

English

First Additional Language

CLASS TEXT & STUDY GUIDE

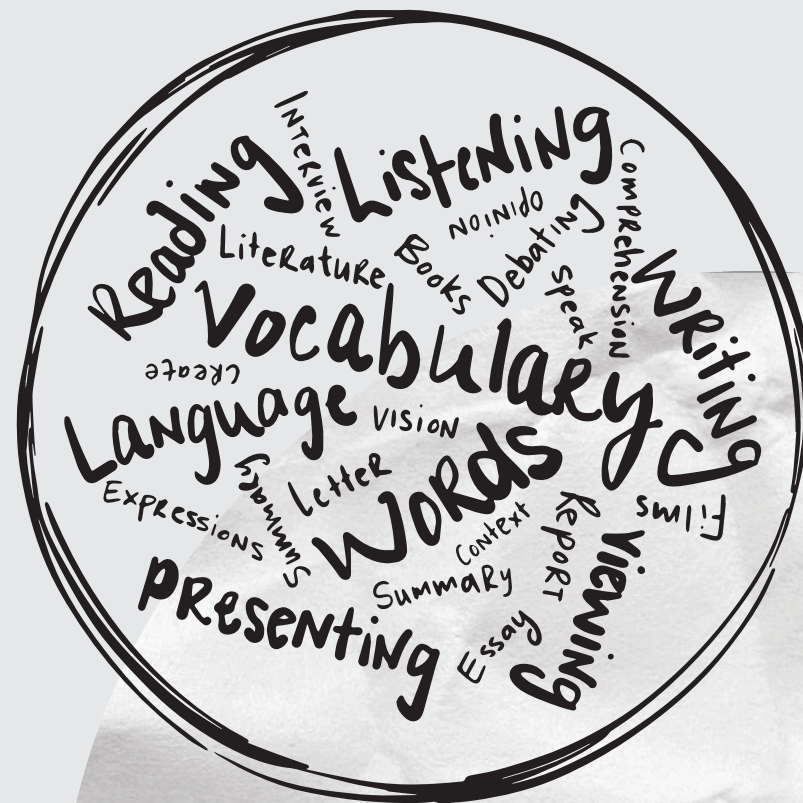
Mich lle Coetzee, Lawrence Hoepner, Nadia Anhuizen,
Gail Simon & Beverley Coburn

GRADE

12

CAPS

3-in-1



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Grade 12 **English FAL** 3-in-1 CAPS

CLASS TEXT & STUDY GUIDE

This Grade 12 English First Additional Language 3-in-1 study guide offers a step-by-step walk through the four main FAL skills – Listening & Speaking; Reading & Viewing; Writing & Presenting; Language Structures & Conventions. This study aid is broken up into bite sized, unintimidating chunks, which you can work through at your own pace, watching your confidence grow.

Key Features:

- Step-by-step, methodical approach
- Comprehensive, memorable notes on each of the 4 skills
- Carefully selected exercises with answers on each of the skills
- Exam paper and memo
- Audio CD of listening activities

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Gail Simon & Beverley Coburn**

With contributions by Gail Wallace, Sue Jordaan, Linnell Holland
and Lindi Clarke

THIS CLASS TEXT & STUDY GUIDE INCLUDES

- 1 Stimulating Notes on each of the four skills
- 2 Exercises
- 3 Answers

*Plus a **sample** Exam Paper 1 and Memo*

E-book
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Try This!**Exercise 42**

Read through the following article and summarise the seven key tips on choosing a career. Use between 60 and 70 words, and number your points. Write the word count in brackets at the end of your summary.

Finding a career that is right for you

If you are already working, you will need to be prepared to give up your existing job in your drive to find something more appropriate. This doesn't mean resigning immediately, it just means getting ready to let go. If you aren't yet working, get ready to let go of your ample leisure time and daydreams.

Then write a bulleted list of your strengths, and try and be specific. You can ask friends and family to help you with this.

Also think carefully about what really drives you. Create a bulleted list of your main interests, without worrying about how good you are in these areas.

