

## Writing a coursework essay

Writing a coursework essay does not need to be a completely stressful experience. The secret is to plan and be ready. You can see from your programme of study when the work is coming up.

You will be told a title and an expected word amount. You have to write at enough length to gain the marks. You have to write in Standard English. You should also be told the assessment criteria – they are also shown in the Overview document.

With the exception of the Shakespeare, you can expect to have at least a week to write your draft. Your draft will be marked formatively and you will be given a date by which you should make any changes or do a redraft. Occasionally, students are allowed to redraft again, but this is at the discretion of your teacher.

Shakespeare is drafted in timed conditions in the classroom.

## Steps to achieving the right result

1. Write down the title in full. Make sure that you understand the title and you are sure what is required to do well. If you don't understand, you need to ask your teacher before you move on.
2. Note down ideas that answer the question – you will need at least six, if not eight good points in order to have enough material. This could be a list or a spider diagram.
3. You will need to find quotations for each point you want to make. As a minimum, you will need at least a quotation per point. It is even better if you can quote little and often.
4. Start with a good, strong point. Use PEA. This shows the examiner that you are directly answering the question straight away. Don't say 'I am writing this essay about...' – it's a no brainer – that is what you are supposed to be doing and it is just stating the obvious.
5. Use good connectives to join ideas together. 'On the other hand', 'Significantly', 'Alternatively' etc. Remember that connectives are signposts to the reader, do you want them to see there is more to this point, are you moving to a different point or to a different point of view? Choose carefully.
6. It is always a good idea to use literary terminology and explain how it is used.
7. A conclusion is about showing that you have answered the question. You may use some repetition, but it is better to find a form of words that is different to reinforce what you have been saying.
8. Read through and check your work carefully. Does it flow nicely? Do you say what you mean? Then check for technical errors: these are very irritating and will pull you down if they go uncorrected. By technical errors, we mean not just the spellings and punctuation, but also that correct capitalisation is used and that you have paragraphed clearly.
9. It is a good idea to put aside the essay for at least a day before it is due in (this means you have to be very organised), so that you can have a bit of space to think if something is missing. This gives you time to sort it out.
10. Give work in on time.

**Shakespeare Coursework – extracts from coursework in italics.**

**How is Shylock presented by Shakespeare in 'The Merchant of Venice'? Comment on the cultural and historical influences on this presentation.**

This piece makes good use of context, embedding it in to the body of the text and making sure that it is useful. He begins by setting out the background Shakespeare wrote in, showing that this must have an influence on how Shylock is perceived, but commenting that Shakespeare's presentation is ambiguous. This shows a sophisticated appreciation of the context.

*'The forfeit of his money is explainable, but it is dubious as to why he had to be converted to Christianity and lose the thing he cherished most, his religion. The hypocrisy of the Christians is revealed here as Portia appeals unsuccessfully to Shylock to have mercy, this is described when she says 'The quality of mercy is not strained...It is an attribute of God.' Here Portia tries to compare the quality of mercy as Godlike, yet still, when Shylock is punished they show no signs of mercy either.'*

There is appreciation of the language involved: *'The bestial imagery continues, and is used to explain his stubbornness when not showing mercy and complying with the bond. This is highlighted when Antonio comments in Act 4 Scene 1, 'question with the wolf why hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb.' Here it suggests that Shylock's persistence is impossible to stop, that it is comparable to restraining a wolf when they are feasting on their prey.'*

**Pre 1914 Poetry Coursework - How do Tennyson and Shakespeare show their attitudes to death in Crossing the Bar and the soliloquy from Hamlet? With additional references to: Death by Not Proud (Donne), To An Athlete Dying Young (Housman) and Hymn to God in My Sickness (Donne).**

This student put together these five poems from the nine that were studied in class. Although the beginning is rather pedestrian, it quickly demonstrates a sophisticated appreciation of the poetic techniques and forms.

He uses literary terminology and explains the effects *"Crossing the Bar" opens with a metaphor 'sunset and evening star'. This phrase uses light to represent life; 'sunset' implies that the end of the day is near, thus in context it symbolises that the end of his life is approaching.'* Each of these effects is tied in to the attitude it reveals.

Context is brought in and used meaningfully e.g the shorter life expectancy at that time.

Throughout the essay, he compares (Death Be Not Proud) and contrasts (To An Athlete) with other poems, making the large amount of poems they need to mention slightly more meaningful.