Tutorial Letter 201/2/2018

Foundations in English Literary Studies
ENG1501

Semester 2

Department of English Studies

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:
FEEDBACK AND EXAMINATION GUIDELINES
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### ASSIGNMENT 01

1. **Seasons Come to Pass**
2. **The Road to Mecca**
3. Work through the feedback on your first assignment

### ASSIGNMENT 02

1. Make sure that you understand what the assignment question requires
2. Plan your work carefully
3. Understand the structure of an academic essay
4. Respect academic writing conventions
5. Quote and reference accurately and correctly
6. Ensure that you acknowledge all your sources and that you do not commit plagiarism

### CHECKLIST

1. Assignments 01
2. Assignments 02
3. Checklists
1 ASSIGNMENT 01

1.1 *Seasons Come to Pass*

The instructions for this part of the assignment state that you need to answer the questions in paragraph form. They also state that you need to provide quotations from the poem to support your answers.

What follows below are examples of how you could have answered the questions in the assignment, as well as notes on how to unpack each question before answering it. Although you have already completed this activity, please work through the steps, as this will assist you in preparation for the examination.

1.1 Your anthology notes that Sepamla was ‘one of the giants of the black poetry movement of the 1970s, sometimes called “Soweto poetry”’. Also refer to the applicable e-reserve that discusses Sepamla’s life. With this information in mind, write a paragraph in which you explain what Sepamla describes in this poem. Refer to specific words in the poem to support your answer (Hint: words like ‘platforms’ in line 4)

**Step 1:** Make sure that you consult the e-reserve to which this question refers. This will help you answer the question. In the e-reserve, you will find information about Sipho Sepamla the poet and why he can be considered an important figure in ‘Soweto poetry’.

**Step 2:** You need to integrate the information you gleaned from step 1 with an overview of the poem. To be able to write a paragraph about what Sepamla describes in the poem, you must first understand the poem. Follow the steps as set out in *IELS* on pages 90-91 when reading a poem for the first time. Once you understand the poem, try to summarise the main idea(s). This is what your paragraph should be about.

**Possible answer:**

Sepamla is describing the spectacle of a busy morning at a station, possibly in Soweto as this was the poet’s home. He describes how at first there are only a few people on the ‘platforms’ (line 2), but soon the morning rush hour gets into full swing and there is a ‘rush of feet’ (line 3). But there are hints about these people and their circumstances – they ‘shuffle onto platforms’ (line 4), ‘dragging the last strains of energy’ (line 5). Perhaps they have had to get up very early to get to their places of work, sometimes many kilometers away from home in cities. The ‘hearts
palpitating’ (line 6) tells us more about lives of these people – they are rushing to get to work, possibly in fear of losing their jobs if they do not get there in time. The lines ‘Tired from the hurrying of the city/ Spirits maimed by commands’ (lines 8–9) reinforce this idea. The fear in this image could also have something to do with the danger that has always been attendant on travelling by train in the townships. The fact that the crowd is compared to a ‘single maskless face’ (line 7) suggests that most people are expressionless, simply faces in a crowd. This description implies that the crowd consists of anonymous and lifeless faces, as the people are taking no heed of those around them and are focused on the day ahead. Perhaps they are worn down by drudgery and their difficult circumstances. There are other indications of this dehumanisation in the metaphor describing the crowds as ‘sheep herded into a kraal’ (line 14). Despite the fact that some have the time for ‘laughter’ (line 11), their interaction is characterised as never ending ‘grinding complaints’ (line 13). The word ‘coaches’ in line 15 confirms that this is a station scene that is being described, but the words ‘crowd’ (line 15), ‘multitudes’ (line 17) and ‘throngs’ (line 20) emphasise the crush of people and the desperation to get onto the trains as quickly as possible.

1.2 Identify the image the poet uses in lines 1 to 3 of the first stanza. Comment on the effect of this image, and discuss in particular the use of ‘patterning’ (line 1) and ‘torrent’ (line 3).

Step 1: What is an ‘image’? What does the question want you to look for when it asks ‘identify the image’? In simpler terms, an image is a picture created by the words in the poem; it is the visual representation of words.

Step 2: Read the question carefully – you need to find this image in lines 1 to 3 of the very first stanza. If you quote images from other sections of the poem, you will not receive marks for it.