Find out which occupations match both your strengths and your interests, including those that would require you starting your own business. Where your strengths and interests overlap is a good direction to follow.

If there are many occupations that meet your strengths and interests, choose the one that will bring you the lifestyle that you would most enjoy. You need to be honest about what you want.

Develop your skills in order to prepare for your new career. Be prepared to take classes, or work as an intern so that you are not totally inexperienced in your new field. Consider the possibility of following a new career within your existing company by shifting jobs.

Ease slowly into a new career. This will give you time to make sure that you are on the right path.



IDENTIFYING AND ANALYSING FIGURES OF SPEECH



LITERAL LANGUAGE VERSUS FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

The simplest way to define figurative language is to begin by stating what it is not. Figurative language is not literal language.

Literal language means exactly what it says. If we say 'The boy is high up on the roof', the word 'high' here means far off the ground, which is the literal meaning of the word.

But if we were to say 'The boy in the red shirt is high on ecstasy' the word 'high' would in this instance not mean far off the ground. Instead, this use of figurative language would mean that the drug ecstasy has made him feel extra happy.

So **figurative language** is non-literal language. The meaning of a word used figuratively differs from the literal meaning of that word.

Figurative language (also called figures of speech) can be hard to understand at times, but it is used in an attempt to make a text more vivid, emotive and interesting.



Source: Greudin

Figure skating is creative skating, just like figures of speech are creative ways of making language interesting.

Sound devices and rhetorical devices are usually grouped under figurative language:

- **Rhetorical devices** (such as rhetorical questions, hyperbole and understatement) are instances of language being used for extra impact.
- **Sound devices** (such as alliteration, rhyme and onomatopoeia) are instances where language is used to appeal to our sense of hearing.

EXAM FOCUS SIMILE

We normally compare things that are in the same category to show which one is bigger, faster, older, etc. However, a **simile** is a comparison between two things from different categories where the comparing words 'like', 'as' or 'than' are used.

The comparing words create a connection between the first thing and the second thing that are being compared, and one of the characteristics of the second thing is transferred to the first thing.

For example:

- His face was like a brick wall.
(His face is being compared to a brick wall to show that it was expressionless and did not invite conversation.)
- That day there was no wind, and the sea was as smooth as glass.
(The sea is being compared to glass to show how calm and flat it was.)
- She felt more bitter than a pot of black coffee.
(She is being compared to a pot of black coffee to show that she is in a resentful state of mind.)

To fully explain a simile you must say what is being compared *and* what is being shown through this comparison.

EXAM FOCUS METAPHOR

A **metaphor** is a comparison between two things from different categories where no comparing words are used. Like a simile, a metaphor is an attempt to make a connection between some aspect of the two things that are being compared.

For example:

- Jacob is a rat.
(Jacob is being compared to a rat to show that he is not to be trusted.)
- To start off with we sat on the lawn, but our bums were poked by the blades of grass.
(The leaves of grass are being compared to knife blades to show how sharp they are.)
- My manager shot down all my suggestions.
(The manager's response is being compared to the shooting of bullets to show how destructive it was.)
- My father punctured my good mood when he asked how much the trip would cost.
(The father's question is being compared to a sharp item such as a thorn, and the speaker's good mood is being compared to a tyre that is punctured by that thorn, in order to show what a negative effect the question had on the speaker's spirits.)

EXAM FOCUS PERSONIFICATION

Personification is a specific type of metaphor where a non-human thing is given human qualities.

When we use human characteristics to describe non-human things we are also personifying them.

For example:

- The shy moon hid behind the clouds.

The way the moon disappears behind the clouds is being compared to the way a shy human hides away in order to make the moon seem to be a conscious being with its own thoughts and behaviours.

- The sun smiled down on the fields.

The way the sun shines on the fields is being compared to the way a human smiles in order to make the sun seem friendly.



- O stars, do not look, for I am ashamed!



The stars are addressed as if they are humans in order to make the person's statement have more impact.

