



*Preparing for the
English Exit Exam*

ACADEMIC SKILLS CENTRE

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ENGLISH EXIT EXAM: GENERAL INFORMATION

Be informed. Knowledge is power!

ELIGIBILITY:

- You are **automatically** registered for the English Exit Exam in your final semester.
- You may register for the exam after you have passed **two** English courses and are currently completing the **third** of the 101, 102, and 103 English courses.
- You are encouraged to write the exam before your final semester. The exam takes place every May, August, and December.

THE TASK:

In four hours, write a **750-word essay** "based on a main idea" in an essay or a short story. To do this properly, you must:

- Identify a **main idea** from one of the three readings.
- Write an analytical/critical essay that develops a **thesis sentence**.
- Explain how the author uses literary or rhetorical **techniques** and **devices** to construct their idea.
- Demonstrate your English **writing skills**: essay structure, grammar, punctuation, word choice, etc. See CORRECTOR'S CRITERIA for more information.

ITEMS TO BRING:

- **Required:** Your student ID card or any other official picture ID
- **Required:** A printed copy of the message you received in Omnivox, since it confirms the date, time, and location
- **Recommended:** Up to three books: an English dictionary, a bilingual dictionary, a grammar book, and/or a thesaurus but **no** notes and **no** electronic devices

EXAM MATERIALS:

- **Booklet 1:** Instructions, evaluation, criteria, and blank pages for notes, planning, etc.
- **Booklet 2:** The final copy of your essay (the only copy that the correctors will see)
- **Booklet 3:** Three texts, the writing guidelines, and a list of techniques and devices

RESULTS:

- You can check your results (RE=pass, and EC=fail) in Omnivox approximately **six weeks** after the date of the exam. If you are graduating, the results may be available earlier.

*Contact the Academic Skills Centre for individual help preparing for the exam
or to get information about our workshops*

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE AND WRITING TIPS

"Before anything else, preparation is the key to success." - Alexander Graham Bell

READING AND COMPREHENSION: up to 1 hour

- **Underline** key words when you read the instructions to clarify what you have to do.
- **Begin reading** the type of text (short story or essay) with which you have more experience. Otherwise, read the first page of each reading and choose the one that is easiest to understand.
- Read your selection carefully. Make **notes** in the margins when you:
 - Identify **significant details**.
 - Recognize a **main idea** that is consistent throughout the reading. This is an idea you can develop in your essay. Most texts have more than one main idea. See handout RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA: Short Stories.
 - Identify **techniques and devices** used by the author to communicate that main idea.
 - Find references that relate to that main idea. Ensure you have enough **support**.

PLANNING: up to 1 hour

Introduction:

- Decide the focus of your essay:
 - **What** idea the author expresses (this means you will focus your discussion on a point the author is making on a topic and only mention techniques and devices 'here and there' as a secondary task in your body paragraphs)
 - **How** the author expresses an idea (your whole discussion will be based on the techniques and devices used to communicate an idea)
 - **A combination of both what and how** (focus some body paragraphs on a main idea and focus some others on techniques and devices used to express that idea)
- Think about what you want to say about the author's idea. Write this down as your **thesis statement**. See handout PHRASING TIPS: DECIDING YOUR THESIS.
- Write a simple list of **three or four supporting ideas** that you can use to explain and prove your thesis. Each idea will be the basis of a separate paragraph and introduced in your topic sentences. See handout ENGLISH EXIT EXAM ESSAY OUTLINE.
- Choose **two or three techniques and devices** that the author effectively uses to express the idea you are discussing. You are free to use devices that are not listed in the exam booklet. See handout TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES.
- If you are writing about **how** the author expresses an idea, the author's use of **devices** will be your supporting ideas.

Body Paragraphs:

- **Skim** the reading again and choose specific **examples** from the text (two to three per body paragraph) to which you can refer. Look for key words and phrases for short effective quoting.
- If you refer to examples from your own experiences, connect them well to your thesis.
- **From this plan, start your essay**. Writing a complete rough draft is **not** recommended.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE AND WRITING TIPS

Continued

WRITING: 2 hours (1.5 hours writing plus 30 minutes to proofread and edit)

Introduction:

- Mention the **author's full name**, the **title** ("..."), and the **genre** (essay or short story).
- Based on your **plan**, write your introduction.