Step 3: Now that you have found the word-picture created in these lines, you need to explain what it does in the poem – its ‘effect’. The question also states that you should focus on the words ‘patterning’ and ‘torrent’ in particular when you explain this image. Why do you think these words could be important? What do they sound like? (If you are unsure what these words mean, first look for their definitions in a dictionary before answering this question.)

Possible answer:
The image the poet uses in the first three lines of the poem is that of a rainstorm. The poet compares the growing crowd of commuters to a rainstorm. The first indication of rush hour is compared to ‘raindrops patterning’ (line 1), a simile which suggests the appearance of a few
isolated figures on the platform. At first, the commuters come ‘singly and in pairs’ (line 2), like the first drops heralding a storm. This irregular, slow appearance of people changes suddenly to a ‘torrent’ (line 3), a crowd likened to a downpour or cloudburst. This emphasises the speed at which the few solitary commuters are rapidly swamped by a mass of rushing people.

1.3 What is the effect of referring to the crowd in line 7 as ‘a single maskless face’? In other words, what does this image convey about the speaker’s attitude towards these people, and about their own state of mind or condition?

**Note:** Like the previous question, here you need to discuss and explain a particular image. However, you also need to say what this image possibly conveys about the speaker’s attitude as well as the people’s own state of mind. Thus, there are two parts to this question: what the image tells you about the speaker, and what the image tells you about the people it describes.

**Possible answer:**
The fact that the crowd is described as ‘a single maskless face’ (line 7) suggests the expressionlessness of these people, and the way they have become dehumanised as one amorphous (shapeless) mass of humanity, devoid of any distinguishing features. There is possibly a comment here on the lives of these commuters, and the hardships imposed on them by the system have ‘maimed’ their ‘spirits’ (line 9). There are other words in this stanza that imply their suffering and oppression: ‘palpitating’ hearts (line 6), ‘tired from the hurrying of the city’ (line 8) and ‘commands’ (line 9). The speaker’s attitude is one of compassion and empathy – he understands their suffering. The commuters themselves appear worn down and disheartened: ‘grouse of mouths’ in line 11 and ‘grinding complaints’ in line 13 suggest this discontentment. And yet, there are still signs of the power of the human spirit to rise against adversity: he hears the ‘clicks of tongues (line 10) of their conversations, and hears ‘laughter rising’ (line 11) above the complaints.

1.4.1 Identify and explain the irony in lines 17-19.

**Step 1:** What is irony? Find the definition of this term on page 24 of Tutorial Letter 501 as well as page 199 of *IELS*. Rewrite the definition in your own words (reference the source correctly), and include this with your answer.
Step 2: This question also has two different parts – identifying the irony AND explaining it. Be sure to complete both of these activities.

Possible answer:
The irony in these lines lies in the juxtapositioning of the phrase ‘multitudes rub shoulders’ (line 17) with the phrase ‘the loneliness beyond’ (line 19). It is ironic because on the train the commuters are packed together like sardines, surrounded by people. However, when they reach their destination and begin work as poorly paid domestic workers or manual labourers, they are isolated by their language and skin colour.

1.4.2 Based on your answer in 1.4.1, what comment does Sepamla make about modern society?

Note: In order to answer this question you need to think about the implications of this ironic statement; what does this statement tell you about society? You need to think beyond the scope of the poem and reflect on the meaning of this sentiment in terms of a broader society.

Possible answer:
The loneliness beyond is a reference to the lives of the workers when they are away from the township – often working for years as faceless, unnamed and unrecognised employees whose personal lives and circumstances are unknown and unimportant to their employers. Although this was written many years ago at the height of apartheid, this is still a theme that rings true today – it is a comment on modern society and the dehumanisation of the worker who is the very bedrock of the economy but who, nonetheless, is often faceless and acknowledged.

1.5 Read the final stanza of the poem carefully. How does the contrast between ‘throngs of people’ (line 20) and the image ‘little holes of resting’ (line 21) underline the main theme of the poem? (In order to identify the main theme, consider the title of the poem.)

