

The 4 Box Approach

The Process

- Take note of title any significant information given at the end (date, genre, etc)
- First reading: use a highlighter to mark any words / phrases that strike you as important, powerful or significant
- Second reading: draw lines across the page to mark changes in pace, tone, focus, mood, setting
- Third reading: pay attention to any sounds used including rhyme and rhythm
- Fourth reading: look at the interaction between characters including pauses, interruption, aggression, long sentences, short snappy sentences, etc
- Then fill out the following four box grid

<p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who is speaking to us? Out of what circumstances? What do they want to communicate to us?</i> • <i>Does this describe a scene / experience / state of mind?</i> • <i>Where and when is this set?</i> • <i>How does the first sentence frame the passage? Does it suggest what might have gone before? How does it set up the mood for the rest of the passage?</i> 	<p>Key Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What key things are we meant to notice?</i> • <i>Are these concrete and specific things about characters/ the world or is there some abstract stuff about themes in there too?</i> • <i>What themes are there and how does the writer draw our attention to them?</i> • <i>What gives the passage its central tension?</i> • <i>What emotions underpin the writing?</i>
<p>Movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Look at the lines across the page. How does the piece unfold? Is it chronological? Is there a gentle progression or sudden shift?</i> • <i>Is it in 'real time' or not</i> • <i>What ground does the passage cover between first and last lines?</i> • <i>Are there any natural breaks? Focus points?</i> • <i>Rhythm? Rhyme? Patterns?</i> • <i>What kinds of things are contrasted in the text and to what effect? This is often a good point to start your analysis from</i> 	<p>Nuts and Bolts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Devices/ methods/ techniques/ specifics</i> • <i>Imagery</i> • <i>Diction (for emotion)</i> • <i>Adverbs (for tone)</i> • <i>Adjectives (for concrete detail)</i> • <i>Verbs (for energy)</i> • <i>Pronouns (for perspective)</i> • <i>Everything else!</i>

How to turn this into an essay:

Intro: This will involve establishing the *Context* and basic story and summing up the *Key Ideas*

- Try to identify a genre of writing where possible
- Throw in a few adjectives e.g. this is a poignant, powerful, effective, glib, satirical, clichéd, philosophical, lyrical, descriptive, narrative piece
- Hint at the tone e.g. quirky, jovial, wistful, dark, sinister, ironic, questioning, celebratory, uplifting

Body: This is an exploration of how writers use *Movement* and the other *Nuts and Bolts* to achieve effects

- Remember the examiner has read the piece and does not need it paraphrased
- Remember to relate everything you say back to the *Key Ideas* or main purpose of the writer

Conclusion: This should sum up your overall point but also reflect upon where this passage leaves us

- Do not merely repeat what you have already said – try to draw it together into a conclusion
- Consider what the reader is left with?
- Consider how specific or universal the themes and ideas are?

Remember:

- **Don't!** write about what might come before or after this passage. You are meant to analyze it on its own so don't try and guess what happens in the bits that we don't see
- **Don't!** make a list of unconnected observations. Remember a commentary has to be fluent
- **Don't!** forget to relate things clearly back to the writer's general purpose
- **Do!** watch your time. You don't have much!
- **Do!** make sure your writing is legible. The examiner can't reward what the can't read
- **Do!** read the mark scheme so you know what we're looking for