

COMPOSITION

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PERSONAL ESSAYS

DISCURSIVE ESSAYS





**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2020

English - Higher Level - Paper 1

Total Marks: 200

Duration: 2 hours 50 minutes

- This paper is divided into two sections, Section I COMPREHENDING and Section II COMPOSING.
- The paper contains **three** texts on the general theme of **EXPLORING GENRE**
- Candidates should familiarise themselves with each of the texts before beginning their answers.
- Both sections of this paper (COMPREHENDING and COMPOSING) must be attempted.
- Each section carries 100 marks.

SECTION I – COMPREHENDING

- Two Questions, A and B, follow each text.
- Candidates must answer a Question A on one text and a Question B on a different text. Candidates must answer only one Question A and only one Question B.

N.B. Candidates may NOT answer a Question A and a Question B on the same text.

SECTION II – COMPOSING

- Candidates must write on **one** of the compositions 1 – 7.

THEME

- The theme is written in block capitals on the cover page of the exam.
- The theme will reflect an aspect of life that is relevant to young people.
- There is no obligation to stick to that theme in the Comp B or composition, but it can be an aid to your planning and can guide your reading of the texts.
- Don't waste time trying to predict the theme!
- The theme will never be controversial or specific. So, for example, 'Covid 19' will never appear, but you might see something like 'Challenges' or 'Uncertainty'.

2017 - 2022

2022 – Powerful Voices

2021 – Reflections on
Time

2020 – Exploring Genre

2019 – Feeding Our
Imaginations

2018 – Young Writers

2017 – Different Worlds

2010 - 2016

2016 – Journeys

2015 – Challenges

2014 – Influence

2013- Story-telling

2012 – Memory

2011 – Mystery

2010 – The Future

2003 - 2009

2009 - Decisions

2008 – Identity

2007 – Change

2006 – Pretence

2005 – Ordinary lives

2004 – Work and Play

2003 – Journeys

COMPOSITION

Composition

100 marks – 25% of overall exam

An hour and twenty minutes

Choice of seven titles

Four main areas: opinion pieces, personal essays, short stories, descriptive essays



You can prepare for both the long and the short composition tasks at the same time.



Speech writing and feature articles, for example, could be a Comp B or a Composition task.

TYPES OF TASK

COMPOSITION



You should know what type of composition suits you best.



Don't have 'a story' you use no matter what!

2022

Personal essay x 2

Discursive essay

Short story x2

Feature article

Speech

2021

Personal essay x 2

Discursive essay

Short story

Fable or fairy tale (unusual type of composition – no need to prepare for this type but you can, of course, do it on the day if you like the title!)

Feature article

Speech

PERSONAL ESSAYS AND OPINION PIECES

ALWAYS BASED ON ASPECTS OF LIFE TO WHICH TEENAGERS CAN RELATE.
HERE ARE SOME OF THE TOPICS COVERED IN RECENT YEARS:

- Important lessons learned in life / Significant moment/s in life to date /Time when you achieved something important / Moment of uncertainty
- How to enjoy teenage years
- Views on music, money, happiness, sport, drama, books
- Education
- Problems of our age and how to address them: scientific advances, social media etc.
- People you admire and why you do so / Celebrity status in this day and age / Important people in your life /Someone who has inspired you
- A time you felt left out or ignored
- Romance

PERSONAL ESSAYS

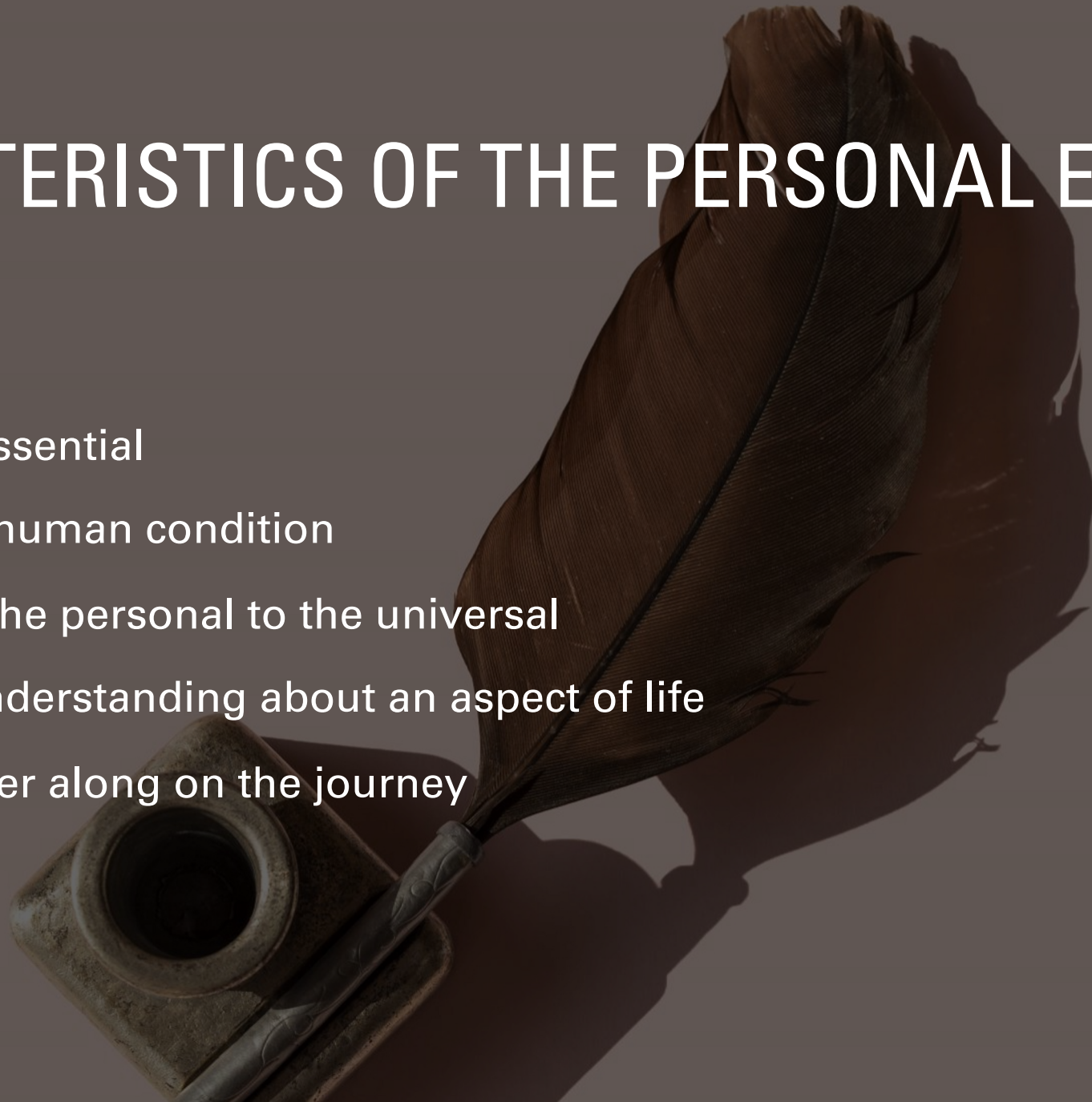
WHAT MAKES YOUR ESSAY PERSONAL?