Try This!

Exercise 43

Identify which of the following extracts is a simile, which is a metaphor (but not personification), and which is an example of personification.

- 43.1 His baby cry
was of a cub
tearing the neck
of the lioness...

From 'The birth of Shaka' by Oswald Mtshali

- 43.2 Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so...

From 'Holy Sonnets' by John Donne

- 43.3 He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more...

From 'Snake' by D.H. Lawrence

EXAM FOCUS CONTRAST

Contrast is when two things are compared to show their differences.

For example:

- Some people are willing to work and other people are willing to let them.

EXAM FOCUS HYPERBOLE

A **hyperbole** is an exaggeration used to make a point.

For example:

- I have a thousand things I need to do today.
(He has lots of things he needs to do today.)
- She has a brain the size of a pea.
(She is stupid.)
- I am so hungry I could eat a horse.
(I am very hungry.)

EXAM FOCUS UNDERSTATEMENT

An understatement plays something down and makes less of it.

For example, if an onlooker at a terrible road accident said 'This is not very nice' he/she would be using an understatement.

Understatements can be used by people who do not like making dramatic statements.

Sometimes understatements are used as a form of humour.

For example, if there was a flood and a person said 'It has rained a bit more than usual' this would be an example of an understatement that was meant to be humorous.



The contrast between what is said and the real situation is an important part of both a hyperbole and an understatement.

Try This!

Exercise 44

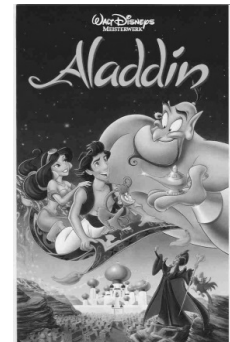
Identify which of the following extracts simply uses contrast, which is a hyperbole and which is an understatement.

- 44.1 If you want to look young and thin, hang around old fat people.
Jim Eason
- 44.2 ... the National Rifle Association says that, "Guns don't kill people, people do," but I think the gun helps, you know?
Eddie Izzard
- 44.3 I'm as poor as a church mouse that's just had an enormous tax bill on the very day his wife ran off with another mouse, taking all the cheese.
From *Blackadder*

EXAM FOCUS IRONY

Irony (verbal irony) is a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite of that expressed by the words used. It depends on the contrast between what is said and how things really are.

For example, in the film *Aladdin*, the sultan's advisor (vizier) Jafar is hoping to marry Princess Jasmine, so he does not want any princes arriving at the palace seeking her hand in marriage. Therefore in the extract shown below, his comment is an example of irony.



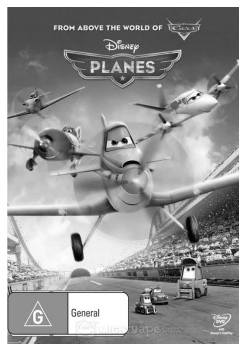
More and more fanfare until ALADDIN flies off ABU's back on the magic carpet and flies down to the SULTAN. JAFAR slams the door shut.

- SULTAN: (clapping) Splendid, absolutely marvellous.
- ALADDIN: (in a deep voice) Ahem. Your majesty, I have journeyed from afar to seek your daughter's hand.
- SULTAN: Prince Ali Ababwa! Of course. I'm delighted to meet you.
(He rushes over and shakes ALI's hand.)
This is my royal vizier, Jafar. He's delighted too.
- JAFAR: (extremely dryly) Ecstatic.

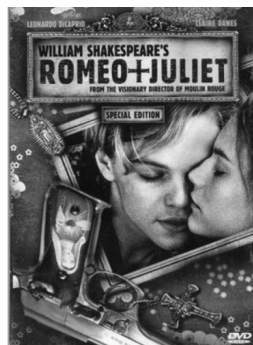
When Jafar says 'Ecstatic' his tone makes it clear that he means the exact opposite of what he is saying.

Situational irony is when you expect something to happen, but the exact opposite happens.

