

# Critical Essay

# What is the CE?

- This is a part of the second exam paper that your child will sit - it is worth **20 marks**, and is therefore **20% of their overall grade**.
- The critical essay assesses your young person's knowledge of a text they have studied throughout the year in class, and asks them to write a critical response on this piece with reference to an essay question.

# What is the CE?

- Your child will get the choice of two (N5) or three (H) essay questions to choose from - they only need to answer on **one** of these questions.
- The questions must be broad enough to suit the range of texts taught across the country, and so there should always be a question that will suit the text your child has studied.

# How to prepare for CE

**Learn the quotes** - Your young person will need to remember quotes and analysis for their text. You can use flashcards to help them, or quiz them on their quotes regularly!

**Write practice plans** - Instead of spending lots of time writing essay after essay, writing detailed plans for a range of essay questions can be more beneficial for your young person's revision. This lets them practice using their quotes in relation to a question, without risking them purely memorising one essay and regurgitating it for a different question.

# Example Questions 2024

## SECTION 2 — CRITICAL ESSAY — 20 marks

Attempt ONE question from the following genres — Drama, Prose, Poetry, Film and Television Drama, or Language.

Your answer must be on a different genre from that chosen in Section 1.

You should spend approximately 45 minutes on this section.

### DRAMA

*Answers to questions in this part should refer to the text and to such relevant features as characterisation, key scene(s), structure, climax, theme, plot, conflict, setting . . .*

1. Choose a play which explores a theme that interests you.  
By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how this theme is explored.
2. Choose a play which contains a character for whom you have strong feelings.  
By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the writer creates these strong feelings.

### PROSE

*Answers to questions in this part should refer to the text and to such relevant features as characterisation, setting, language, key incident(s), climax, turning point, plot, structure, narrative technique, theme, ideas, description . . .*

3. Choose a novel or short story or work of non-fiction in which there is a character for whom you feel sympathy.  
By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the writer creates sympathy for this character.
4. Choose a novel or short story or work of non-fiction which explores an important issue.  
By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how this important issue is explored.

## PART C — PROSE NON-FICTION

*Answers to questions on **prose non-fiction** should refer to the text and to such relevant features as ideas, use of evidence, stance, style, selection of material, narrative voice . . .*

7. Choose a non-fiction text in which the writer engages the reader's interest in a culture or society.  
By referring to appropriate techniques, discuss how the writer successfully engages the reader's interest in this culture or society.
8. Choose a non-fiction text in which a specific experience leads the writer to reflect on a wider issue.  
By referring to appropriate techniques, explain what the specific experience is and discuss how it leads the writer to reflect on a wider issue.
9. Choose a non-fiction text in which the writer expresses disgust or anger or sadness about an issue.  
By referring to appropriate techniques, discuss how this expression of disgust or anger or sadness enhances your understanding of the issue.

## PART D — POETRY

*Answers to questions on **poetry** should refer to the text and to such relevant features as word choice, tone, imagery, structure, content, rhythm, rhyme, theme, sounds, ideas . . .*

10. Choose a poem which explores loss or injustice or isolation.  
With reference to appropriate techniques, discuss how the poet's presentation of loss or injustice or isolation enhances your appreciation of the poem as a whole.
11. Choose a poem in which the speaker's feelings **and/or** situation is explored.  
With reference to appropriate techniques, discuss how this exploration of the speaker's feelings **and/or** situation enhances your appreciation of the poem as a whole.
12. Choose a poem in which the poet makes particularly effective use of imagery **and/or** sound.  
With reference to appropriate techniques, discuss how the poet's use of imagery **and/or** sound enhances your appreciation of the poem as a whole.