- Whatever approach you take to the personal essay, it is essential to keep the word 'personal' in mind throughout.
- Your experiences and **your reflections on** them distinguish you from the rest of your classmates. Use this to your advantage; draw the reader in and make him or her care about you and relate to your life.



CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERSONAL ESSAY

- Reflection is essential
- Exploring the human condition
- Moving from the personal to the universal
- Come to an understanding about an aspect of life
- Bring the reader along on the journey



ENGAGE THE READER



Authentic voice



Vary the tone: you can be confessional and reflective but also self-deprecating and chatty

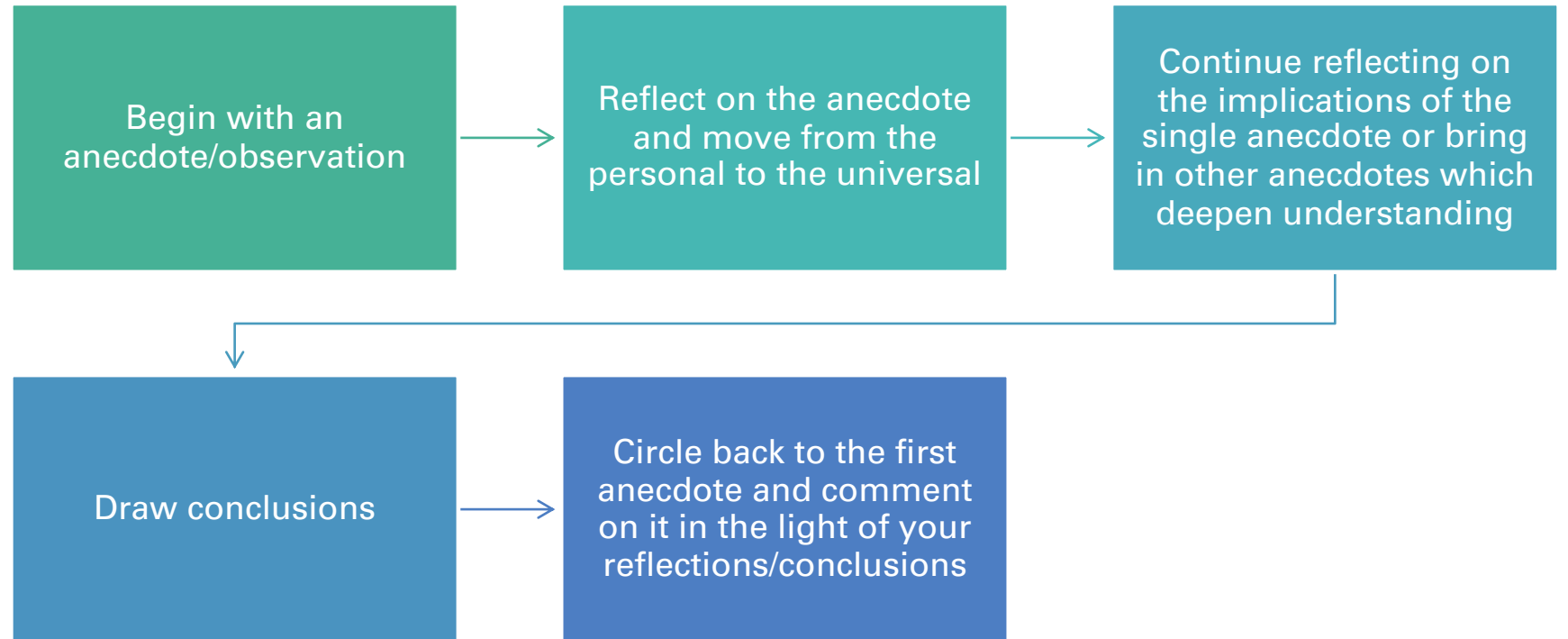


You are the main character in your own piece!



Work on lively and interesting expression

PERSONAL ESSAY STRUCTURE OPTION



PERSONAL ESSAY STRUCTURE OPTION

Move chronologically

If the essay asks about the importance of music in your life, remember your earliest experiences and move from there

What did your like/dislikes say about you at each stage?

What did this tell you about the human need to fit in, for example?

Did you/do we use music to express individuality at times?

What role does music play in your life now?

How does what you have been through inform your attitude as you look to the future?

SAMPLE APPROACH

'She was expected to carry on as she was.... he was always expected to take over the family business.'

Write a personal essay on the part which other people's expectations play in our lives.

POSSIBLE APPROACH

Trace the development of people's expectations in your life.

When you were a child, what was expected of you? Did that influence your behaviour or cramp your style in any way?

As you have grown older, have you become more concerned with the expectations of a different group? For example, have you stopped worrying so much about your parents' expectations and begun to focus more on those of your peer group? Do you think that this has played an important role in your life?

Reflect on the way that this might be true for others (move from the personal to the universal).

End by wondering what expectations will shape your life in the future and perhaps conclude that it is time to set your own goals.

PERSONAL ESSAYS

STUDENT
SAMPLES

2021 PERSONAL ESSAY

Write a personal essay in which you reflect on the significance of birthdays, your own and those of others, sharing your thoughts on this annual personal milestone.