For example, in the film *Planes*, the main character, Dusty, is an aeroplane who wants to enter a round-the-world race. Then he reveals he is scared of heights.



Dramatic irony is when the audience has more information than at least one of the characters in a play or film, therefore the audience is extra aware that a particular statement that one character makes is the opposite of the truth.



For example, in *Romeo and Juliet*, once Juliet has taken the sleeping draught most people think she is dead, including Romeo. Therefore, he speaks to her as if she is dead, while the audience knows she is the opposite: alive, and about to wake up.

Romeo: O my love! my wife!
Death, that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath,
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty:
Thou art not conquer'd; beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
And death's pale flag is not advanced there.

EXAM FOCUS SARCASM

Sarcasm is a form of verbal irony that is meant to be hurtful or embarrassing.

For example, imagine that a learner gets 5/35 for a literature test. As the teacher gives the test back he calls out the mark in front of the class and says, 'Well done, Anelisa'. This is sarcasm because he means the complete opposite of what he says, and is trying to embarrass Anelisa.

EXAM FOCUS EUPHEMISM

A **euphemism** is a neutral or inoffensive word or phrase that is used in the place of a word or phrase that is blunt, crude or embarrassing. Euphemisms are most commonly used as substitutes for the vocabulary of death and sex.

For example:

- Simamkele left his wife Denise when he found out she was sleeping with Jan. (The term 'sleeping with' is a euphemism for 'being in a sexual relationship with'.)
- Even that extraordinary man, Nelson Mandela, will have to pass on. (The term 'pass on' is a euphemism for 'die'.)

Try This!

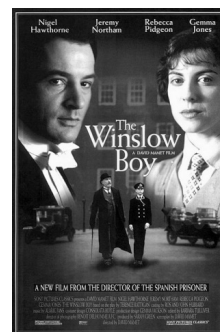
Exercise 45

Identify which of the following extracts is a classic example of verbal irony (and not sarcasm), which is an example of sarcasm, and which is a euphemism.

- 45.1 'You are a beauty,' he said to the young lady, whose face had been scarred in an accident.
- 45.2 'Looks-wise she's plain, but she has a great personality,' he told his single friend.
- 45.3 While the sun set and bathed the scene in a beautiful peach light, he kneeled down on the beach sand and said, 'This might not be a good time, but will you marry me?'

EXAM FOCUS ANTI-CLIMAX

An **anti-climax** is a statement or event in a story, play or poem that surprises the reader or audience because it is far less exciting or impressive than was expected.



For example, in the film *The Winslow Boy* a teenager at a British school is accused of theft and expelled. His father spends almost all the family's money hiring a lawyer to prove that the boy, Ronnie, is innocent. Because of the costs of the case, his older brother has to leave university and all the adults in the family go through very stressful times. Even his sister's engagement is broken off by her fiancé. However, when the family receives the news that they have won the case, the boy is at the cinema. When he returns he simply says quietly 'How about that. We won.'

The anti-climax brings the audience to wonder how much of the case was about justice for the boy, and how much about the father's pride.

Another example of anti-climax is in the anecdote below:

- 'Oh, poor Mr Jones,' mourned Mrs Smith. 'Did you hear what happened to him? He tripped at the top of the stairs, fell down the whole flight, banged his head and died.'
- 'Died?' said Mrs Robinson, shocked.
- 'Died!' repeated Mrs Smith with emphasis. 'Broke his glasses too.'

From Isaac Asimov's Treasury of Humor

The last comment about Mr Jones's glasses is an anti-climax, as it is almost irrelevant when compared to the fact of his death.

**SYMBOL**

A **symbol** is a sign or image used to represent something else. For example, a picture of a rising sun usually represents birth or the beginning of something, and a picture of a setting sun usually represents death or the end of something.

In literature a word or phrase can also be a symbol.

For example, in his poem 'The Serf' Roy Campbell uses the phrase 'palaces, and thrones and towers' to represent the power of the ruling class.