# The Marking Advice

Supplementary marking grid

	Marks 20 - 18	Marks 17 - 14	Marks 13 - 10	Marks 9 - 5	Marks 4 - 0
The candidate demonstrates:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a high degree of familiarity with the text as a whole</li> <li>very good understanding of the central concerns of the text</li> <li>a line of thought that is consistently relevant to the task</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>familiarity with the text as a whole</li> <li>good understanding of the central concerns of the text</li> <li>a line of thought that is relevant to the task</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>some familiarity with the text as a whole</li> <li>some understanding of the central concerns of the text</li> <li>a line of thought that is mostly relevant to the task</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>familiarity with some aspects of the text</li> <li>attempts a line of thought but this is may lack relevance to the task</li> </ul>	<p>Although such essays should be rare, in this category, the candidates essay will demonstrate one or more of the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>it contains numerous errors in spelling/ grammar/punctuation/ sentence construction/ paragraphing</li> <li>knowledge and understanding of the text(s) are not used to answer the question</li> <li>any analysis and evaluation attempted are unconvincing</li> <li>the answer is simply too thin</li> </ul>
Analysis of the text demonstrates:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>thorough awareness of the writer's techniques, through analysis, making confident use of critical terminology</li> <li>very detailed/thoughtful explanation of stylistic devices supported by a range of well-chosen references and/or quotations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sound awareness of the writer's techniques through analysis, making good use of critical terminology</li> <li>detailed explanation of stylistic devices supported by appropriate references and/or quotation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an awareness of the writer's techniques through analysis, making some use of critical terminology</li> <li>explanation of stylistic devices supported by some appropriate references and/or quotation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>some awareness of the more obvious techniques used by the writer</li> <li>description of some stylistic devices followed by some reference and/or quotation</li> </ul>	
Evaluation of the text is shown through:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a well developed commentary of what has been enjoyed/gained from the text(s), supported by a range of well-chosen references to its relevant features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a reasonably developed commentary of what has been enjoyed/gained from the text (s), supported by appropriate references to its relevant features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>some commentary of what has been enjoyed/gained from the text(s), supported by some appropriate references to its relevant features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>brief commentary of what has been enjoyed/gained from the text(s), followed by brief reference to its features</li> </ul>	
The candidate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses language to communicate a line of thought very clearly</li> <li>uses spelling, grammar, sentence construction and punctuation which are consistently accurate</li> <li>structures the essay effectively to enhance meaning/purpose</li> <li>uses paragraphing which is accurate and effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses language to communicate a line of thought clearly</li> <li>uses spelling, grammar, sentence construction and punctuation which are mainly accurate</li> <li>structures the essay very well</li> <li>uses paragraphing which is accurate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses language to communicate a line of thought at first reading</li> <li>uses spelling, grammar, sentence construction and punctuation which are sufficiently accurate</li> <li>attempts to structure the essay in an appropriate way</li> <li>uses paragraphing which is sufficiently accurate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses language to communicate a line of thought which may be disorganised and/or difficult to follow</li> <li>makes some errors in spelling/grammar/ sentence construction/ punctuation</li> <li>has not structured the essay well</li> <li>has made some errors in paragraphing</li> </ul>	
In summary, the candidates essay is	thorough and precise	very detailed and shows some insight	fairly detailed and relevant	lacks detail and relevance	superficial and/or technically weak

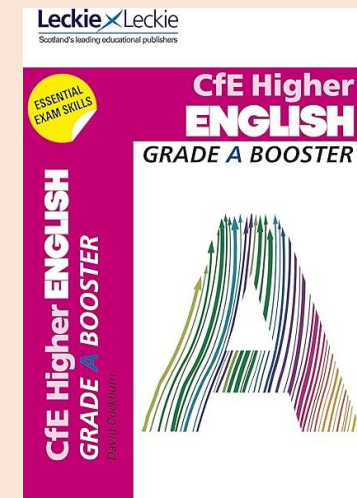
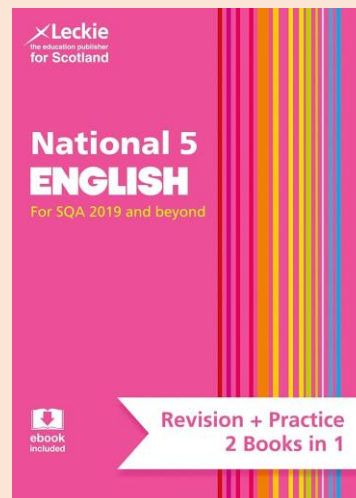
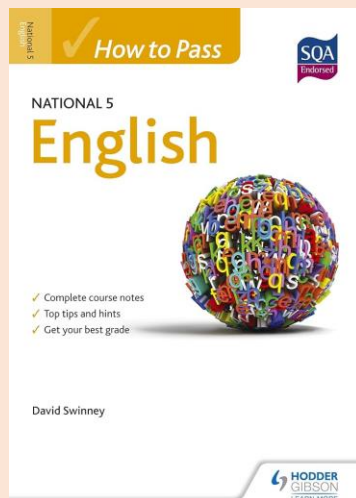
[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]

**Essentially, pupils are marked on;**

- How well they know the text (have they quoted in each paragraph? Do they understand the plot and themes of the text?)
- Do they understand techniques used by the writer? Have they used the names of specific techniques? Alliteration, character, narration, etc.
- Have they analysed the effect of the techniques in enough detail?
- Have they evaluated how effective the writer's use of techniques is, using words such as **meaningful, moving, interesting**, for example?
- Can their essay be understood **at first reading**? Have they used correct spelling, punctuation, and capital letters?

# Where to find essay questions

- **The SQA website** – google “SQA English past papers” and click on the first link, filter for level (N5, H, AH).
- **Check your teams page** – often, teachers will post practice questions and papers in the files section of the class team.
- **Any study books such as;**





# Where to find examples of good essays

- Check the SQA Understanding Standards website to see responses written by actual candidates, and to see the mark and feedback they were given by the examiner;

<https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/Subjects/English/national5/CriticalReading>

# Senior Phase English Information Evening

