

What to Analyse? – Revision

In marking your assignments, I noted a large number of students who felt the need to force their analysis of literary techniques employed in the article provided by including commentaries on devices such as alliteration and the use of irony. I would just like to take this opportunity to reiterate that you do not need to go to such lengths to identify the "tricks" used by authors when analysing a passage.

As always, your focus needs to remain fixed on the author's message, the theme of the text. When you analyse a text, start by working out what you think are the broad themes of the passage. Once you have identified those, try to work out what the author is saying about the themes. When you are certain that you have a fair idea of what the author is trying to say, start looking through the passage for the ways the author uses to get their message across to you, as the reader. This is where you start looking for literary devices and techniques used by the author. Now, the important part of this process is that every time you find a literary device or technique, you need to ask yourself, "How does the author use this to make their point?" If you cannot answer that question in detail, then whatever technique you are examining is an analytical dead-end and you should ignore it, in favour of saying more about techniques that allow you to answer that incredibly important question in detail.

I hope that you can use these simple tips in the examination to help you produce focused, detailed and relevant essays that will improve your overall marks considerably.