Opens with an anecdote

Reflection on the moment – relating to the title

I didn't manage to get anything for my mum's birthday last week. She seemed not to notice but it's more likely she's given me a pass because of the stress of sixth year. Or perhaps she really wanted to pretend that forty-eight years hadn't gone by so quickly. Her insistence that it was only yesterday she turned twenty-one doesn't sit quite right with my eighteen-year-old brain. I have seen years of bouncy castles and balloons and more 'Happy Birthday!' stickers than anyone could possibly need fade in the rear-view mirror, but I've been keenly conscious of each event. Time doesn't seem to be accelerating for me like it is for her.

Significance of own
birthday

Link to significance of
birthdays for another

Older people – and by that I mean anyone above the age of thirty – seem to react in a radically different way to their birthday. I love my birthdays; each one brings me closer to new opportunities and new freedoms. I'm racing to get older: counting the weeks and the days until I get to the next phase of life. I'm only now entering the much-acclaimed 'best days of your life'. What happens when those days are behind me? What my mum sees when she looks at the end of March on the family calendar posted on the kitchen door is, I suspect, a timer. Not a stopwatch.

Anecdote

Rhetorical
questions
appropriate for
reflection

Link to first
anecdote

Moving from the
personal to the
universal.

My brother's eleventh birthday last month was a rager of epic, pre-teen proportions. He and about ten others spent the day frolicking around an aquatic obstacle course in West Cork, with regular breaks for birthday cake and ice-cream. If there was any deep personal reflection going on, it certainly wasn't obvious to me. But there wasn't a need for any, either. If, God willing, my brother lives a long and healthy life, he will have lived another seven eleven-year-old lives before time catches up with him. For him, as for me, life still seems to be eternal. And with so much left to look forward to, is there any room to look back?

It's different for my mum. The forty-eighth centimetre mark on the metre stick seems far more daunting than the eleventh or the eighteenth. It announces a disquieting truth that I would struggle to come to terms with - your life is almost certainly halfway over. As you get older, reflecting on the significance of your special day is not an indulgent option; it's an uncomfortable obligation. When I look at it this way, the birthday seems to be one of the cruellest celebrations of a key moment in life. Your date of birth might be the gift that keeps on giving but that gift gradually moves from sweet to sour over the course of a lifetime.

Link to first
anecdote

Moving from the
personal to the
universal.

Third anecdote

Whatever about my mum, the true mystery is my grandmother. Her ninetieth birthday last year was an unmissable event, not least because she was diagnosed with terminal oesophageal cancer months before. I'll always wonder what her thoughts were on that day, on the ninetieth – and almost certainly last – anniversary of her arrival into this world. The festivities were many and varied – as is only right when her eleven children and dozens more cousins and relations come together, but I noticed Grandma stealing out of the crowded dining room by herself on numerous occasions. I didn't follow her because I knew that she was deliberately going where she could have some time to think about herself, by herself.

I don't want to suggest that birthdays are always sombre occasions as you grow older. On the contrary, I need look no further than Grandma to appreciate the power of the milestone for what it is: a solitary moment in time when, unabashed and unobstructed, a person can truly stand back and survey the experiences already behind them as well as those left to come. A birthday is the closest thing we can get to a timeline of life. How must Grandma have felt as she looked over her shoulder at ninety years of life? I wonder if she perceived the same visceral sense of time passing that my mum did: that unignorable blend of achievement and dread. Achievement, because a new year of life has been reached and another one survived, and dread because of the unstoppable power of Father Time.

Sooner or later, I am inclined to believe, everyone experiences the sensation of helplessness in the face of time. I felt a little of it on my 18th birthday when I realised that my childhood had come to a close. It was no longer accessible: sent down the current of history and memory. That sadness will always tint birthdays, but it serves a greater purpose. When I reflect on the year of my life that I've left behind and my life to date, it's a perspective I don't often view. I spend so much of my life engaging with my present self and thinking wistfully about the great time I imagine I'll have in the coming years, that the past doesn't play much of a role, normally. But every December 28th I allow myself the luxury, or perhaps the necessity, of staring into the face of time. I don't look longingly at the past. There will be time enough for that sort of wistfulness. Still, I do recognise that I am floating down the river on an inflatable flamingo pool ring while my mother seems to have lost hers and is fighting the current.

Circling back
to first
anecdote
and ending
on a lighter
note.

I must have heard my mum exclaim some version of, 'Forty-eight! I can't believe it! I'm getting so old!' at least twenty times last week. I imagine she would have preferred to keep the cake and not the visitors. There's something about the frenzy of a birthday that takes away from the individuality of the moment. We are made to share with others in a celebration that nobody can understand quite like the person themselves. That's not to say that there isn't joy and charm in a well-orchestrated birthday celebration too. Still, I'm certain Grandma was onto something when she left some time for herself alone on her special day.

As for my mum this year, well, I apologised profusely and have committed to going over and above next year. I did suggest, rather slyly, that her wish to see me get a good Leaving Cert may have played a role in my failure to get a present in time. A more foolish man than I would have told her that she can't have her cake and eat it.

SECOND SAMPLE ESSAY

- Question allowed for a blend of the personal and the descriptive
- Student handled it well, but tenses were an issue. A little more planning here would have helped.
- Perceptive touches
- Not as strong as the first essay but with some editing, it could reach the H1.



WRITE A PERSONAL ESSAY IN WHICH YOU DESCRIBE A PLACE THAT YOU CONSIDER BEAUTIFUL

The days were meandering and warm in the most comfortable sense of the word. There was a languorous atmosphere that filled the rooms in my grandparents' house and made each visit feel like a moment frozen in time. I would spend my summers there as a child, and the deceptively sultry Dutch sun gave the trips a tropical feel despite the suburban setting. The house was never chaotic, never bustling, which meant you could take pleasure in each moment.

The journey to Maastricht was pretty standard, yet arriving at the station at midnight each time had a magical quality that seems to dissipate as you grow up. My sister and I would run to our grandparents fuelled by an airport hotdog and a bag of sliced apples, with my mother lugging all the suitcases behind us. My Opa would stand at arrivals, my Oma hiding in the car to avoid the rain and maintain her innate glamour. A crushing embrace with my Opa would follow, with the smell of the cracked leather of his jacket leaving an indelible impression on me.