Some of the common symbols in literature are as follows:

- A rose usually represents love.
- Stars usually represent fate (our inability to control our own futures).
- Shadows usually represent lies.
- Chains usually represent imprisonment.
- A fire usually represents passion.
- A guitar or other musical instrument usually represents music.
- Books usually represent education.
- A grave usually represents the shortness of life.
- A gun usually represents violence.
- A dove usually represents peace.

Some things represent quite different things in different cultures. For example, in many parts of Africa, rain is a symbol of joy, while in many parts of Europe rain is a symbol of sadness.

**PUN**

A **pun** is a sentence that plays on the fact that the same word or phrase can have two meanings, and the person making a pun constructs it to be amusing and to show how clever he/she is.

Many **puns** depend on homophones – words that sound the same but which are spelt differently and have different meanings. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo complains that being pierced by Cupid's arrow did not fill him with the ecstasy of love but instead hurt him (because he and Juliet are kept apart). He says:

I am too *sore* enpierced with his shaft
To *soar* with his light feather...

Puns are also based upon homonyms – words that are spelt the same and sound the same but have different meanings. In *Romeo and Juliet* Mercutio, who is dying from a sword wound, puns on the homonym 'grave'. He says:

Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a *grave* man...

Here 'grave' means 'in a very serious mood' and 'a hole in the ground in which a dead body is placed.'

Puns are often used in humour, as in the joke:

Did you hear about the guy whose whole left side was cut off?
He's all right now.

Here 'all right' means 'only consisting of his right side' and 'OK. The double meaning of the term 'all right' makes this a pun.

**RHETORICAL QUESTION**

A **rhetorical question** uses the structure of a question to make a statement with impact. The person making the rhetorical question does not expect it to be answered.

For example, if a prosecuting attorney in a courtroom turned to the judge and said, 'Your honour, do you think it is acceptable that a father, an adult man, physically abuses his defenceless eight-year-old child?' this attorney would not be expecting the judge to answer. This would be a rhetorical question carrying the message 'No, it is not!'

Try This!**Exercise 46**

Identify which of the following extracts is an example of anti-climax, which contains a symbol, which contains a pun, and which contains a rhetorical question.

- 46.1 Lettuce go to the salad bar, we're starving!
- 46.2 Marriage is a wonderful institution, but who would want to live in an institution?
- 46.3 Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

From 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' by
Thomas Gray



REFRAIN

A **refrain** is a line, more than one line, or just part of a line that is repeated at various places in a poem. It is a special form of repetition.

In a poem consisting of stanzas, a **refrain** is most commonly found at the end of each stanza.

In the following folk song both the lines 'Oh, the wind and rain' and 'Oh, the dreadful wind and rain' form a refrain.

Wind and rain

There were two sisters of County Clare,
Oh, the wind and rain.
One was dark and the other was fair,
Oh, the dreadful wind and rain.

And they both had a love of the miller's son,
Oh, the wind and rain.
But he was fond of the fairer one,
Oh, the dreadful wind and rain.

Dark one pushed her to the river to drown,
Oh, the wind and rain.
And watched her as she floated down,
Oh, the dreadful wind and rain.

And she floated till she came to the miller's pond,
Oh, the wind and rain.
Dead on the water like a golden swan,
Oh, the dreadful wind and rain.

And along the road came a fiddler fair,
Oh, the wind and rain.
And found her bones just a-lying there, cried
Oh, the dreadful wind and rain.

So he made a fiddle peg of her long finger bone,
Oh, the wind and rain.
He strung his fiddle bow with her long yellow hair, cried
Oh, the dreadful wind and rain.

But the only tune that the fiddle could play was
Oh, the wind and rain.
The only tune that the fiddle would play was
Oh, the dreadful wind and rain.

Try This!

Exercise 47

47.1 From the following extract quote:

- three words that rhyme
- an example of a phrase used as a refrain..

Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott

And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott

From 'The Lady of Shalott' by Alfred Tennyson



The Lady of Shalott by John William Waterhouse

- 47.2 Describe the rhythm and identify the repetition used in the poem below. Then comment on how they affect the impression the poem makes.

