



PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER: PLANNING AN ANALYTICAL TEXT RESPONSE

A text response is a structured piece of writing that explains and explores a text. Text responses are usually written in response to a question or topic, and argue a point of view about a text being studied.

16.1 PREPARATION

As you study a text, you can take a number of steps to enable you to write a text response with confidence. Be sure that you understand how the writer:

- has constructed the novel – you should be able to identify key moments in the text and explain why they are important
- creates and incorporates setting
- explores main ideas and central concerns
- uses literary devices
- creates and develops each character – is it through their actions, what others say about them, authorial comment or a combination of all of these? Consider the language a character uses and whether any symbols or imagery are associated with the character.

A good text response effectively uses details from the text, and one way to do this is by incorporating a number of short quotations in the body of your essay. It is a good idea, therefore, to compile a bank of quotations that you will be able to draw on. It might look something like this example.



Quotation bank

TITLE OF TEXT:

Characters (divide into sections, one for each character)	Setting
•	•
•	•
Language/narrative voice	Themes (divide into sections, according to themes)
•	•
•	•
Tensions in the text	Central concerns and big ideas
•	•
•	•

16.2 BREAKING DOWN THE TOPIC

Before you can plan and write your response, you must analyse the topic. You *must* understand what the topic is about, and what the question is asking you to do.

WHAT IS THE TOPIC ABOUT?

Typical analytical essay topics can ask you to focus on a range of aspects which make up the text. For example, you might be asked about:

- characterisation/relationships
- narrative style/voice
- structural elements
- language
- values
- issues/ideas.

Pay attention to any symbols or imagery associated with a character.



WHAT IS THE QUESTION ASKING ME TO DO?

There are different types of questions that you could be asked. This table illustrates some (but not all) of them.

QUESTION TYPE	EXAMPLE	WHAT YOU NEED TO DO ...
Why does character act in a particular way?	Why is Shylock the most morally upright character in <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> ?	Explain why: because ...
A statement about one or more relationships, followed by 'discuss'.	'The characters in the text value money more than love.' Discuss	State whether you agree or disagree, and explain <i>why</i> these relationships are the way they are.
How does the text ...?	How does the structure of <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> work to maximise the emotional impact on the reader?	Explain how several features of the text are used to have the stated effect.
Quote from the text followed by 'is this true?' or 'discuss'.	' <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> is more about "the quality of mercy" than money.' Discuss.	Explain the significance of the quotation, state whether you agree/disagree, and explain why.
A contention about the text, followed by 'do you agree?' or 'discuss'.	'In Shakespeare's world the stereotype of a Jew was viciously negative; similarly, Morocco, an African, would have been scorned as inferior. Shakespeare's <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> both reflects and encourages the widespread anti-Semitism and racism of the time.' Do you agree?	State whether you agree/disagree and explain why.

YOUR TURN

16.1 This planner will help you to 'break down' a topic. Ask your teacher for a topic if you do not have one already, then complete the planner.

Understanding the topic

Text studied:

Topic:

Remember to underline the title of the text.