Note: Focus on the final stanza of the poem together with the title, and as for the first part of this question, try to comment on the poem as a whole. Here you are not necessarily pointing to what the poem is about (the content of the poem) but instead you should be discussing its overall meaning or theme.
Possible answer:
The title of the poem summarises its theme: ‘The loneliness beyond’. This suggests a modern phenomenon – the more the population of cities grows, and the more people we are surrounded by daily (the ‘throngs of people’ mentioned in line 20 – a throng is a crowd, a mass of people), the more we are inclined to be isolated and lonely as individuals – and to experience the ‘loneliness beyond’ (line 23) the crowds of people we encounter. Loneliness and isolation are huge problems in modern society and although this poem is commenting more on the loneliness in South Africa created by the political dispensation, the poem makes perfect sense set against a 21st century backdrop. The contrast between lines 20 and 21 emphasise this – solitary individuals creep home to their little abodes, their own safe havens, and lock themselves away from those around them. Perhaps we have become more and more inward looking, finding solace in our own ‘little holes of resting’ (line 21). The use of the word ‘little’ here is possibly a comment on the reduced and circumscribed circumstances of the commuters the speaker describes; they are exploited and so cannot afford larger homes, and they are also forced to live in particular places under specific conditions.

1.2 The Road to Mecca

Before you answer this question, read Section 3 in Tutorial Letter 501, focusing especially on pages 95-102, as well as Chapter 4 in Introduction to English Literary Studies.

In an essay of at least five paragraphs, discuss how Athol Fugard explores the theme of art and freedom through his portrayal of Helen’s artistic journey and the community’s reaction to it. In your answer, refer to (1) Helen’s need for artistic expression, (2) differing interpretations of Helen’s art and the effect of this, (3) the conflict between Helen’s aspirations and the expectations of her society.

When planning your assignment, keep the following in mind:

- Geographically, Mecca is a city in Saudi Arabia. In the play, Helen does not physically visit this city. Mecca is a holy city to followers of Islam, but Helen did not convert to the Islamic faith. For her, Mecca is symbolic. Helen creates her Mecca to express her innermost self.
- Do not to confuse the historical figure, Helen Martins, with the character of Helen in the play. This is especially important when discussing the various statues and figures Helen created in her Mecca. Focus on the information that you are given about these in the play itself, and not the extra information you know about the actual Helen Martins and her creations.
In literary studies, a theme refers to ‘an implicit conceptual idea which is embodied and brought to life through the evolving meanings and imagery of a work of literature’ (Abrams, 1971: 102 as quoted in IELS, p. 108).

You may not simply reproduce the summaries in Tutorial Letter 501. We expect to see your own ideas in your essay, and your argument must link to the question.

Your essay should have a clear introduction that tells your reader what you will discuss and argue.

You should develop the argument of your essay in at least three paragraphs that each have a topic sentence and refer to relevant examples in the text throughout. Use the guideline provided in the question, and write one paragraph about each of the ideas. All three paragraphs must be linked to the question.

Your essay must have a clear conclusion that tells your reader what your findings are.

50 marks

Important: You must not use any other sources for this assignment other than those mentioned in the questions. While you should engage with the content in the IELS and Tutorial Letter 501, we do not want you to make use of any other sources. If you are found guilty of copying from an online source, or from another student, your work will not be assessed.

The page limit for this assignment is six pages in total. If you exceed this limit, you may be penalised.

In answering this question, you should read the instructions carefully and use it a guideline to constructing your essay. The question mentions three specific aspects that you need to discuss in your answer:

(1) Helen’s need for artistic expression

(2) differing interpretations of Helen’s art and the effect of this

(3) the conflict between Helen’s aspirations and the expectations of her society

Therefore, your essay should consist of an introduction, a paragraph on each of these aspects, and a conclusion.

Remember that your introduction must clearly tell your reader what the argument in your essay will be and how you will make your argument. Your introduction should be like a map for your reader to see exactly where your argument will take them.
Below is a sample essay to show you what we expect of you at this level. You could have made a number of points to prove your argument. The answer below is not the only option but should be viewed as a guideline.

Sample essay:

In his play *The Road to Mecca*, Athol Fugard explores the theme of art and freedom through his portrayal of Helen’s artistic journey and the community’s reaction to it. This essay will argue this point by considering Helen’s need for artistic expression, the differing interpretations of Helen’s art within her community and the effect of this, as well as the conflict between Helen’s aspirations and the expectations of her society.

Helen has a need to express herself artistically to give meaning to her life and to reveal her identity to others. Helen explains to her confidant and friend, Elsa, that her creations express her true self, as well as the best version of who she believes she is:

> This is the best of me, Elsa. This is what I really am. Nothing, not even my name or my face, is me as much as those Wise Men and their camels travelling to the East, or the light and glitter in this room. The mermaids, the wise old owls, the gorgeous peacocks… all of them are *me* (Fugard, 1985: 35).

