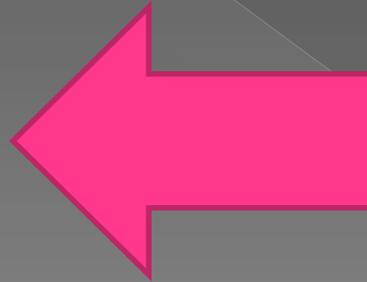


'The Test'

Writing a critical essay
in the exam



Actual people after
doing exam essays

In the exam

- You will have 45 minutes to write a critical essay.
- You will be able to pick a question from the prose section
- There will be two options in each section for you to choose from.

- ◉ Why do the examiners want you to write an essay? What do they want you to prove about your skills?
- ◉ They are actually looking at **four different** areas of your essay-writing skill:
- ◉ **A) Understanding** means how well you understand and know the text you have studied
- ◉ **B) Analysis** means being able to examine the way the writer writes and the techniques he or she uses
- ◉ **C) Evaluation** means having a personal response to and a personal opinion about what you have read.
- ◉ **D) Expression** is how well you use the English language in your writing. This includes your spelling, grammar and punctuation. It also means that your essay has to be well linked together, and that the language you use should be formal.

Example Question

Choose a novel or short story in which you feel great sympathy for or intense dislike of one of the characters.

Briefly outline the situation in which the character is placed and show by what means you are made to feel sympathy or dislike.

Critical Essay Writing

Introductions

Discussion Task



What should a good introduction to a critical essay do? What information should it include?

Introductions

- ◉ Formal language/style
- ◉ Use the language of the question
- ◉ Title of text and author
- ◉ Addresses the essay question
- ◉ Lets your reader know what you're writing about
- ◉ Clear and succinct
- ◉ BRIEF overview of plot

Introductions - TATTS

T – Title of text (in inverted commas “The Test”)

A - Author

T – Task (Link to essay question)

T – Techniques (Characterisation, word choice, theme, etc)

S- Summary (Not more than 150 words)



'The Test'

Choose a novel or short story in which you feel great sympathy for or intense dislike of one of the characters.

Briefly outline the situation in which the character is placed and show by what means you are made to feel sympathy or dislike.

Introduction – use the words of the question

Choose a novel or **short story** in which you **feel great sympathy** for or intense dislike of **one of the characters**.

A short story which makes me feel great sympathy for one of the characters is 'The Test' by Angelica Gibbs.

Summary

Gibbs makes us feel a great deal of sympathy for the main character of the story, Marian. In the story, she is taking her driving test. Despite being a good driver, Marian fails her test because of the instructor's racism.

Task and Techniques

Gibbs uses a number of techniques to make us feel sympathy for Marian, including characterisation and word choice.

A short story which makes me feel great sympathy for one of the characters is 'The Test' by Angelica Gibbs. Gibbs makes us feel a great deal of sympathy for the main character of the story, Marian. In the story, she is taking her driving test. Despite being a good driver, Marian fails her test because of the instructor's racism. Gibbs uses a number of techniques to make us feel sympathy for Marian, including characterisation and word choice.

You have a try...

Choose a novel or short story in which you feel great sympathy for or **intense dislike** of one of the characters.

Briefly outline the situation in which the character is placed and show by what means you are made to feel sympathy or **dislike**.

- A short story which makes me feel great dislike for one of the characters is 'The Test' by Angelica Gibbs. Gibbs makes us feel a great deal of dislike for the character of the driving inspector. In this story Marian, a black woman, is taking her driving test for the second time. Despite being a good driver, the racist driving inspector fails her because she had the cheek to answer back to his racist assumptions. Gibbs uses a number of techniques to make us dislike the inspector, including characterisation, word choice and theme.

You have a try...

Choose a novel or short story in which there is a character you feel strongly about.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the author creates this reaction in you.

A short story which makes me feel strongly about a character is 'The Test' by Angelica Gibbs. Gibbs makes us feel a great deal of sympathy for the main character of the story, Marian. In the story, she is taking her driving test. Despite being a good driver, Marian fails her test because of the instructor's racism. Gibbs uses a number of techniques to make us feel sympathy for Marian, including characterisation and word choice.

- A short story which makes me feel strongly about a character is 'The Test' by Angelica Gibbs. Gibbs makes us feel a great deal of dislike for the character of the driving inspector. In this story Marian, a black woman, is taking her driving test for the second time. Despite being a good driver, the racist driving inspector fails her because she had the cheek to answer back to his racist assumptions. Gibbs uses a number of techniques to make us dislike the inspector, including characterisation, word choice and theme.

Swap and mark

- Has your partner included

- T

- A

- T

- T

- S?

- 1 mark for each!

One more practice...

- ◉ Choose a work of prose fiction or non-fiction which deals with an important human issue – for example, injustice, or poverty, or scientific discovery, or any other issue which you regard as important.
- ◉ Identify and explain what the issue is and go on to describe the ways in which the writer has made the prose work thought-provoking.

Swap and mark

- Has your partner included

- T

- A

- T

- T

- S?

- 1 mark for each!

One more for luck

- Choose a novel or short story which deals with a powerful human emotion: for example love, shame, hatred, fear, embarrassment, despair, joy, or any other strong emotion.
- Show how the emotion you have chosen affects one, or more than one, of the characters, and go on to show how it affects the course of the story

Writing a Critical Essay

How to write the MAIN BODY
of your essay.

Let's look at the question again...

Choose a novel or short story in which you feel great sympathy for or intense dislike of one of the characters.

Briefly outline the situation in which the character is placed and show by what means you are made to feel sympathy or dislike.