Body Paragraphs:

- Write **topic sentences** for each supporting idea as opening sentences for each paragraph.
- Refer to **examples**: use short quotes or paraphrase. See handout REFERRING TO A READING.
- Explain how these examples support each **idea** and how they relate back to your **thesis**.
- Write **concluding sentences** for each body paragraph that summarize what you have discussed. You can also include **a sentence that transitions** to the next paragraph.

Conclusion:

- **Restate** your thesis.
- Briefly **summarize** your supporting ideas.
- Share **any additional thoughts**, but be objective. Do not simply praise the author in a meaningless way. Include:
 - a critical judgment (strengths and weaknesses) **OR**
 - the importance of the author's idea and your response to the reading **OR**
 - insights into the author's beliefs, attitudes, or purpose for writing as you now understand them

WRITING TIPS:

- Use the full name of the author the first time; all other references require the last name only.
- Refer to the author at least **once** in every body paragraph. This helps keep your focus on the author's main idea. Always refer to the author in your conclusion.
- Work slowly and carefully, checking the grammar and punctuation as you go; due to time constraints, **writing a complete rough draft is not recommended**.
- Spelling counts, but not as much as grammar, punctuation, and correct word usage.
- Avoid overly complicated sentences; find simple and clear ways to state your ideas.
- Your essay can be less formal than an academic essay, but avoid casual language. You may use 'I' and mention personal experiences if you relate them to the author's main idea.
- Integrate quotations into your own sentences. See handout REFERRING TO A READING.
- Citations, page references, and bibliographies are not required.
- Budget your time so you can proofread and edit your essay in the last 30 minutes.
- **If time is short**, make sure your introduction and conclusion are clear and well-edited.

ESSAY OUTLINE

"A plan is a crucial part of any successful assignment." - Anonymous

PARAGRAPH 1: Introduction

- author, title, and genre (essay or short story)
- main idea expressed by the author
- your thesis statement
- very brief summary of points to be raised in your essay

PARAGRAPH 2: Your First Idea

- topic sentence
- examples or details from the text
- explanation of their significance or implications
- concluding sentence

PARAGRAPH 3: Your Second Idea

- topic sentence
- examples or details from the text
- explanation of their significance or implications
- concluding sentence

PARAGRAPH 4: Your Third Idea

- topic sentence
- examples or details from the text
- explanation of their significance or implications
- concluding sentence

PARAGRAPH 5: Conclusion

- restatement of your thesis
- recap of your major points
- your final thoughts

You may have more than three body paragraphs if you have more than three ideas.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA: SHORT STORIES

"Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world." - Robert McKee

WHAT IS THE TOPIC OF THE READING?

- Does the **title** indicate a topic?
- **General topics** that authors often write about:
 - relationships, family, friendship, love, neglect, death, grief, facing adversity, challenges, physical or mental disabilities, conflict, corruption, power, prejudice, injustice, war, liberation, survival, change, identity, moral dilemma, stages of life, etc.

WHAT IDEA IS THE AUTHOR COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE TOPIC?

- There is usually more than one **main idea** in a text.
- Main ideas are usually stated **indirectly** by authors.
- Some stories may not have one principal character but actually have a pair or group of main characters, particularly if the topic of the text is a relationship or family.
- **Focus on the main character(s)** to understand the author's point or purpose for writing.

USE GUIDING QUESTIONS TO RECOGNIZE A MAIN IDEA THAT IS PRESENT THROUGHOUT A STORY:

Who is/are the main character(s)?

- Is one of the characters telling the story (first-person narration)?
- Does one character seem more significant than the others?
- Which character(s) is/are the reader left with at the end of the story?

What happens to the main character(s)?

- Does one character(s) experience any problems or conflicts? What kind?
- If not, does the story illustrate a crucial moment in the life of a character(s)?
- Or does the story demonstrate a particular lifestyle of a character?

How does the main character(s) develop?

- If there is a problem or conflict, how does the character cope, react, or resolve it?
- If there is a problem or conflict, has the character changed because of this? If yes, how?

What is one main idea present throughout the story?

- Does the experience of the character(s) provide insight into a particular topic?
- Does it imply anything about life? Many authors can convey serious or negative ideas.
- Does the experience of the character(s) suggest one thing in particular is important or difficult in life?