Sleep was always deep there, and I was awoken by the sound of my Oma creeping down the steep stairs. I followed down lethargically, putting on my clog-shaped slippers and plaid pyjama bottoms, to eat my breakfast. This typically comprised a wholemeal bread my Oma would make my Opa, eat and some low-cholesterol butter that always reminded me I wasn't in Ireland. The busy, chatty atmosphere peaked in the mornings when everyone was around, with the quietness slowly edging in throughout the day. We all took to our havens of solitude, be it the park, the garden, or the living room, but it was that mutual understanding that we didn't need to socialise which made me feel mature and independent from a young age.

If the weather reached an uncomfortable, sweltering heat, I could be seen lying prostrate on the couch with a linen covering, which had doily-like embellishments where the cloth would have otherwise frayed, reading one of the tattered books I acquired on our first trip to the library. The sun beaming through the windows gave the bright room an exposed feel, and my grandparents' penchant for bamboo furniture created an almost exotic ambience. The sage green plants with thick, waxy leaves never were out of place, with my Oma strategically choosing plants that were both low-maintenance and regal.

On slightly cooler days, I would venture out into the town wearing loose cargo or genie pants and a thin, cotton t-shirt. Maastricht was always bustling, which made the peace back at home all the more appreciated. The smells of waffles and churros wafted down the streets. The sun brought a lackadaisical energy to the streets that were usually hectic, but the summer breeze encouraged people to sit on a terrace, smoke a cigarette, and drink a beer. In July and August, the rules were different. You could live life carefree and not feel listless or uninspired. It was like hedonistic hibernation for western Europeans to congregate in this town and live less inhibited and less stressful lives than when they returned to their respective cities.

I always wondered whether it was this relaxed aroma in Limburg culture that made my grandparents inherently relaxed, or was it their age? It could be both, but when we would drive two hours north to spend two weeks on the Belgian coast, their disposition was different. The car journey was mildly arduous, with my Opa being the only driver in the group. To have a heart-disease patient with an occasional pessimistic and grouchy attitude to be your driver for two hours is not ideal, but the frequent stops at petrol stations were a welcome relief.

The Belgian coast is strange because it's like Youghal for the low people, which is a connection I formed retrospectively. Ostend and Blankenberge had distinct charm to them that attracted a mix of generations and I think if you didn't grow up there you wouldn't quite grasp the unassuming allure the place has. The cacophony of seagulls would luckily be overpowered by the heavy, dark waves of the North Sea that left you galvanised after tentatively dipping your toes in. The long, golden beaches were out of an illustration from a Dutch vocabulary book I had growing up and there were quaint, wooden beach houses scattered along the beach, each with a different coloured stripe along them to signify what neighbourhood you belonged to.

A deep shade of violet painted the skies, drawing in the evening. After a long day at the beach, everyone's skin tanned, face warm and hair sandy, came the queue for the shower that felt extra clean after a tiring day of lethargy. After everybody topping up on aloe vera and my Oma dousing herself - and everyone else in the process - with Chanel number 5, we were ready for another dinner with distant relatives. Relatives would come and go constantly from our apartment on the boulevard, which always confused me because nobody particularly liked these people, even my Oma who was hellbent on having these arrangements simply so she could tick them off the list. Luckily, it was my mother who was usually subjected to the interrogations from a rotation of aunts telling her she should never have moved or that a master's in history was a waste for a brain like hers. My sister and I would be relegated to the end of the table, which I could see my mother envied and I enjoyed as we just coloured in Suske and Wiske or Tintin comic strips while eating trays of mussels.

The ending of these trips was always heart-breaking, even from a young age. My usual stoic and reserved Opa would try not to say much on the drive to the station and would sport a pair of sunglasses with black lenses instead of his usual maroon. My Oma came and would try to tell us about the weekly scandals of the bridge club to make it feel like we would be back soon. The worst thought of all was that I would forget the details of my trip after a week at home, and that felt like a betrayal to my grandparents, who I'm sure would remember them much more vividly. The conductor of the train blew his whistle, stamped my card and I wouldn't be back for another year.



THIRD SAMPLE ESSAY

2019 - WRITE A PERSONAL ESSAY ON WHAT FEEDS YOUR IMAGINATION.

While I imagine most of my fellow students sitting in this exam hall spent last night studying for the exam, I took a different approach. I put aside the textbook and picked up 'Game of Thrones; Clash of Kings'. George RR Martin's eight hundred page second installment of the 'Ice and Fire' series. It's not that I wasn't nervous; indeed, I'm still somewhat on edge as I write this essay! But I knew that I needed creative inspiration more than any minor point of knowledge I could cram into my study. I turned, like I have for as long as I remember, to literary fiction.

My most crucial realization perhaps in all my years of schooling, is that literature is the foundation fountain of my curiosity and creativity. Imagination is a funny thing. I see it as a vast river with more tributaries than anyone can count. Anyone can carve for themselves as small channel of creative insight from the current. The river flows through the heart of human history's continuing story in which we all play but a minute role. When I pick up a book, I have the opportunity to draw on the imaginations of others and to claim my own microscopic sliver of the river.

I find that the imaginative powers of others feeds my own imagination. My childhood memories can be segmented into definite eras: one period while I read 'Harry Potter', another when I made my way through 'The Lord of the Rings', and yet another when Suzanne Collins' terrifying 'Hunger Games' captured my attention. The more complicated, long-winded and messy the world of a story is, the better. The wonderful inability of my brain to fully distinguish the world of the imagined from reality is made all the more enjoyable when the writer's world is outrageous, twisted or unbelievable. Tolkien's Middle Earth was so outlandish, so alien to my eleven-year-old mind that it piqued my curiosity. It didn't matter that Bag End wasn't a place I could point to on a map, just as the fact that Harry Potter spells weren't real didn't stop me from spending whole afternoons researching incantations on the Internet.

