't be vague by using terms like "bad", "good" or "nice". You have to be more specific with the adjectives or adverbs you use.
The more precise, varied and uncommon your adjectives are the more the reader will be able to engage with your description.	You can create an observer who reveals his thoughts or feelings but don't create a sequence of events based on his observations.
You need to employ varied sentence lengths and types. A mix of short sentences for impact and longer one works best.	Do not forget to describe the size or shape of an object.

### 2.2. Tackling descriptive writing

1. Select the prompt you would like to respond to.
  1. Specific prompts: "Write a description of a group of people who have become stuck somewhere"

1. Identify subjects/focus areas of the prompt, i.e. "group of people" and "somewhere" indicating the things that need to be described.
2. General prompts: Write a description with the title, 'The nest'
  1. Brainstorm the concept of the piece - what 'nest' are you describing? A literal bird's nest, or a metaphorical nest?
    1. Identify distinct components of a nest
2. Plan/consider descriptive semantic fields or the different senses you would portray:
  1. Semantic field: vocabulary or a set of terms closely linked by subject or usage.
  2. Senses: smell, touch, sight, sound, taste
    1. Depending on your choice of structure, each 'sense' would be a focal point. What do the group of people look like? What sounds can you hear in the location? Are there any distinct scents?
  3. Focal points can be created by "zooming" into aspects of the scene.
    1. For the "nest" prompt, this may be describing the bird who made the nest, or the shape, color etc of the eggs.
3. Writing the response:
  1. Be wary of descriptions or movements that turn into plot. Using present tense may help keep the writing "in a moment".
    1. A good way to think about descriptive writing is like describing a picture, painting or at most, a live photo. The character, previous actions or future actions of characters within the frame aren't captured and shouldn't be written.
  2. Structure the description so it flows. Choices may be by:
    1. Each paragraph zooms into a different part of the picture, e.g. tree canopies [with x, y, x elements] and then the next paragraph is about the river bank.
    2. Each paragraph concentrates on a sense, e.g. smell, then sight, then touch.
  3. Specific, precise vocabulary enhances imagery. A "pink" box leaves a lot to be interpreted. A "fuschia box" is different from a "a maroon box".

## 3. Reading Response

### 3.1. Identify the RAFTS - Role, Audience, Format, Topic and Strong Voice.

1. Role - who am I writing as?

1. Is the character formal (e.g. journalist) or informal (writing in a diary)?
2. What is the character's writing style?
  1. This can be gauged from the text if the character is mentioned
  2. Character's background influences tone and register - professionals like doctors or professors are unlikely to use slang or colloquialisms
2. **Audience - who are you writing for?**
  1. Type of language used and persuasive techniques will be determined by the audience e.g. a speech to school children versus a letter to a principal.
3. **Format - what text type is the response?**
  1. News report
  2. Magazine article
  3. Formal letter
  4. Formal Report
  5. Interview
  6. Journal Entry
  7. Speech script
4. **Topic - what are the 3 bullet points asking for?**
  1. Label each bullet with A1, A2 and A3 for assessment objectives.
  2. Annotate the points in the text that relate to each bullet with A1, A2 or A3.
5. **Strong Voice - what is the purpose of the writing?**
  1. This links strongly to role. Ensure that the tone you choose to employ matches the role, and properly conveys the message of the task.
    1. I.e. A speech should use persuasive techniques like power of three, repetition and powerful adjectives or adverbs. Punctuation can be used to indicate emphasis in the speech.

## 3.2. Reading and Annotating

### 1. Reading and Annotating

1. As you read, ensure you highlight/underline the key points relating to the question.
  1. Annotate the points in the text that relate to each bullet with A1, A2 or A3.
  2. As part of the *READING* paper, your response highly relies on what is provided in the text. It should only build on the material provided, and is NOT a creative response. Thus, ensure you understand the text thoroughly.

## 3.3. Planning your answer

1. Extract the points and map it out according to the question.
  1. Choose the best points to include in your answer.

2. It is NOT THE QUANTITY to how many points from the text you include (3-5 per section of the question is enough). You need to focus on the QUALITY of the points taken that you are able to develop well with details and personal thought.

2. **Plan the structure** - the order of how you would like to address the question. At IGCSE the question will give you the structure and flow of how you should write your answer.

1. Point, detail, development and evaluation must be included.

1. Point - answers the question
2. Detail - taken from the text
3. Development - your own extrapolation or evaluation based on what the text implies.