Sonnet XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
 For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
 I love thee to the level of every day's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
 I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
 I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
 I love thee with a passion put to use
 In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
 I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
 With my lost saints, – I love thee with the breath,
 Smiles, tears, of all my life! – and, if God choose,
 I shall but love thee better after death.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning



Elizabeth Barrett Browning

EXAM FOCUS ALLITERATION

Alliteration is when words that begin with the same consonant sound are placed near to each other.

For example, in 'The Coffee-Cart Girl' Es'kia Mphahlele writes that 'The crowd moved like one mighty being, and swayed and swung like the sea...' Here alliteration is used to emphasise the unity and energy of the crowd.

EXAM FOCUS ASSONANCE

Assonance is when words containing the same vowel sound are placed near to each other.

For example, in the phrase 'Waltzing Matilda' the 'a' sound appears three times. This has the effect of making the phrase more catchy and memorable.

EXAM FOCUS ONOMATOPOEIA

Onomatopoeia (pronounced 'on-o-mat-o-pee-a') is when a word imitates the sound it is describing.

Examples of onomatopoeia include:

- the *hiss* of the deadly puff adder
- the sad *miaow* of the old cat
- the *plp* of water in the cold basement.



Try This!

Exercise 48

In the following extract identify:

- an example of alliteration
- an example of assonance
- an example of onomatopoeia.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
 I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
 While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
 I hear it in the deep heart's core.

From 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' by William Butler Yeats

PREPARING FOR A LITERATURE EXAM

Because there are so many possible literature texts that can be studied for Grade 12 FAL English, it is not possible to cover them all in this book. What we have provided is some general advice about contextual questions, and some more specific advice about each of the four possible genres that you may have studied.



CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS

A contextual question will always contain a piece of text from the relevant short story, novel or drama. If you are writing on poetry, it will contain the whole poem. There will be a number of questions based on the piece of text. If it is an extract there will also be a number of questions on things that happen in the rest of the short story, novel or drama.

When answering contextual questions, use full sentences unless you are asked for only one word or a quotation.



SHORT STORIES AND NOVELS

There is a great similarity between short stories and novels. The main difference is that a novel is longer than a short story, therefore in a novel much more time can be spent on describing the setting and developing the characters, and the plot can be more complex.

The setting

The **setting** of a story is the time and place in which the story is set, and the social context in which the characters interact.

In Can Themba's short story 'The Dube Train' the setting is Apartheid South Africa in the early 1960s, which was a very stressful time for black South Africans. More specifically, the story is set in a third-class railway coach in the black townships south-west of Johannesburg. The coach has a broken door, a missing seat and glass missing from a window. The writer describes the coach in some detail because it contextualises the broken moral codes of the characters.

In Somerset Maugham's story 'The Luncheon', the story is set in the early part of the twentieth century in a restaurant called Foyot's, in Paris, France. It is a very expensive restaurant, frequented by the elite of Paris for its fine food. The setting is an important part of the story because, as the lady that the narrator has taken out for lunch continues to order more items, we are painfully aware of how much the narrator is going to have to pay at the end of the lunch.

You must know the time and place in which a short story or a novel is set, and know any significant facts about that social context.

The writer's context

The **writers' context** is the place and time in which he/she wrote the text, and any relevant details about his/her social context.

You must know when and where the story was written, and any relevant facts about the writer's social context. Writers writing about their own culture will include details based on their experiences. Writers writing about other cultures will have to imagine most of the details, and will draw on their own cultures to help them do this.

It is interesting to note that William Golding, who wrote *Lord of the Flies*, was a teacher at a boy's high school in England, and that many people believe his characters were based on some of the teenagers that he taught. Therefore, while he imagined the events that happened to his characters, he drew on his experiences as a teacher to describe his characters, and to anticipate how they would act when faced with such events.

The characters

The **characters** are the people that we meet in the story. They have been imagined by the author.