REFERRING TO A READING

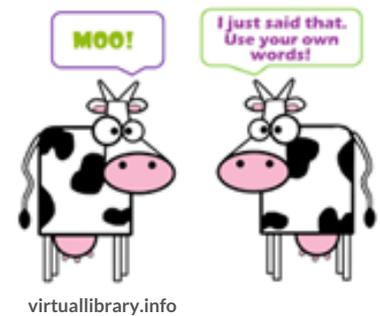
"Quotation is the highest compliment you can pay to an author." - André-Marie Ampère

You are **not required** to use exact quotations for the exam, but you are required to make references to the text. Using well-chosen, brief quotations to make detailed references to a text can be effective, however.

Remember to explain and discuss the significance of a quotation while ensuring that the **meaning** and **tone** is not changed in any way.

PARAPHRASING:

- To avoid excessive quoting, summarize longer passages in your own words.
- Remember to mention the author.
- For examples, see handout PHRASING TIPS: Referring to the Author's Ideas.



USING QUOTATIONS:

- Use quotes to **interpret** or **analyze** the author's ideas, **not to summarize**:
 - X** • She "comes home and starts watching TV." **Then she goes to sleep.**
 - ✓** • She "comes home and starts watching TV," **which suggests life has returned to normal.**

INTEGRATING QUOTATIONS: making a smooth transition from your own words to those from the reading

- A quotation cannot stand as a sentence by itself without an introduction.

1. Use a complete sentence to introduce a quotation:

- Using a complete sentence is considered a **formal** way to introduce a quote.
- Use a **colon** after the sentence.
 - X** • The author uses a violent metaphor. "The moonlight slashed through the window."
 - ✓** • The author uses a violent metaphor: "The moonlight slashed through the window."

2. Use a short phrase to introduce a quotation:

- Use a **comma** between the phrase and a quotation:
 - According to the author, "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us."
 - In the author's view, "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us."

REFERRING TO A READING

Continued

3. Choose an effective verb to introduce a quotation: says, argue, admit, assert, claim, compare, emphasize, imply, point out, suggest, etc.

- Use a comma after the verb, followed by a capital letter:
 - The essayist **argues**, “**C**apitalism breeds corruption,” which reveals her radical attitudes.
 - When the narrator talks to another boy about the incident, he **says**, “It didn’t hurt.
 - The mood of the story darkens when the sheriff **reveals**, “**T**here’s no justice here.”
 - Because the character **whispers**, “**W**e do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us,” he reveals his profound nature.
- You could use **that** instead of a comma. Begin the quote with a lower case letter when the first word is not a name:
 - The essayist argues **that** “**c**apitalism breeds corruption,” which reveals her radical attitudes.

4. Shorten the quotation to essential words and phrases and incorporate them into your sentences:

- The author uses visual imagery to show that the narrator is pessimistic. The narrator “drinks somber black coffee” and wears “grim grey clothes,” demonstrating that he is not a hopeful character.

TECHNICAL RULES FOR MAKING QUOTATIONS FIT YOUR SENTENCE GRAMMATICALLY:

1. You may shorten your quotation and change the pronoun and verb tense to fit:

- The original reading: “**I had** growing suspicions about the banker.”
- Your sentence: At this point, **Claude has** “growing suspicions about the banker.”

2. If the quotation cannot be shortened, you may use SQUARE BRACKETS to change the pronoun and verb tense:

- A switch from **I** to **he**: “... [He] drink[s] at” the stream of time.
- A switch from past to present: Samia wins her freedom when she “[runs] to the beach.”

3. You may use an ELLIPSIS to skip over irrelevant text.

- The author states, “Some individuals ... exchange lively details with each other.”

If you would like more help, contact us at the Academic Skills Centre.

PHRASING TIPS

"A sentence sings with the right words." - Anonymous

REFERRING TO AN AUTHOR:

- Essays:** Refer to the author by last name or use **writer**, **author**, or **essayist**. The term "narrator" is not used in discussing an essay since the author is the one speaking.
- Short Stories:** Refer to the author by last name, or use **writer** or **author**. In fiction, the actual story-telling voice is not the author's. Refer instead to the **narrator** or the **narrative voice** in the story.

DECIDING YOUR THESIS: choose phrasing to express your point effectively

- Compare it:** The author's main idea is similar to/contradicts ____'s ideas because...
- Relate it:** The author's main idea relates to the issue of...
The author's main idea helps me understand my own experience because...
- Analyze it:** The author makes effective use of literary devices, including ____, ____, and ____ to express...
The author uses details of the story, including ____, ____, and ____ to convey...
- Support it:** The author's main idea is valid because... The author is correct in suggesting that...
- Question it:** The author's main idea is questionable because... I disagree with the author because...
- Evaluate it:** The author's main idea is important because... The author shows meaningful insight into...
- Criticize it:** The author's main idea is illogical because... The author seems only partly correct, since...
- Categorize it:** The author's main idea represents a ____ ...