I often return to the sense of incredulity that a single human mind can conjure a whole other existence and describe it in writing for others. It seems nothing other than impossible that someone else's words could ever blur the lines between fiction and nonfiction in my head. What's more, I'm inspired by the vastness of the human mind. It is a reminder, I suppose, that my imagination is the least restricted part of my being. It takes willingly from others and generates its own version of reality without direction. That imagination is contagious is the reason I love to read. Why did Miguel de Cervantes write 'Don Quixote' or Jane Austen write 'Pride and Prejudice'? Come to think of it, why does anybody feel a desire to channel their own imaginations into a sweeping fictional world? Whatever the reason, and I'm sure there are many, I like to believe that writers of fiction see their books and the ideas within them as videos vehicles for inspiring the creativity of their readers. These things that are created in our minds, often without the slightest basis in reality what I consider the peak of human potential. When I leave my mind to wander into the realm of the fictitious, it is a radically different experience to anything nature can offer us. I don't imagine that other animals have the time or interest to ponder orcs and magical rings. No, fiction is uniquely human and represents our higher selves, a level of experience I feel privileged to engage with when I open a book.

It is a sad fact that I often gravitate toward my phone or the television rather than a book these days, especially when I'm mentally fatigued from study. I must concede that there is a certain imaginative quality to the sorts of programmes you will find on Netflix. Some of the series are even based on books with the same name. Even so, the spark of ingenuity I got from reading fiction is replaced by a dull comfort when I throw myself on the sofa and press the on button. I switch on the TV to switch off my creative brain.

It takes effort to devote yourself to a book of fiction. Any reader will tell you that. But in my experience, the imaginative process is not a smooth path. It is creative and demands an effort from us, and for that very reason, cannot be achieved passively by simply watching a television show.

On that very note, I've begun to notice that using my imagination to read actively is becoming more of a chore. It's used to flow so easily that I would slip into the world of my chosen book without even realizing it, but now as I grow up in a world that identifies less with the tradition of writing and reading with each passing year, I find that I must pull myself from this culture to return to my primary school curiosity and openness. It's a difficult exercise, and a reflective one.

I think a part of all of us yearns to return to the days when our imagination was a sharp and eager tool. Memories of cycling through Enid Blyton's 'Faraway Tree' books are vivid in my mind. It was a feeling of power to open a book, look at the words on the page and immediately be able to drift into a more colourful, exciting present. That idea of transcending reality was less of a visible goal at the time; I wasn't trying to escape to another place or run from stress. I would have thought that such an escape might be more welcome in sixth year of secondary school; there are times when Mordor has felt more inviting than returning to my study desk at home, but the opposite is true. And what a cruel irony that is.

Despite the difficulty, I've worked hard to maintain the skill of imagination when I'm reading. This past summer, I began George RR Martin's acclaimed 'Game of Thrones' with that very goal in mind. With such vivid storytelling, my job is much easier. I'm making my way through the series slowly, and it hasn't always been a simple task to force myself out of study mode and into my imagination, but it's very rewarding. It has afforded me the luxury, the nervous nights like last night, to submerge myself in the world far removed from notes and notebooks and marks, and continue to discover an equally valuable aspect of my mind: that part that, entranced by dragons, kings, giants, walls, and wars, forgets briefly the real world and embraces the majesty of the created one.

DISCURSIVE ESSAYS



PAST TITLES

- 2022 – Write a discursive essay in which you identify some of the powerful voices in modern life and discuss their influence on society.
- 2021 – Write a discursive essay in which you consider the meaning and importance of community.
- 2020 – Write a discursive essay about our changing relationship with machines and the rise of artificial intelligence.
- 2019 – Write a discursive essay about some of the items you think symbolize the values held by people of your age in Ireland in 2019.
- 2018 – Write a discursive essay in which you consider the subject of leaders and leadership.
- 2017 - Write a discursive essay in which you explore the positive and negative aspects of different types of advertising.
- 2015 – Write a discursive essay, in which you discuss the importance of privacy in peoples lives and the challenges to privacy in the modern age.

WHAT IS A DISCURSIVE ESSAY?

1

Investigate a topic

2

Gather evidence

3

Evaluate evidence

4

Present a position based on evidence

DISCURSIVE ESSAYS

Type One

- Argue strongly in favour of or against a given topic
- More persuasive tone

Type Two

- Take a more balanced approach: weigh up both sides of the argument
- More argumentative tone

WRITING TIPS

- Write in formal, impersonal style.
- Introduce each point in a separate paragraph.
- Use topic sentences for each paragraph.
- Write well-developed paragraphs.
- Give reasons and examples for each point.
- Use sequencing.
- Use linking words and phrases.



STRUCTURE OF A DISCURSIVE ESSAY

Gradually build to a conclusion that seems the only possible conclusion to which one could come, having read the preceding points.



INTRODUCTION

Clearly state the outline of the topic under discussion.

THE MAIN BODY

- Evidence
- Evaluation/Analysis of that information



CONCLUSION

Here the writer states his/her final position on the topic and demonstrates how the position s/he is taking is derived from the previous arguments / points, is convincingly and comprehensively justified by them, and may even provide a new perception or perspective, or, at least, a deepening of understanding. No new information – arguments / points are presented in the conclusion.



MARKING GUIDANCE FOR A DISCURSIVE ESSAY

SEC

HOMework SOURCES

- When you have decided on your title, Google it. Look for newspaper articles on the topic.
- Remember to stick to reputable papers, ideally broadsheets. The Irish Times or The Times are good sources.
- Look for quotes on the topic. The dreadfully-named 'Brainy Quote' site is very useful.
<https://www.brainyquote.com>
- Jot down all the quotes and sources you have found. Be sure to attribute your quotes correctly.



NEXT STEP...

- Look at the information you have gathered. Does it help you to form a thesis?
- Think about the others in your class. Will they have the same approach as you? Try to be original.
- Once you have decided on your point of view, discard any material which is irrelevant.
- Decide on the order in which you are going to arrange your points and their associated quotes and sources.
- You may wish to save a strong quote for your conclusion. Remember, the examiner will be marking you at this stage!



AUDIENCE

It is vital that you keep your audience in mind throughout.

This will determine the register of your essay.

Err on the side of formality if you are not sure how relaxed your tone should be.

Remember, your essay is being corrected by an adult examiner, not a fellow student. The examiner is your audience too!

DO NOT...