### 3.4. Writing Process

1. Refer to your plan to make sure you do not deter away from what you are *supposed* to write about.
2. In essence, transfer and expand what you have in your plan to the answer sheet in complete and well-structured sentences and paragraphs.
3. With a clear plan, there is no need to rush; therefore, you can focus on using good handwriting and ensuring that all the mechanics of spelling, punctuation and sentence structure can be applied correctly.

### 3.5. Checking and Proof-reading

Check your answer for:

1. Clear sentence structure
2. Correct grammar and spelling
3. Check punctuation
4. Content - have I addressed all the bullet points? Are my points communicated clearly with no doubt to what I am trying to convey?
5. Is my handwriting legible?

### 3.6. Summary (120 words)

Steps

1. Read and underline relevant points with pencil
2. Make a plan by writing the points in your own words
3. Group the points logically- prioritize points
4. Check the summary (word count) decrease by changing punctuation or removing repetition. Add information by including more points that you think are relevant.

IMPORTANT: PLANNING-- The fluency of ideas presented by you is crucial, so you need to **plan** in order to structure and sequence the points effectively. Also, don't break down the

summary into paragraphs. You have to write it in **1 paragraph**.

**Keep In Mind**

- Write in your own words as much as possible
- Write in complex sentences to keep within word limit
- Clear and direct points
- Use connectives
- Try to pick out 12-15 points from the text
- Use umbrella terms
- No Opinions
- Keep facts and quotes
- Present tense
- Paraphrase
- 3rd person objective tone

## 4. Writer's Effect

### 4.1. Writer's effect

*The following reading assessment goals are tested by this question which is for 10 points:*

1. *You must show that you grasp the clear meanings.*
2. *You must show that you grasp underlying attitudes and meanings.*
3. *You must choose the information you use carefully and only for those purposes.*

- The total mark awarded for the Writer's Effect question is 15. 10 marks for the content of your answer and 5 for your style of writing.

### 4.2. What to do while reading the text?

Things to think about while reading the text:

1. What did the author write about? Find the meaning and the purpose of the text.
2. How have they done it? Look for figurative devices used to create an effect in order to achieve the meaning or purpose of the text.
3. Why have they done it? What was the writer's intention in including those particular phrases in the text? How did the author want you to feel?

### 4.3. Process

1. Skim through the passage first, and try to figure out the overall meaning and purpose of the passage. Additionally, make an effort to determine the passage's general mood, tone, and atmosphere.
2. Only essential words or phrases should be highlighted; do not highlight a large "chunk" of text.

1. Try to come up with three to five options for each section of the question.
2. Don't underline large sections of the text. Only the most powerful phrases should be highlighted.
3. Start your plan
  1. Divide the selected quotations into the three categories of Evidence, Explanation, and Effect on a table.
  2. Pay attention to the particular impact the phrase is having. Additionally, look for any figurative language that contributes to this effect.
  3. First, explain the explicit meaning of the phrase then the implicit meaning tries looking for connotations, etc.
4. Write the response
  1. Start your response by discussing the passage's overall impact.
  2. Use one paragraph to cover one section of the response, and a different paragraph for the second section.
    1. Explain Part A in 120 words and Part B in 120 words
    2. No conclusion is required

#### 4.4. Key Vocabulary

- **Mood:** Mainly to do with the emotion the character is feeling internally.
- **Tone:** The way the text/narrator sounds. Ex: The narrator can sound frightened. We know this because of other techniques used in the writing that lets us know that the narrator is frightened.
- **Atmosphere:** The feeling caused by the environment around the narrator. It can be influenced by the objects within the setting. Ex: When the principal reprimanded the student in a stern tone, the atmosphere was suffocating for the student. The student can react with a frightened tone.

#### 4.5. DOs and DONTs

##### DOs

1. First, explain the explicit meaning of the phrase then the implicit meaning tries looking for connotations, etc.
2. Select diverse selections so that you don't repeat explanations/ don't choose phrases that have a similar effect.
3. Use technical terms correctly though they aren't required.
4. Search for the type of sentence and see if there is repetition and see what effect the syntax plays.
5. Look for synonyms for the word created before the exam. Some synonyms could be designed or portrayed.

##### DONTs

1. Don't make general comments like stating that the writer has used great imagery.
2. The following phrase "the writer created an effect of..." should be avoided as it is not recommended for the effect to be stated explicitly, sometimes it is unavoidable.

#### 4.6. Common linguistic devices

1. **Alliteration:** the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the start of words that are near together or adjacent.

*Example:* "Tasty Tacos"

2. **Metaphors and Similes:**

1. **Metaphor:** when a writer states that one thing is another while comparing the 2 subjects

*Example:* She is a shining star.