REFERRING TO THE AUTHOR'S IDEAS: use precise and relevant verbs

The author builds an argument:	X argues that...
The author persistently states:	X maintains that...
The author strongly states:	X asserts that...
This implies doubt on your part:	X claims that...
The author indirectly conveys the idea:	X implies that... X suggests that...

INTERPRETING & ANALYZING DETAILS: use different types of phrases

This metaphor shows...	This example proves...
This story reveals...	This story illustrates...
This essay demonstrates...	The author implies...
This passage suggests...	This argument indicates...
This highlights...	The repetition emphasizes...
This character represents...	The author's ____ shows that...

TRANSITIONAL WORDS: use these to make smooth and logical transitions

Similarly,	However,	Nevertheless,
In addition,	As a result,	To sum up,
Moreover,	Consequently,	For example,
On the other hand,	In brief,	Finally,
In contrast,	Therefore,	In conclusion,

TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES

"The symbol and the metaphor are as necessary to science as to poetry."
- Jacob Bronowski

Choose **two** or **three** devices that you recognize clearly and are comfortable explaining. You do not have to define them; however, you must **identify** them and **explain** how effectively the author uses them to develop the **idea** you are discussing.

LITERARY TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES USED IN SHORT STORIES:

- Characterization:** An author always creates central characters to develop a plot and to represent a particular **topic**, such as relationships, love, neglect, grief, conflict, prejudice, injustice, survival, change, identity, moral dilemmas, stages of life, etc., or **human qualities**, such as leadership, courage, empathy, etc. It is central to any story and is always connected to the main idea.
- Flashback:** An author jumps backwards in time, temporarily suspending the progress of the plot to narrate earlier events.
- Foreshadowing:** Certain words or images found in a story can be hints about important events that will follow.
- Narrative Point of View:** A story is always told from a particular perspective. In **first-person** narration, the main character, speaking as "I," provides readers with direct insight into their thoughts and feelings. In **third-person** narration, a voice with no actual identity narrates the story, referring to all characters as "he," "she," or "they." It usually reveals the thoughts and feelings of the characters in a more objective way or from varied perspectives.
- Setting:** An author chooses a time and place to develop a story. (e.g., **time**: a historical era, season, year, time of day, etc., or **place**: outer space, heaven, a city, a hospital, a classroom, etc.).

RHETORICAL TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES COMMONLY USED IN ESSAYS:

- Anecdote:** An essayist can share personal experience or life events.
- Appeal to Authority:** An essayist can refer to the opinions of experts (the WHO, government officials, a famous critic, the Pope, a rabbi, a coach, a CEO, a teacher) to support certain views.
- Definition:** An essayist can explain key terms to help the reader understand the topic.
- Emotional Appeal:** An essayist can try to make the reader feel specific emotions to persuade the reader to accept their ideas.
- Empirical Evidence:** An essayist presents scientific findings from the physical or social sciences to support a position.
- Enumeration:** An essayist can use numbering to establish a sequence of points. (e.g., First, Second, Third; a), b), c))
- Example:** An essayist can refer to people, items, concepts, experiences or events to illustrate a point.

TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES

Continued

Methods of Argumentation: An essayist can use clear reasoning – establishing points and drawing conclusions in an organized way; you can mention this as a ‘logical argument.’ If you are familiar with specific patterns of formal reasoning (deductive, inductive, etc.), you may comment on them.

Refutation of Opposing Views: An essayist can support their own opinion by pointing out faults in opposing views.

TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES COMMONLY USED IN BOTH SHORT STORIES AND ESSAYS:

Cause and Effect: An author emphasizes a relationship between actions or events when one is the result of another.

Comparison/ Contrast: An author can use comparison to examine two things, mentioning both similarities and differences. A contrast focuses on differences – typically major differences.

Description: An author can provide details about a person, place, or thing.

Dialogue: An author can create conversations to develop the story. Dialogue normally appears in quotation marks.

Diction: An author chooses particular words, phrases, and expressions. Use an adjective to describe the style of diction (e.g., simple, formal, emotional, scientific, objective, etc.).

