

## **EXAMINER TIPS for AS English Language 8693**

### **General Advice**

- It is important that you are ready for the examination in terms of your standard of written English: this is a step up from GCSE and requires a high degree of fluency and accuracy.
- Ensure that you are particularly practised at using consistent tenses and subject-verb agreement.
- Try to ensure that you are familiar with different types of texts such as travel writing, autobiography, biography, humorous writing, persuasive or promotional materials, fictional genres (such as science fiction, suspense, thrillers and so on).
- Try to ensure, too, that you are familiar with writing in different formats for both papers. You should practise writing the openings of different types of texts and familiarise yourself with the structures and conventions of different genres and formats.
- Ensure that you annotate passages that you read.
- Ensure that you plan your work in the examination.
- Do not try to off-load a prepared list of terminology on Paper 1 but try to select and draw from the terms which you do know which are appropriate for the passage.
- Don't write under the amount required or go excessively beyond the upper limit.

### **Paper 1**

- When asked to comment on the language and style of the set passage try to be prepared in your approach: don't be afraid to plan, highlight or annotate the text.
- Try to avoid being inflexible; try not to write a list of prepared terms or to spot features/techniques that you recognise. Examiners call this 'feature-spotting'. Unlike some other subjects English Language is not really content driven but tends to involve the application of specific reading and writing skills. Trying to off-load revised content for the subject is, therefore, not really appropriate.
- Try to break the set passage into small sections and consider each section in turn.
- As you consider each section try to select issues or techniques which are clearly in evidence in the passage; not everything you know will necessarily be there.
- As a starting point, ask yourself what the mood of the passage is; highlight the key words and phrases that create this.
- Ask yourself what we learn about the narrator or a character, the kinds of attitude they show to others or any issues that arise.
- Ask yourself about the use of setting – which key words and phrases establish this?
- If there is dialogue, what does it show us about different speakers and their attitudes to/relationships with others?
- The key words and phrases that you highlight should form the basis for the brief quotations you should blend into your answer.
- Quotations should be brief (about five words maximum for each one) and be embedded into your sentences: avoid copying huge chunks of the text out.
- Try to comment on these quotations by asking yourself a range of prompt questions for each one: What mood does this create? What qualities does it bring to mind? Does it contrast with

any other words or phrases in the text and, if so, what is the effect of this? What do the words suggest about the voice (the narrator perhaps or another character) using them?

- Try to look for differences between each of the smaller sections you have broken the text up into.
- See if there are changes in mood, attitude or characterisation.
  
- When answering tasks based on directed writing, ensure that you read the instructions carefully so that you understand the purpose of the task, which character it might involve, the format in which it is to be written and the appropriate conventions and style of such a format.
- Keep to the word limits
- If you are asked to write in the style and language of the original passage, refer to some of the material you have highlighted in commenting on the language and style and try to adapt the same techniques.
- If the directed writing task is set first and followed by a task which requires you to compare your piece of writing to the original extract, then focus on the style and language first: so that, when it comes to the writing task, you are familiar with the writer's techniques and can base your writing on them. Again, highlight and annotate the original text.

## **Paper 2**

### **For Section A (Narrative/Descriptive/Imaginative Writing)**

- Be familiar with a range of styles of writing and different genres.
- Try to appreciate the conventions, the features which we would expect to find, in different types of text.
- Practice writing the opening chapters to different genres.
- In the examination read the rubric of each title carefully: there will usually be a specific requirement to focus not just on the title but on one or two foregrounded elements in particular. These elements usually come in pairs and include matters such as: setting and mood; suspense and mystery; character and motivation.
- Try to practice planning the structure of a complete story: sometimes the titles in this section may ask you to write a story with a twist at the end or a story where a secret catches up with a character; plotting of content and the revelation of detail becomes important when addressing such titles.
- Don't overwrite: this means that you should not make your language too flowery or show off your impressive vocabulary by combining words and phrases that sound excessive in the chosen context.
- Try to create a sense of sentence variation.
- If you are writing an essentially narrative piece blend in short bursts of description – of setting, people, character qualities – to break up the narrative.
- Ensure you write a **minimum of 600 words**: short work is penalized

For **Section B (Discursive/Argumentative Writing)**

- Ensure that you practice writing different kinds of essays.
- When writing compositions which require **balanced arguments**, practice summarizing the arguments of other people (your personal view of such arguments is not necessarily relevant).
- Use some useful terms in such compositions in order to facilitate summaries: 'according to', 'supporters of this view argue that', 'proponents believe that', 'opponents claim that' 'to counter this argument', 'they also add that'
- When writing compositions which require **personal judgment**, try to avoid offering an outpouring of unstructured arguments; address the arguments which seem opposite to your view and assess them in a measured and persuasive tone
- Compositions which require **different formats**: sometimes you may be asked to role-play and write in a certain style or format – such as giving advice or offering an opinion in a newspaper; be aware of the audience for and purpose of the piece.
- Ensure you write a **minimum of 600 words**: short work is penalized