List

List your points without having a thesis to unite them.

Generalise

Generalisations weaken your essay

Lie

Make wild, unsubstantiated claims

Contradict

Contradict yourself

Whine

Adopt a whiny or inappropriately sanctimonious tone

STRUCTURE



Introduction, clearly stating your point of view

Main body of the essay which builds towards your conclusion

Strong conclusion

INTRODUCTIONS: WHICH TYPE IS APPROPRIATE?



IN THE FOLLOWING SLIDES, WE
WILL LOOK AT DIFFERENT
OPTIONS.



CONSIDER WHICH WOULD BE
BEST FOR A DISCURSIVE ESSAY.



THE OTHER STYLES MAY SUIT
DIFFERENT ESSAY TYPES.

INTRODUCTION – DIFFERENT STYLES

Provocative

Balanced

Quotation

Illustrative

Anecdotal

Source: BBC Bitesize

EXAMPLES

An example of a **provocative** introduction is - "It is difficult to see how anyone can approve of fox hunting."

An example of a **balanced** introduction is - "Fox hunting is a subject about which people hold strongly contrasting views."

An example of a **quotation** introduction is - "Oscar Wilde once described fox hunting as 'The unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable.'"

EXAMPLES

An example of an **illustrative** introduction is - "On a glorious autumn morning a terrified, exhausted animal is savaged to death by a pack of baying dogs while a group of expensively dressed humans encourage the dogs in their bloody work."

An example of an **anecdotal** introduction is - "I have always detested fox hunting since I was almost physically sick while watching a television film of the kill at the end of a hunt."

BODY OF THE ESSAY – WHAT ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?



Aim to give relevant facts, sources, theories.



You can, of course, make up facts and figures but they should be credible.



Analyse the material as you present it. Critical thinking is required.

LINKING IDEAS

Type of link	Example
Linking similar ideas	Likewise, in addition, similarly, moreover, also etc. Do not use subheadings and do not number your points. Saying, 'Firstly ... secondly' is a little dull and best kept for debate speeches
Be definite!	Undoubtedly, absolutely, definitely, unquestionably
Definite stat	Without question, without doubt, unquestionably, absolutely
Linking contrasting ideas (think of your comparative study)	However, on the other hand, on the contrary, conversely, nevertheless
Concluding a train of thought	Therefore, consequently, thus, as a result

CONCLUSION

Justify your opinion
Come to a strong conclusion



Make sure that your conclusion is consistent with the arguments in your essay. Sometimes you may get carried away and end up concluding the opposite of your thesis, especially if you do not plan well. Do not let such inconsistency happen.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND GOOD EXAMPLES?



- <https://www.theguardian.com/profile/editorial>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/commentisfree>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/section/opinion/editorials>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/section/opinion>
- <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/opinion-analysis>






STUDENT SAMPLE ESSAY





2019 – WRITE A DISCURSIVE
ESSAY ABOUT SOME OF THE
ITEMS YOU THINK SYMBOLIZE
THE VALUES HELD BY THE
PEOPLE OF YOUR AGE IN
IRELAND IN 2019



Addresses the question straight away. Good introduction.

Second paragraph is fine. Perhaps 'young people' is repeated too often.

Our values are formed by the external stimuli we receive. The brain changes and attitudes form depending on what we encounter. This generation of young Irish people has been subject to wildly different stimuli than any previous generation has received. It is no longer the local community or the church that shapes young people's values. Rather, it is the influences of media, culture and political narratives that are globalized and homogenous.

The item that most clearly symbolizes this is the mobile phone. Young people, on average, spend about a third of the day looking at their phones. They receive their news on it. They watch television series and YouTube videos on it. More and more relationships are formed online. The manner in which young people live has shifted into an entirely new paradigm.

STUDENTS TEND TO OVERUSE THE WORD 'MASSIVELY'. IT IS NOT THE BEST CHOICE.

GOOD USE OF RHETORICAL QUESTION.

REPETITION IN THE SECOND PARAGRAPH. THE FIRST AND SECOND SENTENCES COULD BE TURNED INTO ONE LESS REPETITIVE SENTENCE.

INTERESTING CLAIM AT THE END OF THE SECOND PARAGRAPH.

How has this impacted values? Firstly, the size of people's social circle has been massively increased. In the past, people mixed with those who lived and worked nearby. People in rural towns tended to only mix with others living in the same area. The only time they tended to mix with outsiders is if they attended a match or visited the nearest city. Even in these cases, where people were cosmopolitan travellers, once their travels were concluded, the only way to remain connected with those they met was through a letter.

Now, people have instant access to people living everywhere in the world. Apps like Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook provide immediate opportunities to connect with people worldwide. However, the largest impact is not the ability to chat to these people but rather the ability to see them.

Good use of a quote. In looking it up, the student found where it had come from and included that in his essay. It reads well. Keeping a notebook of useful quotes is an excellent idea.

Repetition of 'Young people' weakens the writing.

In his famous play, 'No Exit', Sartre wrote that 'Hell is other people'. Human beings are social animals designed to seek the validation of those around them. Nowadays, young people seek the validation of hundreds, thousands and – in some cases – millions of people. Young people now are far vainer than young people in the past. The existence of influencers who make exorbitant amounts of money simply for being handsome or beautiful has created a standard of beauty that is unattainable for the vast majority of people. The homogeneity of the clothes that young people wear, and the proliferation of billionaire influencers like Kylie Jenner symbolize the efforts that young people make to appear more beautiful and to elevate their social status. The effects are exceedingly pernicious: levels of anxiety, depression and suicide rates have increased dramatically since the creation of social media sites as more and more people deem themselves to be inadequate relative to the perfect people on their screens.

Good points. A clearer link to the 'values' aspect of the title would help.

Social change has been negative in many instances, yet the greater connection it affords has increased the capacity of young people to create social change. Nowhere is this more evident than at climate change rallies orchestrated by youth-led the 'Fridays for Future' campaign. The Swedish sign saying 'School Strike for Climate Change' carried by climate activist Greta Thunberg has become the symbol of the efforts of young people to improve the state of the world in which they will have to live in the future.