This shows that Helen’s creations are extremely personal and meaningful to her. At the same time, Helen says that her creations give her motivation to live: ‘The only reason I’ve got for being alive is my Mecca. Without that I’m… nothing… a useless old woman getting on everybody’s nerves’ (p. 35). Later in the play, Helen expresses concern that at some point she will no longer be able to create: ‘If my Mecca is finished, Elsa, then so is my life’ (p. 47). Clearly, it is very important for Helen to express herself in this manner.

However, the villagers in Nieu Bethesda do not understand Helen’s creations in the same way. Apart from the fact that some villagers think that Helen’s house is haunted, are frightened of her creations, and that children throw stones at her house (Fugard, 1985: 65), Marius Byleveld, the dominee, initially thought of her creations as idle whims ‘coming out of [her] loneliness’ (Fugard, 1985: 67-68). Later he expresses his concern that her creations could be viewed as idolatry, or idol worship (Fugard, 1985: 67). Elsa tries to explain to Marius that Helen’s statues ‘express [her] freedom’, but he sees it as her way of turning her back on the church (Fugard, 1985: 66).

Helen’s community is a conservative one, and their expectations of her as a widow is to remain faithful to her dead husband, attend church weekly, and move to a retirement home because she needs someone to take care of her. Clearly, these expectations are in conflict with Helen’s
wishes, as she will not be able to work on her Mecca if she is forced to move away from it. Such a move would also take away her independence. Thus, there is conflict between what is expected of Helen, and what she aspires to do.

*The Road to Mecca* explores the theme of art and freedom by portraying Helen’s artistic journey as a necessary but opposed one. Helen needs to express herself through her art, as it gives her a reason to live. The community in which Helen lives, however, struggles to understand this need, and misinterprets her creations. Instead, they want her to abandon her art and live a life of an old widow in a retirement community. These differing aspirations create the main conflict in the play.

**Bibliography**


1.3 **Work through the feedback on your first assignment**

Remember that assignments are formative rather than summative assessments. This means that you should see your mark as well as the marker’s comments as learning opportunities that inform how you approach the writing of your second assignment.

This feedback letter should be read alongside your marked assignment. If you have not yet received your marked version, you should retrieve a copy of the assignment that you submitted.

- Read the feedback letter carefully, paying specific attention to the sections that deal with essay writing and structure (many students struggle with these items).
- Work through your assignment section by section. For example, look at your introduction and compare it to the information provided on the structure of an introduction in the feedback material.
- Pay attention to the focus of your essay and see particularly whether you have paid enough attention to what the question requires. Use the feedback letter as a guideline in this process.
- Spend some time working on comparing your argument to the argument as presented in the feedback material. Consider the ways in which these guidelines use linking words and linking sentences to scaffold and signpost the argument’s structure.
Look at the style in which the feedback letter is written and compare it to your own writing:

- Have you made any spelling or language errors? This should indicate to you that you need to work on your language while you prepare for the exam.
- Have you quoted correctly? If not, this is something you should pay attention. Note that you will only be required to quote directly in a possible exam question on poetry.
- Is your writing in the correct academic register? This refers to whether or not you have written in a formal style. Identify areas where you could have improved on this element and keep this in mind as you prepare for the exam.
- Have you followed academic conventions? Are the titles of the texts indicated correctly? Did you write in the present tense? Are the names of the main characters and authors correct?

It is important not to rush through this process as it is a crucial component of your learning experience. Working through the feedback material carefully will indicate to you to which areas you need to pay particular attention when you begin studying for the exam.

