

1st Edition

NEW

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A Practical Course for English Exams

Methodological Guide to prepare for the Tenure
and Qualified Teacher Exams in the Primary
and Secondary Education



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The first part of the exam consists of a text, not more than 2 pages long, followed by a few requirements:

a) Contextualize the text from a historical and cultural point of view.

Here, you should mention:

- ✓ the approximate date when the story (novel, novella, poem, play) was published
- ✓ the historical events that took place at around the time when the book was published and that may have influenced the plot of your text
- ✓ people's lifestyle and cultural level at the time
- ✓ the literary movement the book falls into

b) Discuss the role of the text in the history of literature, with reference to its author's life.

A literary genre refers to a class of literary works. This term is used widely to refer to a group of literary works that share certain characteristics of a particular time period or place.

- ✓ the features of the literary movement that the book (excerpt) falls into
- ✓ the main characters (protagonist, antagonist)
- ✓ the conflict in the book
- ✓ the setting
- ✓ the themes
- ✓ the motifs
- ✓ the symbols (with examples from the fragment given)
- ✓ the tone
- ✓ the narrator and the point of view
- ✓ the figures of speech (with examples from the excerpt given)
- ✓ the literary devices

The narrator is the person who tells \ narrates the story. The point of view is the perspective from which the narrator sees the action and the characters. It also refers to the angle from which the story is told, the point from which the narrative is passed from author to the reader.

The point of view can be:

- first person
- second person
- third person omniscient \ limited omniscient; objective \ subjective

1. A first person narrator uses the pronouns *I*, *We*, and is usually a character in the story, being able to interact with the characters. He is usually subjective and unreliable. Sometimes, it can develop into stream of consciousness, a narrative technique that records the various thoughts and feelings which pass through a character's mind without regard to logical argument or narrative sequence. Stream of consciousness is characterised by lack of punctuation.

2. In the second person point of view the narrator uses the pronoun *you* to address the reader, but it is less common in literature.

3. In the third person point of view, the narrator uses pronouns such as *he* \ *she* \ *it* \ *they*. The narrator is not a character in the story. From the omniscient point of view, the narrator hears, sees and knows everything, describing the characters' thoughts, feelings and intentions. He follows all the characters. In contrast, in the third person limited omniscient point of view, the narrator describes only the thoughts, feelings, intentions of one character, who is usually the main character of the story. He deliberately keeps certain characters from being explained or explored.

In the third person subjective point of view, the narrator may be sympathetic to some of the characters, making favourable comments or remarks. On the other hand, in the third person objective point of view, the narrator describes only what he sees \ hears and doesn't reveal anything from the characters' thoughts, feelings, intentions, motivations. The facts and action of the story are reported by a neutral, impersonal observer who is a mere spectator of events.

In a multiple perspective narration, the various narrators present multiple perspectives of the story, which can deepen conflict. Sometimes, different chapters are narrated by different characters.

Allegory. A story or visual image with a second distinct meaning partially hidden behind its literal or visible meaning. In written narrative, the allegory involves a continuous parallel between two (or more) levels of meaning in a story, so that its characters and events correspond to their equivalents in a system of ideas or a chain of events external to the tale. *Lord of the flies* is an allegorical novel.

Allusion. An indirect or passing reference to some event, person, place or artistic work. In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the two *knitting women* whom Marlow sees alludes to *Moirae* or Fates, as visualized in Greek Mythology.

Ambiguity. A statement which contains two or more meanings. Hamlet, from the play with the same title, is a morally ambiguous character. He is hurt by the death of Ophelia, which is his personal loss, but he does not appreciate the effect of his actions on other characters. The audience or the readers don't know for sure if he is truly insane or if he is just pretending; they also don't know whether he really sees his father's ghost or not.

Analogy. A resemblance of relations; an agreement or likeness between things in some circumstances or effects, when the things are otherwise entirely different. As the definition of analogy includes all types of comparisons, the following list of literary devices all qualify as analogies: metaphor, simile, allegory, parable.