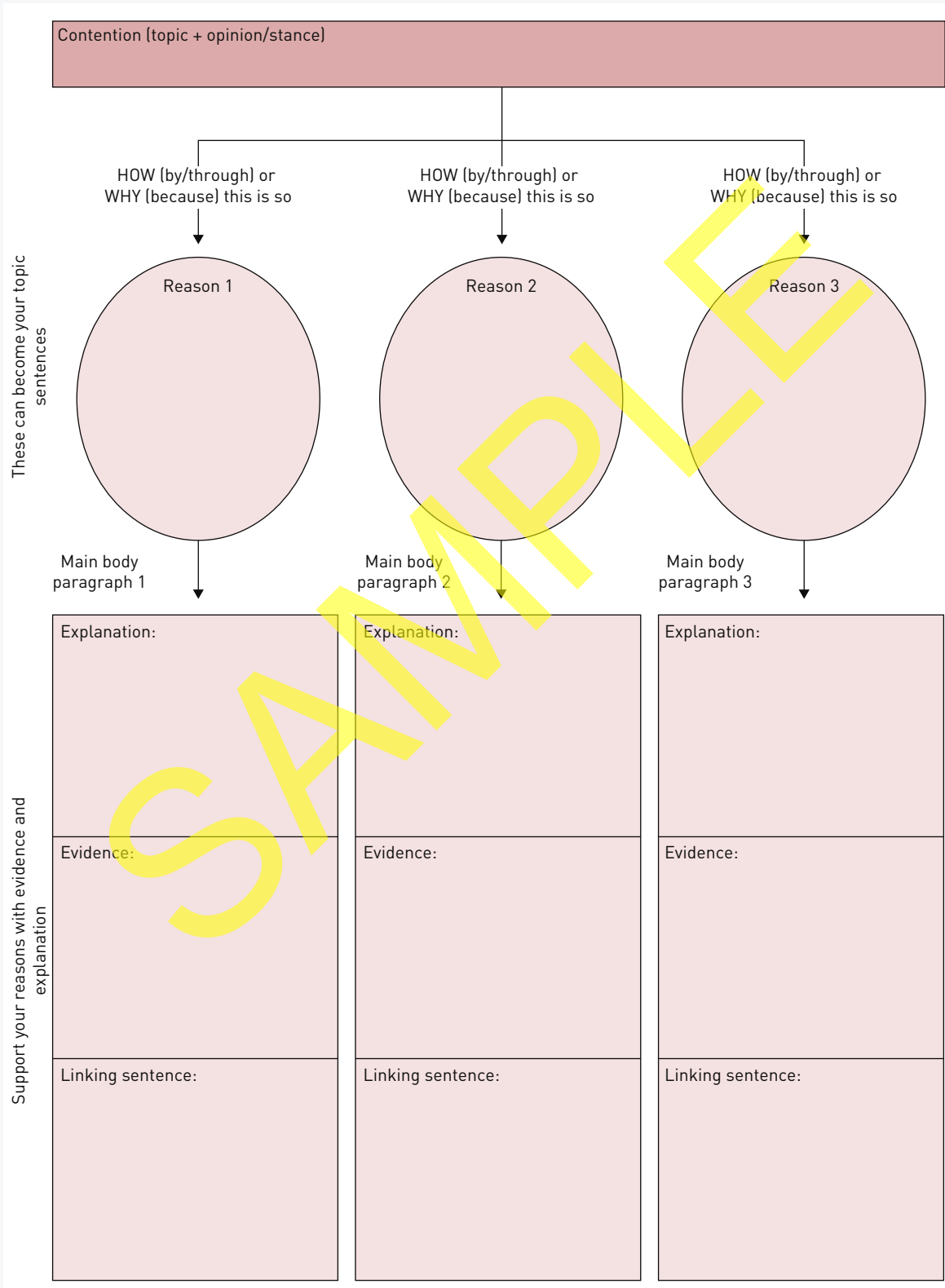
Annotate the topic, using these questions to guide your interrogation of the topic.

- Is there more than one part to the topic? (Highlight each part.)
- What are the key words? (Highlight them, and brainstorm synonyms for each.)
- What is the question about? (For example, is it about characterisation/relationships, narrative style/voice, views/values or structural features?) What is it asking you to do?

Planning your response

Once you have 'broken down' the question – that is, understood what the question is *about* and what it is *asking you to do* – you need to generate your ideas and arguments.

Use this graphic organiser to plan your response.



The structure of your essay

- Introduction
- Main body paragraph 1 (first argument which supports your **contention**; that is, the central idea that you are trying to get the reader to accept.)
- Main body paragraph 2 (second argument which supports your contention)
- Main body paragraph 3 – the 'BUT' paragraph (third argument which acknowledges an alternative view)
- Conclusion

You may include another main body paragraph before the 'BUT' paragraph.

Plan your essay using this guide

Introduction

Opening sentence – introduce the broad concerns of the text, as suggested by the key words in the question

Second sentence – state your contention (a direct answer/response to the essay topic)

Third sentence – state the first reason for your contention (this should be the idea for paragraph one)

Fourth sentence – state the second reason for your contention (this should be the idea for paragraph two). Start with a text connective (see Unit 5).

It is important that you signpost your ideas so that the reader knows exactly what you will argue and how your argument will progress.

Fifth sentence – state the third reason for your contention: the alternative argument (this should be the idea for paragraph three). Start with a text connective.

Combine these five sentences into one paragraph. This is your introduction.

Body of essay

Write at least three main body paragraphs using **TEEL**: topic sentence, explanation, evidence, linking sentence (see Unit 4).

Main body paragraph 1 – elaborate on the first point mentioned in the introduction

- **Topic sentence:** this should reword the first point mentioned in the introduction, perhaps in more detail.