The guidelines on the next page should assist you in understanding how your assignment was marked:
### MARK OUT OF 50 FOR CONTENT/ORGANISATION:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>SCORE</th>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
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| 50–38      | 1 EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD   | Content: focused on assigned topic, thoroughly developed, clearly demonstrating the skills required by the NQF criteria (e.g. familiarity with – recognising and recalling – the subject matter; understanding it; application of this information; analysis, for instance of relationships; evaluation, for example critiquing different approaches).  
Organisation: generating a piece of writing (such as an essay) with ideas clearly stated, succinct, well-organised, logically sequenced, cohesive, and well supported. |
| 37–28      | 2 GOOD TO AVERAGE          | Content: fairly sound demonstration of skills, mostly relevant to topic, lacks detail.  
Organisation: loosely organised, logical but incomplete sequencing and signposting. |
| 27–16      | 3 FAIR TO SHAKY: AT RISK   | Content: not enough substance or relevance, insufficient support for ideas.  
Organisation: ideas confused or disconnected, not enough logical sequencing or development, little signposting. |
| 15–0       | 4 VERY SHAKY               | Content: not pertinent or not enough material to evaluate OR Plagiarised.  
Organisation: does not communicate, no organisation or not enough material to evaluate. |
COMMON ERRORS IN ESSAY WRITING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ERROR</th>
<th>REMEDY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete sentences</td>
<td>Check that all your sentences have finite verbs, and that they do not contain fragments of ideas and are not introduced by transitional words such as ‘which’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong tense</td>
<td>Make sure that you use the present tense whenever you are writing about ‘reality’ in literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concord (subject-verb agreement)</td>
<td>Singular subjects take singular verbs (which often end in -s); plural subjects take plural verbs (which often do not end in -s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to present titles correctly</td>
<td>Make sure all the titles of books are underlined, or, if you are using a computer, that you use italics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation errors</td>
<td>All brackets and inverted commas must be closed once they have been opened. Sentences must begin with capital letters and end with full stops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling errors</td>
<td>Look up all misspelt words in a dictionary and make sure you learn the correct spelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of logic</td>
<td>Connect each idea to those around it using transition words and phrases, such as ‘in addition’, ‘on the other hand’, ‘but’ and ‘then’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-telling the story</td>
<td>Keep your attention on the topic of the essay and do not tell the story of the novel, play, poem or short story to your marker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing errors</td>
<td>Make sure that your essay complies with the rules for correct referencing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you work through your first assignment, look out for what the marker has identified as significant points on which you can improve. These could include:

*Issues relating to content*

- Discussion or argument off-topic: This generally means that you have not addressed the specificity of the question
- Response is too vague: Remember that you should always express yourself as clearly and precisely as you can. Often this means that you should pay attention to the way in which
you phrase your sentences. Choose words that unambiguously express what you mean and give examples to support your statements

- No link to topic: At each point of your essay, you need to show how your discussion relates to your central argument as well as to what the question requires (below we show you how to address this). You should also be careful when selecting the information you would like to discuss: make sure that you choose information that is not irrelevant or outside of the scope of what the question requires

**Issues relating to language**

- Spelling: In an assignment, mistakes of this kind should be avoided. Whether you are writing your essay by hand or typing it out on the computer, it is imperative to consult a dictionary or an online spelling resource to ensure that your essay contains no errors. Also make absolutely sure that you spell the names of the characters as well as the titles of the texts correctly

- Word order, sentence structure or incomplete sentences: Students who have difficulties with this aspect of their writing should seek additional learning resources in the library or online. A lecturer or e-Tutor might also be able to provide you with exercises you can complete in order to practise these elements of writing

- Concord: The subject and object of your sentence need to agree. For example, ‘I has two children’ is incorrect, while ‘I have two children’ is correct

- Punctuation: Students who have difficulties with this aspect of their writing should seek additional learning resources in the library or online. A lecturer might also be able to provide you with exercises you can complete in order to practise this element of your writing

Should a marker indicate that your language is poor or weak it is your responsibility to seek additional learning resources in the library or online. Remember as well that this module tests your ability to read and respond to texts. Work on developing a habit of reading a variety of texts written English (such as newspapers, magazines, biographies, novels or other popular books). Regular reading is an invaluable tool in teaching correct language usage. Students should avoid ‘sms’ language in every instance.
2 ASSIGNMENT 02

This section explains how you can improve your writing skills and thus your marks for the second assignment. Follow these guidelines to ensure that you are better prepared before you submit your next assignment.

2.1 Make sure that you understand what the assignment question requires

Unfortunately, many students disadvantage themselves by not making sure that they understand what exactly the question means before they begin writing their assignments. This leads to answers that are off-topic and that do not respond to the specificity of the question. To avoid this, you should:

Establish the format of the answer to the question:

- Does the question consist of several shorter sections that each requires responses of a single paragraph, or does the question require that you write a single coherent essay in response?

- Does the question include a quote that you are required to respond to or incorporate in your answer? If so, why do you think the lecturers have chosen this particular quote for the question?

- Read through the question several times and use a pen or a highlighter to identify the key words.