Why do we feel sympathy for Marian?

- ◉ She is always judged by her colour
 - > By Mrs Ericson – even though they get on
 - > By the Driving Inspector
- ◉ She fails her test because of her colour, not her ability.

Exam essay paragraphs

- Once you've done your introduction, you're going to focus on the main body of your essay.
- This should be 3-4 paragraphs, **not including your introduction and conclusion.** This means picking out 4-6 quotations that support your line of argument.

Exam essay paragraphs

- To help structure this essay, I would like you to find me at least four quotations that help make us feel some sympathy for Marian.
- Then find at least four quotations that make us dislike the instructor.

Exam essay paragraphs

- ◉ What do you think they should include?
- ◉ (Think back to previous critical essays)

Exam essay paragraphs

- ◉ Topic sentence
- ◉ Point
- ◉ Evidence
- ◉ Explanation
- ◉ Link

Topic sentence

- This is a sentence that tells your reader what you're going to discuss in that paragraph.
- In theory, if I just read the topic sentences of your essay, I should understand your whole argument.

Topic Sentence:

At the beginning of the short story, we feel sympathy for Marian because of her situation with her employer, Mrs. Ericson.

Point

- This is a specific point/statement that you are going to make that links in with your topic sentence.

Point:

Although Mrs. Ericson is kind to Marian, it is clear that she is still very aware of her race and judges her based on this.

Evidence

- This is a quotation from the text.
- You must
 - > Make sure you have quotation marks around it
 - > Make sure it's accurate
 - > INTRODUCE your quotation. DO NOT QUOTATION BOMB!

Evidence – Quotation bombing

- Although Mrs. Ericson is kind to Marian, it is clear that she is still very aware of her race and judges her based on this. “dark, competent hands.”
- Uh...what? Are you talking to somebody called dark, competent hands? Why is that just left floating there? THIS IS JUST CHAOS!
- This is where the context comes in...

Evidence – doing it properly

Although Mrs. Ericson is kind to Marian, it is clear that she is still very aware of her race and judges her based on this. When watching Marian drive, she focuses on her “dark, competent hands.”

- ◎ This is so much better, it makes me want to cry.

Evidence – other ways to introduce quotations

- ◉ This is shown by...
- ◉ We can see this when...
- ◉ Gibbs says that...
- ◉ For example/An example would be when...

Explanation

- Explanation is the **analysis** and **evaluation** of the quotation you have provided.
- This means showing you understand WHY the writer has used certain language and how EFFECTIVE it is.
- Look at:
- Word choice, characters' actions/dialogue, imagery, structure, sound and anything else you think is important.

Explanation

- *This shows us that Mrs. Ericson still notices Marian's race, and the fact that "dark" comes before "competent" clearly shows us that Mrs. Ericson judges Marian on her appearance before any qualities of her personality.*

Practice

For each of the four quotations you found about the inspector, write one or two sentences of analysis.

Link

- This is a clear link to the question you are answering.
- How is what you have picked from the text relevant in answering the question?
- (The link may well be caught up in your explanation – that's fine, as long as it's there.)

Link

- *This makes me feel sympathy for Marian, as even her employer, who seems to treat her well, has a racist attitude towards her.*

Full paragraph

- *At the beginning of the short story, we feel sympathy for Marian because of her situation with her employer, Mrs. Ericson. Although Mrs. Ericson is kind to Marian, it is clear that she is still very aware of her race and judges her based on this. When watching Marian drive, she focuses on her “dark, competent hands.” This shows us that Mrs. Ericson still notices Marian’s race, and the fact that “dark” comes before “competent” clearly shows us that Mrs. Ericson judges Marian on her appearance before any qualities of her personality. This makes me feel sympathy for Marian, as even her employer, who seems to treat her well, has a racist attitude towards her.*

- ◉ *The behaviour of the Driving Inspector also makes us feel sorry for Marian...*

Another reason we feel sympathy for Marian is that she fails her test even though she deserves to pass it. Throughout the short story there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Marian is a good driver. When she is asked to park between two cars she, “squeezed in between them without too much manoeuvring.” This tells us that she managed to park the car in a very tight space on the first attempt and that she is a very precise driver. However, she snaps back at the Inspector after he makes one comment too many and this causes her to fail her test. We are told that the Inspector, “made four very black crosses at random” on her driving application. The fact that he does this “at random” suggests that he is making the crosses wherever he wants and not against any mistakes she has made in her driving. This makes me feel sympathy for Marian, because even when she is standing up for herself she comes off worse. The Inspector doesn't like a black woman speaking to him like this and can hold her back as a result.

Conclusions

- ◉ What should a good conclusion do?

Don't introduce any new information



STOP

- ◉ SUMMARISE the main points of YOUR ESSAY.
- ◉ Link it to the TASK
- ◉ Give your OPINION
- ◉ Make it POSITIVE

- Overall, Gibbs makes us feel sympathy for Marian because of the way she is treated by both her employer and by the racist driving inspector. She is an intelligent and kind person and yet she is never judged by these qualities, she is judged on her skin colour. In addition, Marian shows herself to be a competent driver and yet she has failed her driving test a second time because of the attitudes of others towards her. I think that 'The Test' is an excellent presentation of the ways racism can affect people.

You give it a go...

- ◉ We also feel sympathy for Marian because we realise that she is an excellent driver and she still failed her last driving test, through no fault of her own. “I don’t remember doing all the things the inspector marked down on my blank.”

Example question

- 'Choose a novel or a short story in which there is an obvious climax or turning point.
- Show how the writer leads up to this turning point or climax, and say what is its significance for the rest of the story.