2. **Simile:** expressions that describe one person/thing/attribute to another person/thing/attribute typically using the words "like" or "as".

*Example:* Shine like a star

3. **Pathetic Fallacy:** when the writer describes the natural world as though it had feelings.

*Example:* "Weeping Willow"

4. **Sibilance:** the repetitive use of hissing or hushing-like letter sounds.

*Example:* Using words like "strange", "sight" and "glass" in a sentence, for example.

5. **Assonance and Consonance**

1. **Assonance:** the use of similar or identical vowel sounds repeatedly inside words, phrases, or sentences.

*Example:* They're some creeps who I wouldn't meet if you paid me a heap of cash!

2. **Consonance:** the group of consonants that are repeatedly copied. It occurs when a line or sentence has the same consonant sound several times, giving a rhythmic impression.

*Example:* Mike likes his new bike.

6. **Anaphora:** whenever a particular word or phrase is repeated at the start of clauses or phrases.
7. **\*\*\_Epistrophe: \_\*\***a repetition of a phrase or word at the end of subsequent sentences.
8. **Euphemism:** an alternative term or phrase that is used in place of potentially rude or improper ones.

*Example:* "Passed away" instead of "died".

9. **Hyperbole:** statements that are over-exaggerated (sometimes to a level at which it is inhumane) or overly stressed.

*Example:* I walked a million miles to get here.

10. **Onomatopoeia:** a phrase that describes a sound by imitating that sound

*Example:* "Pitter-patter"

11. **Personification:** to give human-like qualities to non-living things or abstract ideas

*Example:* The sun smiled down on us.

12. **Connotations:** an abstract idea/ something a word suggests. Connotation can be determined by context as well.

*Example:* The color blue can be associated with sadness.

*Example 2:* "As I tread through the forest, I brushed past shrubs, leaves biting at my ankles as I stepped over the gnarled roots snaked around the forest floor."

→ Here, adjectives with negative connotations are used to create a dark atmosphere. "Biting" suggests the leaves are sharp and dangerous, and the adjective "snaked" is less positive than "swirled" or "twisted" which adds to this atmosphere.

## 5. Narrative Writing

### 5.1. Narrative Writing

- **Exposition/Orientation:** It is the backstory on the characters and place that is explained at the beginning of the story.
- **Rising action:** It is made up of a succession of events that build on the conflict and heighten the suspense, propelling the story to a dramatic climax.
  - Inciting incident: It is the event that initiates the plot and pushes the main character into the action.
- **Climax:** The conflict is confronted during the story's primary, most dramatic event. The climax of a narrative is the highest point of tension or drama in the tale.
- **Falling Action:** One can see the results of the climax. Things start to fall in place.
- **Resolution:** The story is concluded

### 5.2. Narrators

- **First person:** The narrator appears recalls his or her own role in the events described, either as a witness to the action or as an integral participant in it.
- **Second person:** This narrative voice implies that the reader is the protagonist or a character in the novel, and

that the events are taking place to them.

Identifier: "You"

- **Third Person Omniscient:** All knowing perspective of the story. The narrator about thoughts and situations of every character in the story.
- **Third Person Limited:** The narrator only knows the thoughts and feelings of a single character.

Identifier of third person POV: "He/She/They"

**Dual narration:** You can write the story from multiple viewpoints by making sections for different narrators/ characters to voice their opinions.

### 5.3. Story Openings/Narrative hooks

1. Scene-settings
2. In Medias Res
3. Mystery/Mysterious opening
4. Dialogue
5. Third/First person narrator speaking to the reader
6. Questions
7. Bold statements

### 5.4. Story Endings

1. Abrupt ending
2. Plot twist
3. Circular narration: The story comes back to how it all started.
4. "Happily-Ever-After"/Resolved
5. Cliff hanger
6. Implied/Open ending

### 5.5. Rules to write dialogues

1. Use a new line for each new speaker
2. Use speech marks
3. Try implementing various dialogue tags
4. Punctuate your sentence within the speech marks
5. Don't use quotation marks when writing speech in multiple paragraphs
6. Capitalize only at the start of sentences
7. Use single quotation marks to quote within a quote

**TIPS** to consider when writing DIALOGUES

1. Don't add any dialogue that doesn't drive the story forward.
2. Dialogue can be used for characterization. For example, a character speaking in a certain slang can tell the reader more about where the character is from, and his/her background.
3. Try to be ambitious while selecting verbs to use.