Characters are given certain physical, intellectual, emotional and, sometimes, spiritual qualities by the author. These qualities make up the unique identity of the character and serve as the motivation for his/her behaviour.

We learn about characters as the story unfolds. Our knowledge about a character comes from what that character says and does while interacting with other characters, and also from what other characters say about that character. If that character is also the narrator, he/she may also tell us a lot about him/herself.

The **protagonist** is the main character, and usually the person that readers identify with. For example, in 'Lord of the Flies' the protagonist is Ralph.

The **antagonist** is the character who opposes the main character. For example, in 'Lord of the Flies' the antagonist is Jack.

Make sure you know the names of each of the characters in the short stories or novel that you are studying, and know at least one adjective that can be used to describe each character. If you are studying a novel, learn a short quotation that is a key to understanding each main character, and know how to analyse what this quotation shows about that character.

In many stories, at least one character undergoes a real change. Be prepared to explain how and why this happens.

The story

A **story (narrative)** is a telling of a series of events, involving a character or set of characters, which takes place over a specific period of time and usually involves some form of conflict.

The **conflict** is the struggle that arises between characters because of opposing desires or values. The conflict is normally between the protagonist and the antagonist.

A story is usually made up of five stages:

- 1 the **exposition** (when the characters and setting are introduced)
In 'The Dube Train' this is where the scene is set: a grey dirty station, people pushing and shoving, a derelict coach, the semi-drunk giant of a man dozing opposite the narrator.
- 2 the **rising action** (when conflicts develop)
In 'The Dube Train' this is when a young woman arrives and then the tsotsi, who starts to abuse her immediately. A woman commuter complains to the men in the coach for doing nothing to stop him, and tells off the tsotsi. The tsotsi responds by viciously insulting her.
- 3 the **climax / turning point** (when the story reaches its most exciting part)
In 'The Dube Train' this is when the giant of a man moves to stop the tsotsi, who slices him with his knife. The badly hurt man picks up the tsotsi and throws him through the paneless window.
- 4 the **falling action** (when the tension is released)
For example, in 'The Dube Train' this is when the commuters run to the window to see what has happened to the tsotsi, completely ignoring the wounded man.
- 5 the **denouement / resolution** (when everything is wrapped up).
In 'The Dube Train' this is when the badly wounded man leaves the train at Langlaagte Station, bleeding and still unassisted.

You must know the sequence of events for each short story or novel that you study. You also need to be able to identify each of these stages within a story.

If there is a twist in the tale (an unexpected turn in the story), you need to be able to analyse how the writer led you to expect one thing, and then overturned these expectations.

In addition, you need to be able to comment on the resolution. For example, you need to be able to say why you find it satisfying, surprising, etc.

The plot

The **plot** refers to the events in the story that are linked to each other in a chain of cause and effect. In simple language, the **plot** is about who did what and why.

For example, in 'The Dube Train' the tsotsi's behaviour causes a woman to berate him, and the men for not stopping him. This causes the tsotsi to insult the woman. This causes the giant of a man to move against the tsotsi. This causes the tsotsi to cut him with his knife. This angers the wounded man, and causes him to throw the tsotsi out the window. This causes everyone else to look out the window. The wounded man leaves the train alone because no-one comes to help him.

You must be able to summarise the plot for each short story or novel that you study.

Dialogue

In a short story or novel, **dialogue** refers to the conversations between two or more characters that are provided in reported speech. A short story or novel does not have to include dialogue, but most of them do.

Dialogue helps to give insight into characters, and allows us to form our own opinions about characters based on what they say, and how they say it. Dialogue also makes a story more dynamic.

The narrator's point of view

The **narrator** is the person telling the story. The narrator may be the same person as the writer, but might be another character that the writer has created.

The narrator can tell the story from as a first-person narrator or a third-person narrator.

A **first-person narrator** is someone who tells the story while referring to him/herself as 'I' and 'me', and who may also use 'my' and 'mine'. The first-person narrator can be a character who participates in the story, or can be removed from the actual events of the story, perhaps telling it as he/she heard it from somebody else. First-person narrators share their thoughts and feelings with readers, but do not know what is going on inside the minds and hearts of the other characters.