Anecdote. A very short tale told by a character in a literary work. In Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, *The Miller's Tale* and *The Carpenter's Tale* are such examples.

Antagonist. The character, force, or collection of forces in fiction or drama that opposes the protagonist and gives rise to the conflict of the story. Jack in the *Lord of the flies* is such an example.

Anti - hero. A protagonist who has the opposite of most of the traditional attributes of a hero. He is the protagonist of the narrative, yet a foil to the traditional hero archetype. In literature, Hamlet is an anti – hero.

Archetype. A term used to describe universal symbols that evoke deep and sometimes unconscious responses in a reader. In literature, it refers to characters, images and

themes that symbolically embody universal meanings and basic human experiences. Dilsey, from Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* embodies the Mother Figure.

Climax. The decisive moment in a drama, the climax is the turning point of the play to which the rising action leads. This is the crucial part of the drama, the part which determines the outcome of the conflict. In William Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, the story reaches its climax in Act 3, when Romeo challenges Tybalt to a duel after killing Mercutio.

Colloquialism. Spoken or written communication that seeks to imitate informal speech. Mark Twain in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* uses Black American vernacular to realistically show the *negroes* talking.

Comedy. A literary work which is amusing and ends happily. Modern comedies tend to be funny while Shakespearean comedies simply end well. *A Midsummer's night dream* is a comedy.

Connotation. The emotional implications and associations that words may carry as distinguished from their denotative meanings. In literature, connotation paves way for creativity by using figures of speech like metaphor, simile, symbolism, personification.

Denotation. The basic dictionary meaning of a word as opposed to its connotative meaning.

Deus Ex Machina. An unrealistic or unexpected intervention to rescue the protagonists or resolve the conflict. The term means *God out of the machine*. The end of *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens includes an example of *Deus ex Machina* when it turns out that Oliver's fellow orphan Rose is actually his aunt. This plot twist allows for several happy things to occur, including Oliver's adoption.

Diction. An author's choice of words. Since words have specific meanings and since one's choice of words can affect feelings, a writer's choice of words can have great impact in a literary work. Keats in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* uses formal diction to achieve a certain effect. In his poem, one can notice the use of formal *ye* instead of informal *you*. Shakespeare also uses in his work the formal words *thou* and *thy* as well as archaic syntax.

Ellipsis is the omission of a word or series of words. Among the most famous examples of ellipsis in literature, the best would be Virginia Woolf's novel, *To the Lighthouse*. The book

involves two parts, one before the World War I was fought and won and the later one accounts for the events occurring afterwards. All the events that occurred in between have not been mentioned in the book. Rather, it has been left to the readers to deduce the events from the notable changes that have occurred in the characters' lives.

Epigraph. A brief quotation which appears at the beginning of a literary work. T. S Eliot writes at the beginning of *The Waste Land* an epigraph and also a dedication for Ezra Pound; As an epigraph to *The Sun also rises*, Ernest Hemingway famously quotes Gertude Stein - *You are all a lost generation*.

Epigram. A pithy, sometimes satiric couplet or quatrain which was popular in classic Latin literature and in European and English literature of the Renaissance and the neo-Classical era. The next four lines of sonnet 76 by Shakespeare are a good example of an epigram. The poet refers to ideas and items simultaneously as both new and old. He tries to say that he has spent something, which he has already done. He is doing this to express perplexity with a lover, and also to show his feelings of the desire of sexuality.

*So all my best is dressing old words new,
Spending again what is already spent:
For as the sun is daily new and old,
So is my love still telling what is told.*

Flashbacks are interruptions that writers do to insert past events in order to provide background or context to the current events of a narrative. By using flashbacks, writers allow their readers to gain insight into a character's motivation and provide background information to a current conflict. Dream sequences and memories are methods used to present flashbacks.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick learns the history of Daisy's acquaintance with Gatsby and of her marriage to Tom through a flashback narrated by Jordan Baker: *One October day in nineteen-seventeen - (said Jordan Baker that afternoon, sitting up very straight on a straight chair in the tea-garden at the Plaza Hotel) - I was walking...*

Flashforward. It is a literary device in which the plot goes ahead of time, that is, a scene which interrupts and takes the narrative forward in time from the current time in a story. In Charles Dickens' novel *A Christmas Carol*, the protagonist Ebenezer Scrooge is shown the future following his death. The subsequent events of the story imply that this future will be averted by this foreknowledge.