You will be looking for the following:

- If the question mentions particular characters by name, these are the characters on which your response should focus. While you might be permitted to refer to other characters in your answer, remember that you should only do so in order to substantiate the main argument you will be making.

- Identify the themes the question requires you to explore. While questions may be based on any number of themes, you should ensure that you clearly establish which particular theme or position the question wants you to address. Remember it is often not enough to simply reproduce what you know about a theme in a text. You may be required to link a theme to particular characters or elements of fiction or drama specifically.

- Look out for instruction words. These could include:
Account for: This means that you are required to give reasons for a particular event, perspective or position.

Analyse: To analyse something means to examine it in more detail and identifying key features of a specific idea.

Argue: This is the most common instruction word. When you see this word, your essay should present substantiation for or against a particular position (more on this later).

Assess: To assess something means to determine how important, useful, valid or effective it is.

Compare: To compare something with something else means showing how the things are similar.

Contrast: To contrast something means to show how it differs from something else.

Discuss: Explain or present both sides of an argument.

Evaluate: When you evaluate an idea, you need to show both its strengths and its weaknesses.

Examine: This means that you should consider something in detail.

Explain: This means that you need to give reasons as to why something is the way it is.

Explore: When you explore a certain topic, you investigate a number of the factors or reasons surrounding a particular topic or issue. Usually this will be done in order to argue a specific point.

Illustrate: To give reasons for something.

Investigate: See “Explore” above.

Outline: This means to give the main points of an argument or an idea.

2.2 Plan your work carefully

It takes time and practice to get anything right. A student learning to become a chef would not be able to prepare a perfect dessert without first establishing which ingredients the recipe uses, making sure they understand the recipe’s method, and practicing a few times in order to make
sure they know exactly what to do when the time comes to produce the final product. Similarly, you cannot expect to write a perfect essay if you do not plan and prepare carefully.

Planning to write an essay involves:

- Making sure you have read the source material on which the question is set. This includes reading and understanding the poem, novel or play as well as its accompanying section in Tutorial Letter 501.
- Reading the question carefully.
- Spending some time considering how best to go about answering the question.
- Using visual tools such as mind maps to help you organise and understand the structure of your response to the question.
- Drafting a rough outline of what you envision your argument being.
- Identifying examples from the primary source that may help you in substantiating your argument.

2.3 Understand the structure of an academic essay

While most academic writers eventually develop their own writing style over time, usually in response to different topics and texts, many undergraduate students submit essays that are poorly structured.

In most cases, our essays on works of literature try to construct and sustain tight arguments, in which we try to prove why our particular ‘reading’ of the novel, poem, or play is a valid one. Your essay should advance a very tightly focused position that responds to the specific requirements of the question.

Writing an introduction:

Remember that an introduction is not simply ‘the first paragraph’ of your essay. It is so much more important than that. An introduction is your opportunity to contextualise the essay for readers, state clearly what you are going to be arguing, and give readers a sense of where your essay is going and how you will support your argument.
Most good introductions include the following main parts:

- **Contextualisation**: This is where you tell the reader of your essay what it is that you are talking about. You should (1) name the writer, (2) name the text, and (3) provide no more than two or three sentences explaining what the text is about.

- **Thesis statement**: Your introduction must contain a clear statement that indicates what your argument is going to be. While this may be expressed in different ways (depending on the question), the argumentative focus should always be clear to the reader. You may want to include sentences such as ‘In this essay I argue that the novel…’, ‘The essay will show why the play’s representation of…’, or any other similar expression. If you are given an extract, you should also contextualise and link it here.

- **Indicating the structure**: Your introduction should have a few sentences that indicate how you will be arguing your point. In other words, you should very briefly state or discuss what main ideas you will be ‘unpacking’ in the subsequent paragraphs in the body of the essay. You may want to use the ‘Firstly,…’, ‘Secondly,…’ formulation.

Paragraphs in the body of the essay are ways of arranging information in coherent ways so that they support and provide evidence for the argument that your essay is making. Each paragraph in the body of an essay should focus on a different aspect of the main argument or topic. Each paragraph should also have a single focus and its relevance to the argument that you are making should be very clear.

*Writing a paragraph:*

A paragraph in the body of an essay should be structured in a way that the ideas develop logically and that the argument is clear throughout:

- The first sentence of any paragraph should indicate what that paragraph will be about. We call this the ‘topic sentence’. Avoid expressions such as ‘This paragraph is about sex and adulthood’. You should rather write: ‘Salinger uses the first person narrative point of view to explore Holden’s relationship to sex’. In this way, readers of your essay will know that you are not only talking about sex but will also know what your particular focus in this paragraph will be.

