



Higher Still English Explained



Helping Your Child with Higher English

Introduction

We've designed this booklet to give you information about the Higher English Course and so that you can help your child with the key skills that they will have to master in order to be successful in the final Higher Still exam.

In addition, to Higher Still, the English Department also offers ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages at Higher Still Levels)

Course Structure

Internal Assessment

There are two units of study and each is assessed by NABs. These are exams from the SQA's National Assessment Bank and these are done in class under controlled conditions.

- 1) Language Study – Close Reading and Writing NABs
- 2) Literary Study – Textual Analysis NABs

These units must be passed in order to be presented for the final exam.

External Assessment

The external examination lasts for 3 hours and 15 minutes. There are two papers:

- 1) Close Reading (1 Hour 45 minutes) 40% weighting
- 2) Critical Essay (1 Hour 30 minutes) 40% weighting

Close Reading

In response to a series of questions, candidates are required to demonstrate their ability to understand, analyse and evaluate two thematically linked passages of unseen prose. Some questions will require candidates to compare ideas and/or style between the two passages.

We have included some more detailed information on types of close reading questions and useful formulas on how to answer questions later in this booklet.

Critical Essay

Selecting from a range of questions candidates are required to write two Critical Essays, each on a different genre, chosen from the following: drama, prose and poetry. In the course of their responses candidates are required to demonstrate their ability to understand, analyse and evaluate previously studied texts. However, candidates are not allowed to take notes/books into the exam. Quotes must be memorised and notes on plot, characters, themes, setting, style, structure and language must be learned. We have included some more detailed information on how you can help your child to revise for the Critical Essay Paper later in this booklet.

Folio of Writing 20% weighting

Two pieces of writing must be submitted and will be sent to the SQA for grading purposes:

- one piece of writing must be creative
- one piece of writing must be discursive

It is essential that your son/daughter keeps up to date with homework and deadlines and in order to ensure you are aware of English deadlines we have included our departmental deadlines sheet on the next page

Close Reading

You can help your child with their close reading skills by doing the following:

- Ensure there are quality newspapers around the house and encourage your child to read them.

Discuss their style, content, vocabulary, arguments and structure – all of these aspects will be looked at in the Close Reading Paper.

- Watch a documentary like ‘Panorama’ or a discussion programme like ‘Question Time’. Ask your child questions to test their understanding.
- Test your child’s knowledge of critical terminology. Are they familiar with simile, metaphor, imagery, personification, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, alliteration, assonance? We have included definitions and examples in this booklet to help with this. Ask your child to find examples of the above techniques in newspaper articles and discuss their effectiveness with them.
- Play vocabulary games with your child. Each find 5 testing and interesting words (e.g. pugnacious, fraternal, dogmatic) but not impossible (zeugma, triptych, proselytize). Give two points if they get the meaning correct and one if they work it out when you put it into a sentence. This will test their ability to work out the meaning from the context.
- Buy past papers and encourage your child to complete the Close Reading papers. Go over the answers with them and help them to see how they can improve their mark.
- Go over the Close Reading Information Sheets included in this booklet. Help your child to identify the different types of questions and help them to frame an answer using the formulas for each type of question.

Critical Essay Writing

You can help your child with critical essay writing by doing the following:

- Help them to understand the text. Perhaps you could also read the play/novel/poetry that your child is studying. Encourage your child to read the text again and discuss aspects such as plot, characters, themes, setting, style, structure and language.

- Test your child's knowledge of key quotations for each text studied. Do they know them accurately and do they know why they are important?
- Encourage your child to use past paper questions. Ask them to highlight key words in the question. They must focus on the task and answer the question. Then ask them to write the opening paragraph and plan for a number of essays.
- Check your child has notes on character, themes, setting etc for each text they have studied.

Ask them to produce their own study notes for each text and help them to learn the information. Encourage them to use mind – maps, spider grams and prompt cards.

Writing Folio

You can help your child with their writing folio by doing the following:

Read over their drafts and check for accuracy in terms of punctuation and paragraphing

Help them with research and ideas for discursive essays by discussing topical subjects that are on T.V and in the quality press.

Encourage your child to use literary techniques such as similes and metaphors in their writing.

In Personal/Reflective essays check that they have written about their thoughts and feelings in detail. Your child should choose a memory or incident which allows some honest and interesting reflection. They should aim to convince the reader that the incident genuinely means something to them and that they have learned something from the experience.

Check that descriptions are detailed and focuses on all the senses and not just what they saw.

In short stories there must be a plot, character development, setting and climax. The story should be realistic, well structured and there should be an underlying theme evident or perhaps strong sense of place.

- At Higher level the minimum length for each piece is 650 words and the maximum is 1300 words. (2 essays)
 - At Intermediate 2 the length should be between 500 and 1000 words (2 essays)
 - At Intermediate 1 the length should be between 300 and 600 words (1 essay)
- Your child should not exceed this limit

Useful Resources

Past Papers – published around now

How to Pass Higher English

Colin Eckford and Ann Bridges (published by Hodder)

How to Pass Close Reading

Colin Eckford and Ann Bridges (published by Hodder)

The Sunday Herald Essay

Every Sunday in the Sunday Herald and most broadsheet newspapers

www.sqa.org.uk

There is a section for learners

www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/learning/bitesize/higher

Lots of advice and practical help

Check the school website for other useful resources.