The new political savviness of the young can also be linked to the dawn of the internet age. Information on everything is accessible to all, and people's capacity to report news events in sensational, shocking ways – even if they are not journalists – has led to a greater consumption of news than ever before. Forest fires are no longer a five-minute segment on the evening news but a perpetual cycle of new videos of burning houses and the testimonies of those who have lost homes and memories.



Young people have grown up in a world in which the climate crisis is front and centre of the news. Therefore, the youth of today care more about the planet than do the previous generations. People no longer feel that they live alongside the environment: they know that they live it and are vulnerable as a result.

Small social changes caused by young people's values are visible everywhere. The plant-based diets being adopted by more and more young people has led to a plant-based burger being available in every fast-food chain, from McDonalds' 'Mc Plant' to the impossibly large Whopper in Burger King. Equally, the phasing out of plastic straws has resulted from the condemnation of ocean plastic that suffocates sea life.

The effects of the youth climate movement have been more or less the same worldwide. Loyal Thunberg supporters like Vanessa Nakate in Uganda and Paloma Costa in Brazil are in every country leading grassroots movements.

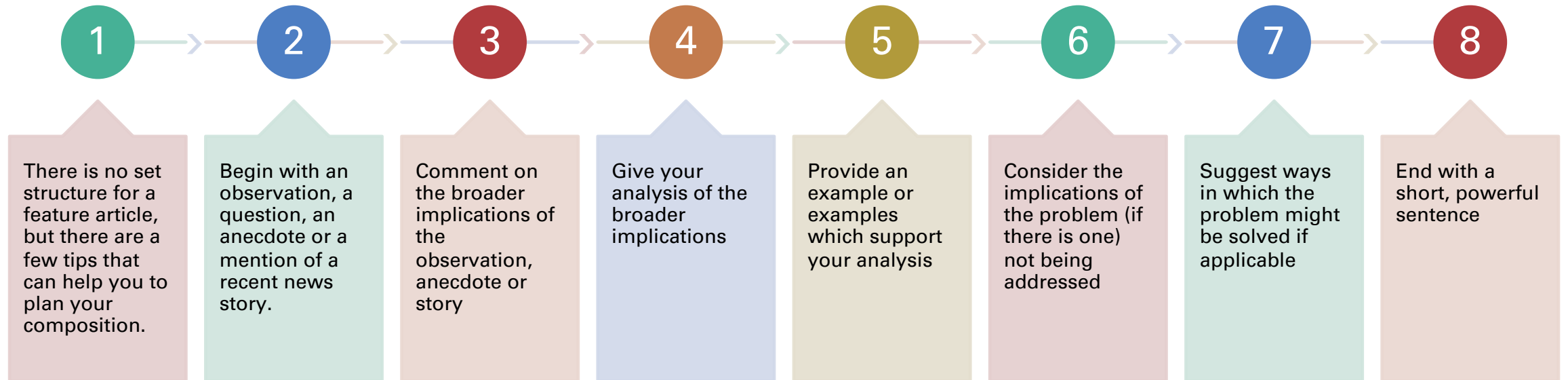
Losing sight of 'items'. Coherence of delivery is suffering a little.

The conclusion is disappointing. It is vague and the points are weak. More focus on the terms of the question needed.

The politics and culture of the young is almost identical in every country now. The advent of streaming services like Netflix and Spotify has meant that young people watch the same TV shows and listen to the same music. It is no longer the case that diverse subcultures exist worldwide because nowadays trends that go viral in Canada go viral in Belgium within minutes. The pop culture t-shirt sported by young European is always in English. The culture consumed by Dutch teenagers is so American that the University of Amsterdam no longer teaches Dutch due to lack of demand.

Homogenisation of values can be positive and negative. If it is the case that the values that young people in Ireland adopt today are positive, positive social change is likely to occur worldwide. But the converse is true too. In any case, the novelty of going to different countries is likely to diminish. Why go to New Delhi for food when there is an abundance of Indian restaurants in your home town? It seems that the excitement previous generations have enjoyed from traveling to foreign lands will become a thing of the past. Only time will tell.

FEATURE ARTICLES



SPEECHES AND TALKS



Your audience only has one opportunity to take in what you are saying and react to it. You have one chance to win them over.



Your audience makes value judgements about you, the people you represent and your message in the first thirty to sixty seconds of your presentation.



Speeches must, therefore, be well-organized and easily understood.



Audience awareness is hugely important.

THE AUDIENCE

- Age?
- Interests?
- Gender?
- Are they already informed about the subject?
- What level of detail will be appropriate for them?
- What tone will be most effective in conveying your message? Be consistent!
- What might offend, alienate or confuse them?



TIP

- There is a difference between a speech and an article, although you might be expressing similar ideas in both. Show audience awareness throughout your speech. It is not enough to do so at the beginning and the end.
- Try **rewriting** your speech as an article and vice versa. What **changes** did you have to make to content and style, and why?





PURPOSE

- What do you want your audience to **learn or do**?
- You must have a **call to action**. When they have finished listening, do you want them to vote differently, recycle, read more...
- If you are not clear on the purpose, they will not be clear.
- How can your audience **benefit** from what you have to say?