- While the topic sentence makes a particular claim, the rest of the paragraph then needs to support and ‘prove’ it. Support usually takes one of two forms, either (1) close reading of extracts or (2) analysis of significant moments in the novel.
o Close readings of a text: You should be able to identify and integrate quotations into grammatically correct sentences. Remember that you always need to discuss quotations and explain how they support the argument you are making. You may want to use phrases such as ‘This comment reveals how…’ or ‘This image is evidence of the way in which the novel…’

o Analysis of significant moments in a text: You should be able to identify important moments in the text and then discuss them. It is very important that you do not merely retell the story. Instead, you need to analyse the significance of particular moments or characters and show how these relate to the main topic of the question.

- Make sure that all the quotes and examples in the paragraph have been effectively linked to the argument that you are making. To avoid paragraphs that end up being unfocused and irrelevant, you may want to end your paragraph with a sentence that connects the ideas to the broader argument or question.

**Writing a conclusion:**

Good conclusions might:

- begin with a phrase reflecting that this is the concluding paragraph of the essay such as ‘In conclusion,…’ or ‘Finally,…’

- include the name of the writer and the text again

Good conclusions must:

- reiterate the essay’s main argument

- summarise the different points that have been discussed in the body of the essay and briefly show the reader, again, how they support your central claim

Conclusions must not:

- have a heading (of course, there should be no headings in essays on literature)

- introduce new ideas

- include quotations or clichés that are dramatic and/or irrelevant

- make moralistic assertions about society
- exaggerate the claims that you have made
- tell the reader of the essay how much you enjoyed the text

This guide was informed by the following book:


### 2.4 Respect academic writing conventions

- The register of your essay should be formal:
  - This means that you should never use any abbreviations or contractions: for example, write out “do not” instead of “don’t” and “cannot” instead of “can’t”.
  - Do not use any slang whatsoever. “Slang” can be defined as a type of language consisting of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal and that are more common in speech than writing. An example of a sentence that contains slang would be: “Elsa is a super cool chick who likes to hang out with her BFF Helen.” A general rule would be not to use the type of language you would use in a WhatsApp conversation with a friend or on a social media site such as Facebook.
  - Do not give your essay any title other than the question number as it appears in your Tutorial Letter 101.
  - Do not ever use bullet points when writing a formal academic essay.

- Remember to indicate the titles of poems, plays or novels correctly. The titles of novels or plays should be underlined when handwritten (The Road to Mecca) and italicized when typed (The Road to Mecca). The titles of poems should be placed in inverted commas whether typed or written by hand (“Ingrid Jonker” or “In the Shadow of Signal Hill”).

- A literary analysis should always be written in the present tense. This is because the events or feelings described in a novel, play or poem exist in a special temporal space which is always present. For example, “Helen had a friend whose name was Elsa” is incorrect while “Helen has a friend whose name is Elsa” is correct.

- When you refer to the author of the novel, poem, or play for the first time, use their full name and surname. Thereafter, only use their surname. We never refer to an author by simply using their first name.
2.5 Quote and reference accurately and correctly

Being able to quote correctly is a crucial skill when writing any academic essay. When writing an assignment, you need to quote from both the primary text and from secondary sources if you are using any. The purpose of quoting from the primary text is to indicate where exactly certain ideas you are discussing can be seen in the text. These quotes could thus be seen as constituting the basic building blocks of your argument. You quote from secondary sources in order to show how the ideas of others either inform or contradict your own opinions. In both cases it is never enough simply to quote without discussing and engaging with that which you are quoting. The important thing to remember is that all quotations must be discussed. Quotes are your ‘evidence’ to support the main point that you are making in the essay and you need to explain why that particular quote is relevant or significant. Students may want to use phrases like ‘this is significant because...’ and ‘this shows the reader that...’ to connect a quote to the main argument. Remember, you should read the assignment instructions carefully to determine whether you need to use any secondary sources.

There are certain academic conventions that one needs to follow when quoting from any source:

- Your quote needs to be placed in a full sentence. When you quote from either a secondary source or from your primary text, you need to ensure that what you are quoting forms part of a coherent and grammatically correct sentence. This means that when you read the final sentence out loud, you should not be able to tell which words form part of the quote and which are your own – together they should make sense as a complete sentence.