Imagery: The author can use descriptions that create sensory impressions in a reader’s mind – usually sights or sounds, but occasionally the senses of taste, smell, or touch. More vivid than description.

Metaphor: The author can refer to something as if it were something else (e.g. “Life is a winding road”).

Symbolism: The author can use something to represent an idea, a concept, a common experience, a feeling, etc. Symbols can be objects, animals, colours, light or darkness, weather, etc. (e.g., a dark shadow can symbolize death)

Tone: The author can convey an overall feeling in a text. A tone can be angry, joyful, sorrowful, fearful, nostalgic, optimistic, cynical, sympathetic, apologetic, etc.

Level of Language: The degree of formality of the language can range from very casual (e.g., slang, a personal tone, and unstructured) to very formal (e.g., a scholarly tone and sophisticated vocabulary).

SAFE BETS:

Short story: Characterization, setting, imagery, description, symbolism, tone, and flashback

Essay: Description, example, level of language, tone, comparison, and contrast

CORRECTOR'S CRITERIA

"Knowing how you will be graded is half the battle." - Anonymous

FIRST GRADING CRITERION: "Comprehension and Insight"

This refers to your understanding of the reading and your ability to analyze and/or criticize it.

- Did you identify the author's **main idea** accurately? Did you clearly state it?
- Have you identified several **techniques** and **devices**? Have you explained their effect or their implications?
- Have you actually **analyzed** and **interpreted** – not just summarized – the author's ideas and use of techniques and devices?
- Did you make frequent, detailed **references** to the reading? Did you discuss specific details, points, examples, statements, scenes, etc.? Do these references show that you understood the author?

SECOND GRADING CRITERION: "Organization of Response"

This refers to the structure of your essay and to your paragraphing.

- Was your **thesis** actually a response to the author's idea? Did you clearly state it? Did it form the basis for your entire discussion?
- Did you include all the necessary components in your **introduction**? Did each **body paragraph** have a clear **topic sentence**? Did your ideas follow each other in logical order? Did you include a **conclusion**? Did you write **about 750 words**? Writing under 600 words is an automatic failure.
- Did your **ideas** and your **references** to the reading actually support your thesis statement?
- Did each body paragraph present **one particular idea**? Did you present each idea in your topic sentences? Did all the details in each body paragraph relate closely to its topic sentence? Did the ideas in each body paragraph **flow** smoothly together?

THIRD GRADING CRITERION: "Expression"

This refers to your basic English skills.

- Have you expressed your ideas **clearly** through carefully chosen words?
- Did you avoid **run-on sentences** and **fragments**? Did you use an appropriate mix of simple and complex sentences?
- Did you use correct **grammar**? Were you consistent? (e.g., verb tense, verb consistency, subject-verb agreement, plurals, pronoun agreement, prepositions, etc.)
- Did you use correct **spelling, punctuation, and mechanics**? (e.g., apostrophes, capitalization, quotation marks, hyphenation, etc.)

Contact us at the Academic Skills Centre for more help preparing for the exam.

MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH,
LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND LITERATURE

ASSESSMENT SHEET

CRITERION	OBJECTIVES TO BE MET	PLACE A CHECKMARK (✓) WHERE APPROPRIATE		
		M+	M	M-
COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT	1. recognition of a main idea from the selected reading	✓		
	2. identification of techniques and/or devices as employed by the author		✓	
	3. evidence of critical or analytical interpretation of the selection	✓		
	4. references which demonstrate understanding of the reading	✓		
ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE	1. statement of a thesis about the text	✓		
	2. structured development of the essay		✓	
	3. use of supporting detail		✓	
	4. unified paragraph structure		✓	
EXPRESSION	1. appropriate use of words		✓	
	2. varied and correct sentence structures		✓	
	3. correct grammar			✓
	4. conventional spelling, punctuation, and mechanics		✓	
M: signifies that the objective has been met M+: signifies that the objective has been well and clearly met M-: signifies that the objective has not been met				

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COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT :

<u>A</u>	B	C	D	E	F
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A

ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE:

<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	C	D	E	F
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B

EXPRESSION:

A	B	<u>C</u>	D	E	F
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C

PASSING GRADE:



Failure: _____
Supervisor: _____

C is a passing grade.
Papers graded D or E or F in any category fail.

Marker: LS Marker's Code: 403
 Marker: GB Marker's Code: 406