For example, 'The Dube Train' is told by a first-person narrator, who says, 'The tsotsi followed, and as he passed me he reeled with the sway of the train. To steady himself, he put a full paw in my face.'

A **third-person narrator** is someone who does not use 'I' while telling the story, and is not a part of the story.

2 There are different kinds of third-person narrators:

- the **third-person omniscient narrator**, who knows everything about what happened and what the characters are thinking and feeling
For example, 'The Coffee-Cart Girl' by Es'kia Mphahlele is told by a third-person omniscient narrator. The narrator tells us what Pinkie feels, and what China feels.
- the **third-person objective narrator**, who knows what happened but not what characters are thinking and feeling
For example, 'Manhood' by John Wain is told by a third-person objective narrator. We are not told what Rob or his father are feeling.
- the **third-person limited narrator**, who tells the story from the point of view of one character, and only knows this character's thoughts and feelings.
For example, the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling is told by a third-person limited narrator. We are only told about what Harry experiences and feels.

You should be able to comment on the role of the narrator, and identifying the kind of narrator that is being used will help you to do this. A first-person narrator may actually affect the plot, or be the main character. A third-person narrator will not affect the plot at all as he/she will be playing the role of an observer.



Note: when we write the title of a long work such as a novel or a play, we write it in italics when we type it and we underline it when we write it out by hand. However, when we write the title of a short work such as a short story or a short poem, then we put this title in inverted commas.

The theme

A **theme** is an idea that is explored in a text. A complex novel will have many themes, while a short story will probably focus on a few.

For example, two of the themes explored in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee are racism and courage. In *A Grain of Wheat* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o two of the themes are self-sacrifice and betrayal. In *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding two of the themes are evil and grief. In '*The Dube Train*' the main theme is a lack of community responsibility.

For each short story that you are studying you need to be able to name at least one theme, and be able to link this to an event in the story. If you are studying a novel you need to be able to name at least two of its themes, and be able to link each one to an event in the story.

The message

Fiction is not a sermon – the author is not like a priest who prepares his sermon with the intention of convincing his congregation about something.

However, short stories and novels do contain messages. **Messages** are points that are made about society through the vehicle of the story. Sometimes these messages are unclear, complex or debatable because the writer is mainly creating a portrait of a society; other times these messages are very clear because the writer is challenging the way something has been done, or is challenging a common assumption.

For example, *Lord of the Flies* has a clear message: that we all have a savage nature that lies beneath our civilised surfaces.

The messages within *To Kill a Mockingbird* are less clear, but one message is that courage is valuable, even though a courageous person may be defeated in a particular battle.

You must be able to say how the message of a story is supported by the events of that story. For example, if you are saying that *To Kill a Mockingbird* contains the message that courage is valuable, you need to be able to refer to events such as Atticus Finch choosing to defend Tom Robinson when he is accused of rape, even though the townspeople don't approve of this. Even though Tom is unfairly found guilty, the book is a celebration of Atticus's courage to do the right thing in the face of great opposition.

It helps to be able to refer to a quotation, such as when Atticus says, 'Courage is not a man with a gun in his hand. It's knowing you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what.'

The mood

The **mood** of a text is the emotional atmosphere that the writer creates.

For example, W. Somerset Maugham creates a light and humorous mood in his story 'The Luncheon' by constantly contrasting what the lady says and what she does, to show both how she deceives herself and how this will have a devastating effect on how much he is going to have to pay for their lunch.

When the writer creates the mood of a story he/she may use specific images and figures of speech. You should be prepared to analyse how these help to create the mood of the story.

For example, in *Lord of the Flies* Golding writes that: The flames, as though they were a kind of wild life, crept as a jaguar creeps on its belly toward a line of birch-like saplings... By comparing the fire to a wild animal, Golding emphasises the uncontrollable nature of the fire, which adds to the savage mood of the story.