- Indicate where your quote comes from by putting the author’s surname and the page number in brackets after the quote.

- You have to retain the wording of the original text. When you place something in quotation marks, it has to remain exactly as it appears in the original text. You cannot change the word order or the tense. So, you should carefully decide which sections of a particular quote you want to use and then structure your sentence around it. Remember that even two or three words can be a suitable quote. Alternatively, you can use square brackets to indicate changes. These changes would normally revolve around pronouns and omissions.
  
  - Pronouns: To change a pronoun, put the correct words inside square brackets the replace the incorrect one.
  
  - Omissions: To indicate an omission, put three dots inside square brackets.
• You may use single or double quotation marks when quoting (but be consistent throughout your essay).

• You also need to include a list of sources, which should appear in alphabetical order, should come at the end of your essay and should follow the following format (which is called the Harvard Method of Referencing):

  o For books: Author’s surname, name. Year of publication (of the specific edition you are using). Title. Place: Publisher.


  o For websites: Name of author or organisation. Year of page’s creation. Title of document. Viewed: Day Month Year. <url>.


2.6 Ensure that you acknowledge all your sources and that you do not commit plagiarism

Plagiarism is a very serious offence and will result in zero per cent being awarded for submitted work. The university may also take very serious actions against students who copy from other sources without acknowledging this. Please read the detailed explanation given below very carefully:

• If you copy something out of a book, an article, a website or another document without acknowledging its source, and pass it off as your own, that constitutes plagiarism. In effect, you are stealing something that belongs to someone else, dishonestly pretending that it is your own. If you do copy text, it is essential that you also use quotation marks correctly. If you paraphrase material (i.e. change the wording slightly) or use ideas or a line of argument without acknowledging the original source, this also constitutes plagiarism and the same severe penalty will apply.
• It is not enough to cite sources in the bibliography at the end of your essay. You must refer to these in the body of your essay, in brackets, next to every statement that is based on borrowed formulations or ideas.

• Your lecturers and markers are very familiar with the material they are teaching. They will immediately be able to recognise anything that has already been written on the topic.

• Unisa makes use of programs such as ‘Turnitin’ to check for plagiarism. This computer program immediately notifies us if even a section of the essay has been plagiarised.

• Remember that we are testing your own engagement with the topic and not your ability to replicate information from elsewhere.

• Websites such as Gradesaver or Sparknotes are not credible academic sources and you should avoid using these at any cost.

• It is a punishable offence to pay somebody else to write your assignment for you. The Department is aware of unscrupulous individuals offering their services to students. Even worse, these individuals often promise an individualised service but then submit the same essays for many students. If a lecturer or marker suspects that a student is guilty of this offence, their details will immediately be communicated to the University’s upper management to ensure that the culprit is subjected to disciplinary action.
### 3 checklist

Work through the checklist below before you submit your second assignment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>✔️</th>
<th>☐</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have read and understood the relevant learning material in <em>Tutorial Letter 501</em> as well as the prescribed texts</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand what the question requires me to do</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have contacted my lecturers or my e-tutor for more information on anything I do not understand</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I planned my work carefully, including using visual aids and other tools discussed in <em>Tutorial Letter 101</em></td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my assignment I sustain a coherent and tight argument in response to the question(s)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quotations that I use are integrated into grammatically coherent and complete sentences</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have edited my work carefully in order to ensure that I have not made any language or typing errors</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have acknowledged any secondary sources that I used in writing my assignment both in-text and in a bibliography at the end of each answer according to the Harvard style</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have numbered the pages of my assignment</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My name and student number appear on the cover page of my assignment</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The correct unique assignment number appears on the cover page of my assignment</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have signed and attached a plagiarism declaration (do not send this as a separate document)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have submitted the correct assignment for the correct module</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For online submissions: The document I uploaded onto myUnisa can be opened, read, and edited by my lecturers (NOT a read-only file)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note that your e-tutors are available via myUnisa to assist you on a regular basis.

Please remember to read ALL your prescribed texts as well as the tutorial letters.

Do try to access the MyUnisa site for ENG 1501 as often as possible. If you have any queries for lecturers, please use the following e-mail address:

ENG1501@unisa.ac.za

Good luck with your studies, and all the best for the second assignment.

THE ENG1501 TEAM