### 5.6. Narrative Techniques

- **Backstory**- Provide background information of the character
- **Foreshadowing**- Hinting events that are yet to happen in the story

Ex: A common phrase used to foreshadow a negative event is "I have a bad feeling about this."

- **Chekhov's Gun**- A seemingly irrelevant object/person responsible for plot development

Ex: The knowledge that Katniss' had about the poisonous plants, because it is a significant character trait that helped her trick the Capitol into taking Peeta and herself would survive the Hunger games.

- **Flashback**- When you alter the time sequence of the narrative (interrupt the chronology of the narrative) to take the reader back to a scene that happened before the story began or a past event in the character's life. This technique helpful in developing characterization.

Ex: The opening line of *The Great Gatsby* by *F.Scott Fitzgerald* occurs in flashback.

- **Frame Story**- A story within a story

Ex: . The story of Frankenstein contains the story of a creature, and the story of the creature briefly contains the story of the family with which he has been living.

- **In Medias Res**- Beginning the story in middle of some action

Ex: This technique is usually used in films. This opening can be seen in the tv show *Breaking Bad*.

- **Plot twist**
- **Red Herring**- diverting attention from a significant object. Essentially it is misleading or a false clue.

Ex: Harry Potter regards Sirius Black as a dangerous criminal and murderer. Slowly, Harry discovers that this man murdered his parents and is pursuing him to do the job. When Harry eventually meets Black, he discovers that Sirius is not a murderer at all.

- **Unreliable narration**- bias in narration
- **Ticking clock scenario**- time limit for characters to successfully complete their mission

Ex: In *RUN LOLA RUN* (a film) Lola has only 20 minutes to deliver 100,000 German Marks in order to save her boyfriend's life.

- **Deus Ex Machina**- Hand of god

Ex: In *William Golding's Lord of the Flies*, the abandoned boys spend the whole novel both establishing and tearing down their fragile civilization. When rescue does not arrive despite the continual signal fire, the boys lose hope and turn viciously

against one another. It appears that all is lost until a navy ship arrives and rescues the guys.

- **Mac Guffin**- When the whole story is centered around an ordinary object

Ex: It is used in the movie *Titanic*. The Heart of the Ocean is emphasized not because it aids the plot to move forward, but is used to open and close the movie.

**Tip:** Use literary devices like Pathetic Fallacy, Imagery, extended metaphors

## 5.7. Characterization

Characterization is the representation of a character's features, motives, and personality in a narrative.

Direct

The author directly describes the characteristics of a character.

Indirect

Rather than explicitly describing a character's attributes, an author portrays the character as he or she travels through the world, leaving the reader to deduce the character's qualities from his or her actions through indirect characterization.

- Thoughts of the character
- The actions of the character
- Word choice of the character including dialect
- The appearance of the character
- The actions and mannerisms of the character
- The character's interactions with others (and how others react to the character)

**Why?**

Characterization is an important component of writing a novel or short story because it allows you to understand your characters and how their personalities and perspectives can help push the storyline forward.

## 5.8. How to build tension?

1. Create conflict to characters (external or internal)
2. If your protagonist is unable to attain his or her goal, keep escalating the stakes or the impact of the repercussions.
3. Dramatic Irony: when the audience knows something that the protagonist doesn't

## 5.9. Points to note from the Examiner's Feedback Report

- **What do examiners like?**

1. Usage of short sentences to create surprise or emphasis.
2. Usage of subordinate clauses to begin a sentence.

3. Detailed description of the atmosphere then zooming in on a character or two (using each paragraph as a different camera)- zooming in or out.
4. Pathetic fallacy
5. Circular narration
6. Usage of extended metaphors
7. Plot twists

- **What don't examiners like?**

1. Lack of planning that results in a bad/incomplete ending.
2. They do not recommend taking extra pages.
3. Do not use incorrect punctuation, especially comma splicing.
4. Make sure that the synonyms you use for a common word fit the context.

## 5.10. Tips

1. Your story should use only one tense that should be past tense. Unless you're using narrative techniques such as flashbacks or others.
2. Making a plan starting from the resolution to the exposition is a good idea.
3. Try to limit your coverage to one or two major events. A short story cannot have numerous occurrences.
4. Collect a few dialogue tags before hand to use.
5. Don't use first person narration if you character is going to die at the ending.
6. Do not end your story by saying it was all a dream.
7. Create a plot that is adaptable to a variety of prompts. You can also design characters ahead of time.
8. Try to focus your story on a particular theme such as, loss, friendship etc.

# CAIE IGCSE

## English Language (0500)

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