Foil. A character who shows qualities that are in contrast with the qualities of another character, usually the protagonist. Tom Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby* provides a foil to Jay Gatsby. Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* is another example of foil. Romeo is a romantic person while Mercutio, on the other hand, is witty and not at all romantic.

Framing Device. A story in which one or more other stories are told, also called story within – a – story. Examples include Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

Genre. A literary genre is a recognizable and established category of written work employing such common conventions that will prevent readers or audiences from mistaking it with another kind. The classic major genres of literature are: Fiction, Non-fiction, poetry, prose and drama. Genres are often divided into subgenres such as: *Comedy, Tragedy, Horror, Romance, Satire, Tragicomedy, Fantasy, Gothic.*

Gothic. Literature characterized by gloom, mystery and the grotesque. Allan Poe's stories are good examples of Gothic Literature.

Idiom. A specialized vocabulary used by a group of people; a style or manner of expression peculiar to a given category of people. Shakespeare is credited with coining more than 2000 words, infusing thousands more existing ones with electrifying new meanings and forging idioms that would last for centuries. 'A fool's paradise,' 'at one fell swoop,' 'heart's content,' 'in a pickle,' 'send him packing,' 'too much of a good thing,' 'the game is up,' 'good riddance,' 'love is blind,' and 'a sorry sight,' to name a few.

Imagery. The collection of images within a literary work. Used to evoke atmosphere, mood, tension. Imagery of light and darkness is repeated many times in Shakespeare's "*Romeo and Juliet*" or in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

In medias res. A narrative work beginning *in medias res* opens in the midst of action. Often, exposition is bypassed and filled in gradually, either through dialogue, flashbacks or description of past events. For example, *Hamlet* begins after the death of Hamlet's father. Characters make reference to King Hamlet's death without the plot's first establishment of said fact. Since the play focuses on Hamlet and the revenge itself more so than the motivation, Shakespeare utilizes *in medias res* to bypass superfluous exposition.

Intertextuality. It is a way of accounting for the role of literary and extra-literary materials without recourse to traditional notions of authorship. In this case, a literary work is not

simply the product of a single author but of its relationship to other texts and to the structures of language itself. Starting with its title (the Latin name of *Odysseus*), *Ulysses*, an example of modernist fiction by James Joyce, shares a richly intertextual relationship with Homer's epic poem the *Odyssey*.

Inversion. Reversal of the normal order of words for dramatic effect. William Shakespeare used many examples of inversion in his plays and poetry. He changes around some of the words order to make lines more poetic and stylized:

*Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,*

Irony. A device that depends on the existence of at least two separate and contrasting levels of meaning embedded in one message. Verbal irony becomes sarcasm when the speaker says something other than what he really means. In dramatic irony, the audience is more aware of the facts than the characters themselves. Situational irony occurs when the opposite of what is expected happens. This type of irony is often emphasized when people are caught in forces beyond their comprehension and control. Shakespeare's plays usually contain all types of irony.

Juxtaposition is a literary technique in which two or more ideas, places, characters and their actions are placed side by side in a narrative or a poem for the purpose of developing comparisons and contrasts. In literature, juxtaposition is a useful device for writers to portray their characters in great detail to create suspense and achieve a rhetorical effect.

Charles Dickens uses the technique of juxtaposition in the opening line of his novel *A Tale of Two Cities*: *It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.*

Minimalism. A style of art in which objects are stripped down to their elemental geometric form and presented in an impersonal manner. In literature, minimalism uses short descriptions and simple sentences. *A clean, well - lighted place* is such an example.

Monologue. It represents the thoughts of a single person directed outward. In *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf or in *Ulysses* by James Joyce, the stream of consciousness technique, also known as interior monologue, is used extensively.