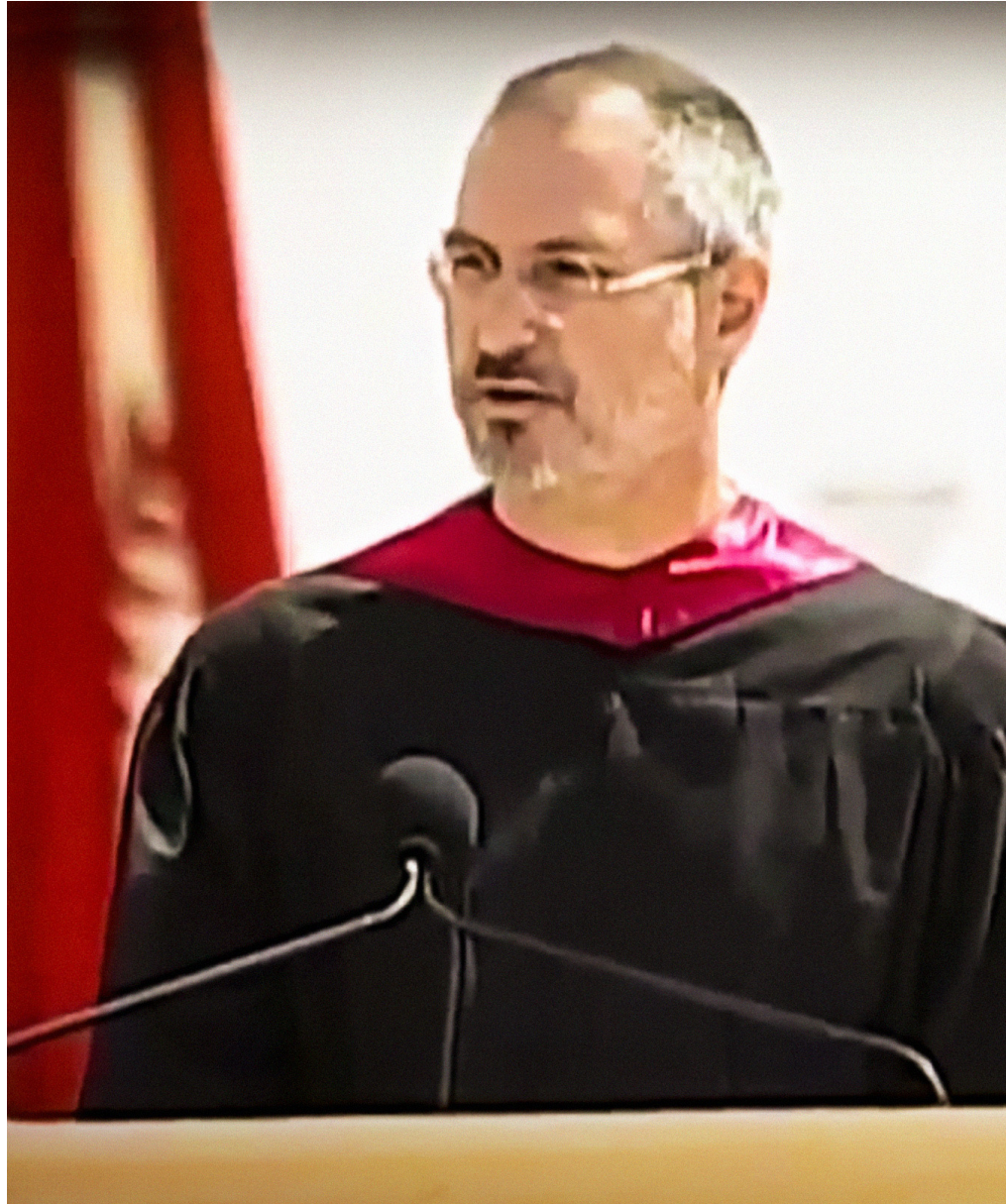


YOU WANT TO **APPEAL** TO THE
AUDIENCE AND FOR THEM TO **RELATE**
TO YOU.

PITFALL

- ▶ Don't start with a definition. "What is freedom? The dictionary defines 'freedom' as..."
- ▶ This is a common error. Everybody knows what the title means!





STEVE JOBS – COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

- Truth be told, I never graduated from college, and this is the closest I've ever gotten to a college graduation. Today, I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it, no big deal – just three stories.
- The first is about connecting the dots. I dropped out of Reed College after the first six months, but then stayed around as a drop-in for another eighteen months or so before I really quit. So why did I drop out? It started before I was born.



Anecdotal

Relaxed
tone

Self-
deprecating

APPEAL OF STEVE JOBS' INTRODUCTION



JANE FONDA – TED TALK

- There have been many revolutions over the last century, but perhaps none as significant as the longevity revolution. We are living on average today thirty-four years longer than our great-grandparents did. Think about that: that's an entire second adult lifetime that's been added to our lifespan.

APPEAL OF JANE FONDA'S INTRODUCTION

Statistic

Made relatable

Directly addressing the audience: 'Think about that'.

'We are living'... engages the audience



QUOTES

- Don't overuse them.
- Two should be plenty!
- This is a great site, and you can search by topic: <https://www.brainyquote.com>
- Build up a little notebook of useful quotes by topic. Here's an example:
<http://www.aoifesnotes.com/leaving-cert/ordinary-level/Paper-One/docs/composition/Quotes%20for%20use%20in%20compositions.pdf>



MAKE YOUR SPEECH EASY TO FOLLOW

SOME TIPS

VERBAL CLUES – STRUCTURE – GUIDE THE AUDIENCE

-
- ‘I want to talk to you today about three things..’
 - ‘I’ve already mentioned...’
 - Repeating crucial words, using the triadic pattern (rule of three) and anaphora (repeating a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences) is helpful.
 - ‘Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.’ (Martin Luther King Jr.)

USE STRONG LINKS BETWEEN POINTS

Help the listener to relate what you are saying now to what they have heard so far.

'Another crucial element is...'

'But this argument does not hold up when you consider...'

**USE SHORT,
SIMPLE
SENTENCES
WHERE
POSSIBLE**

You want the audience to immediately understand and remember what you said.

Avoid too many subordinate clauses.

EXAMPLE

This product, which was invented in 1976 by Francis Weston in Durham, England and was available for sale only a year later, still sells well today.

BETTER VERSION

Francis Weston invented the product in 1976 and introduced it into shops shortly afterwards. It still sells well.

LIMIT PRONOUNS

The Irish government has failed to protect us from the scourge of so-called reality television, which exploits sex, violence and petty conflict and calls it human nature. It cannot continue.

BETTER VERSION

The Irish government has failed to protect us from the scourge of so-called reality television, which exploits sex, violence and petty conflict and calls it human nature. This **failure** cannot continue.

CONCLUSION



Restate your main points if you like, but don't repeat them: 'I asked earlier why we should rethink our approach to recycling. Now I hope it's clear that...'



End with a call to action. Show the audience how they can realistically effect a change. Be positive and encouraging. Let them know what you want them to do.



RHETORICAL DEVICES

- Think of a recipe.
- Have the ingredients ready and to hand!
- Make a list of devices you will use.
- Rhetorical questions, quotes, statistics, anecdotes etc. Make sure you use them but don't overdo any one rhetorical device.