Higher /INT 2/INT 1 English – Course Deadlines 2010/2011 NABs:

Writing Folio and NAB

Writing Personal/ Reflective – First Draft – End of September

Writing 1 Personal/ Reflective – Second Draft – End of October

Writing 2 Discursive/ Persuasive – First Draft – Mid November

Writing 2 Discursive/ Persuasive – Second Draft – Start of December

Writing 3 (both) – mid January

Final Submission of Writing Folio – Friday 25 February

First NAB Assessment Block – W/B Monday 25 October 2010

Textual Analysis NAB

Second NAB Assessment Block – W/B Monday 24th January 2011

Close Reading NAB

Pupils will sit NABs for the level they are currently entered for

Resit NAB Assessment Block – W/B Monday 28 February 2011

Close Reading NAB

Textual Analysis NAB

Pupils will sit NABs for the level they are currently entered for

Other Deadlines:

S5/S6 Prelims: 31st Jan – 18 February 2010

ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

ESOL is a comparative qualification for our young people for whom English is a second language in order to raise attainment and meet pupils' needs.

ESOL assesses the four skills of Speaking, Writing, Listening and Reading. The topics and tasks covered are relevant to the learners and are related to everyday work, study, community and social situations.

The ESOL Intermediate 1 course is internally moderated and there is no external exam.

Due to its success we now provide the ESOL course at Higher level. These courses follow the same model but include an External Exam as follows:

External Assessment

Higher Exam:

Paper 1 - Listening - 3 x texts (30 x minutes)

Paper 2 - Reading - 2 x texts (40 x minutes)

Understanding (U)

Factual

- Look in the text for information which will answer the question.
- Define the word. Say how it relates to the question.
- Answer in your own words unless you are asked to directly quote.

“Summarize..”

Look at the number of marks.

- Each mark = each piece of evidence you need to make.

“How does the passage help you to understand the meaning of a word”?

Formula – Summarizing Questions

1. Define the word.
2. Show how the rest of the sentence makes this clear.
3. You do this by quoting the words in the sentence and their relationship to the word in question.

A link question

These questions ask you to identify a word or phrase which links back to the previous point or argument and at the same time, points forwards to another paragraph.

Formula – Link Questions

1. Here you need to identify in the linking sentence 2 words or phrases.
2. One that points back and one that points forward.
3. You then have to link the backward pointing one to the previous paragraph and then the forward to the next paragraph.

Analysis (A)

How does the writer express their ideas?

Not **understanding** of the passage.

It's not what is being said, it's how it is being said.

Analysis deals with **style**.

How some words may be more powerful than another – why the author used the word they did!

Once you have identified the techniques in the phrase –

You have to say how well it does its job.

Remember- the writer **CHOSE** this **WORD** for a reason. The reason is to create an effect in you-the reader's-mind.

Every time you answer an analysis question you have to remember to consider.

Word Choice

Why did the writer choose a certain word?

Because of the connotation of the word. This is the words which contribute to the impact of a word.

All the marks you get will come from identifying the word/s.

Then discussing the connotations of the word/s

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Formula – Word Choice Questions

1. Identify the word.
2. Quote it.
3. Discuss the connotations of the word.

Imagery

This is the most frequently asked and most powerful aspect of close reading. You need to be able to identify imagery and you also need to be able to comment on why it works so well. Simile and metaphor are devices of comparison, and work by making pictures in your mind.

You need to be able to show that you can identify the main techniques for imagery.

- Simile
- Metaphor

Formula – imagery questions

1. Identify the technique.
2. Show how the connotations help with what is being described.

3. Show the link between you connotation and the meaning of the words used in the technique.

- Personification

Formula – personification questions

1. Identify the personification.
2. Show how the meanings merge to give an effect.
3. Say what the effect is.

Structure

You need to be able to recognise the overall structure of the article. This is why you are practicing reading articles every week.

Basically articles should have

- A beginning, a middle and an end.
- The argument should follow a structure;
- A proposition, a discussion and a conclusion.
- There will be key phrases which signal this.

The idea..... on the other hand.....on the whole

When you read the passage – look out for signposts or linking words.

- **First words in paragraphs.**
- **Topic sentences of paragraphs.**
- **Links between paragraphs help too.**

Sentence Structure

Punctuation is there to help understanding. It can give clues to the tone of the passage, and so on.

You need to learn what the effect is of these structural techniques.

Punctuation Marks

Lists

Sentence Length

Climax and Anti Climax

Repetition

Word order

You then need to use this formula to answer the questions.

Formula

1. Identify the feature.
2. State its job.
3. State where it's used.
4. State the effect it gives the reader.

Tone, Mood and Atmosphere

Tone – voice we would speak the passage in.

Mood – emotional identification of the passage.

Atmosphere – involvement of the senses

Some examples of tone are:

Formal
Informal
Sarcastic
Tongue in cheek
Serious
Humorous
Doom Laden
Ironic
Portentous

Try quietly reading the passage in you head to get a feeling of the tone.

Formula – tone/ mood/ atmosphere

1. Identify the tone/ mood/ atmosphere
2. Reference to the text “quotation”
3. Comment on how the mood, tone or atmosphere is created.

There are other techniques you may wish to consider.

Point of view
Contrast
Use of questions
Use of anecdote
Sound

Formula – other techniques

1. Make a statement which answers the question.
2. Provide evidence to back up your statement.
3. Make a comment which links back you evidence to the statement.

Evaluation (E)

“How effectively...”

Give a personal response. I think it was extremely effective/ not effective because_____.

Use words which have a sense of the degree that you agree or disagree. Don't ever just say it is effective."
You must say how effective and why!

Use words like

Moving Satisfying Humorous
Convincing Persuasive Shocking
Disturbing Entertaining Enjoyable

“Giving examples....explain how the writer has used these features.....

Word choice, sentence structure”.

Formula – How effectively

1. State how well the technique is used.
2. Quote from the passage to back up your point.
3. State why it was used well.

“Giving reasons..... Explain how the article is rounded off”

Reasons you have to mention are **TIPS:**

Tone – Does the tone change?

Ideas – Are they the same all through the passage?

Punch-line – Is there one?

Style – Is the style the same at the end?