

Write a “checklist” of the author’s key concerns

“Higher-scoring responses discussed the implications of specific aspects of a topic; lower-scoring responses did not define the terms sharply enough, or ignored them.” (Assessors)

“A character is defined by the kinds of challenges he cannot walk away from and by those he had walked away from that cause him remorse”. (Arthur Miller, Timebends)

Links to the author’s key concerns

Your topic sentences and your evidence must link to the author’s views, values and their key concerns.

As you delve into the characters and the choices they make, you will gain a deeper insight into the author’s key ideas.

This list will help you write your topic sentences. To avoid generalisations, you must explore themes and characters from a variety of angles. You must show an awareness of the deeper meanings of the text; (the nuances and the ambiguities).

Try to locate the author’s viewpoint and attitude. Consider:

- ◆ Which characters does the author seem to approve of, and which ones do they disapprove of and why?
- ◆ What does the author suggest about the characters’ actions and responses? What dilemmas do they face and how do they deal with conflict. What choices do they make and why?
- ◆ Is one character a (moral) spokesperson?
- ◆ Examine key narrative devices and recurring symbols: how do they shed light on the main characters and the themes? What is the point of the symbol? How does it reflect the author’s views?

You must locate the author’s attitude.

- Jim’s statement: Shakespeare reflects upon his views which was about one’s social standing, freedom and opportunity. This statement does not identify Shakespeare’s attitude.
- Keep breaking down the key concepts, such as freedom and social status, love and hate.
 - » Shakespeare suggests that figures of authority (Lord Capulet) abuse their position of authority by trampling upon people’s wishes.
 - » One of Shakespeare’s messages is that we should settle (tribal) differences in a peaceful way, rather than resort to aggression.
 - » Love and hatred, like medicinal and poisonous weeds should be kept in balance.

A sample checklist of the author’s key ideas and concerns

In Animal Farm, George Orwell:

- outlines a dream of economic equality that would benefit the population; however, it is corrupted by the leaders
- shows that people in power protect their own interests (often ruthlessly) and are not concerned for the people
- advises people to be suspicious of those in positions of power who change the facts
- is critical of those who deceive the masses by propaganda
- warns against the tendency to brainwash people
- believes that people must be educated and they must question their leader’s motives; people should not blindly trust their leaders because they may be betrayed.
- shows that people must resist tyranny from the beginning, before it is too late
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