- **Explanation and evidence:**

- Explain the point of your topic sentence by discussing how it relates to the essay topic
- Use short quotations; embed them in your sentences
- Use linking words (see Unit 5) to introduce a new example
- Do not retell the events

List the evidence you will use in your first paragraph:

- **Linking sentence:** conclude your paragraph by relating the argument you have discussed in this paragraph to your contention

Main body paragraph 2 – elaborate on the second point mentioned in the introduction

- **Topic sentence:** this should reword the second point mentioned in the introduction, perhaps in more detail.

- **Explanation and evidence:**

- Explain the point of your topic sentence by discussing how it relates to the essay topic
- Use short quotations; embed them in your sentences
- Use linking words to introduce a new example
- Do not retell the events

List the evidence you will use in your second paragraph:

- **Linking sentence:** conclude your paragraph by relating the argument you have discussed in this paragraph to your contention

You might like to add another main body paragraph here before writing the paragraph that acknowledges the opposing argument. If so, use the same template as that for paragraph two.

Main body paragraph 3 – the ‘BUT’ paragraph – elaborate on the third point mentioned in the introduction

A strong text response will acknowledge and analyse an alternative view – that is, a view that opposes your own contention – but will go on to discredit this argument, and establish why your contention is superior.

- **Topic sentence:** this should reword the third point mentioned in the introduction, perhaps in more detail.

- **Explanation and evidence:**

- Explain the point of your topic sentence by discussing how it relates to the essay topic
- Use short quotations; embed them in your sentences
- Use linking words to introduce a new example
- Do not retell the events

List the evidence you will use in your third paragraph:

- **Linking sentence:** conclude your paragraph by relating the argument you have discussed in this paragraph to your contention

Conclusion

- Restate the overall contention of your essay *in different wording and sentence structure* to the introduction.

- Summarise your reasons in the order of the paragraph structure.

- Refer to the author's overall message and/or purpose in writing the text.

- *Do not* introduce any new ideas or information.

16.2 This essay has been partially annotated to show the elements of a high-scoring analytical text response. First, read the entire *essay*. Then read the teacher's annotations on paragraphs 1 and 2. These annotations are the internal thoughts of the teacher about the strengths of the *essay*. After you have read these, it is your turn to *assess* the *rest* of the *essay*. Annotate paragraph 3, 4 and 5. Make specific *comments* about the strengths of the *essay*. Highlight text to show how the student has used TEEL (see Unit 4) to structure their response.



The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger

Topic: 'Certain things should stay the way they are.' Why is Holden reluctant to change?

Mentions author	<p>In J.D. Salinger's <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> it is Holden's fear of destroying the connection with the memories and innocence of his childhood which leave him most apprehensive about becoming an adult. Primarily, Holden's desire to remain close to the memory of his beloved younger brother, Allie, and need to protect the innocence of his childhood fuel his resistance to the transitional period between child and adult. Similarly, his experiences of immersion in the adult world lead to an inherent fear of the isolation and responsibilities of adulthood, further contributing to Holden's reluctance to grow up. However, the conclusion of the novel reveals a transformed image of Holden, who is able to finally recognise and accept that things don't always 'stay the way they are'. Demonstrating a capacity to be flexible and a maturity of thought, Holden is able to overcome his fears, and his reluctance to grow up, whilst still maintaining a connection with his childhood.</p>	Italics the title of the text. (If writing by hand, underline the title of the text.)
Uses a synonym for 'reluctant' – a key word in the topic.		States the contention straight away; directly addresses the topic.
Signposts the first argument (which is to be discussed in main body paragraph 1).		Defines, in the student's words, another key word in the topic – 'change' (defined as becoming an adult).
Signposts the 'BUT' paragraph (main body paragraph 3) – acknowledges that there is an alternative view.		Signposts the second (and different) argument (which is to be discussed in main body paragraph 2).

Explains argument in more detail.

Subtle link to the narrative style.

Refers to 'reader', not 'viewer' or 'audience' (only use 'viewer' or 'audience' for texts that can be watched).

Uses a text connective to signal cause.

Uses a third type of evidence – a key event/aspect of the character's experience.

Uses a text connective to clarify argument. (Response uses a range of text connectives for different purposes.) Student varies vocabulary – using 'fearful' 'distressed' 'anguished' and 'resistant' rather than repeating 'reluctant' (a key word in the topic).

Indeed, it is Holden's fear of further increasing the disconnection between himself and the memory of his brother Allie which makes him most resistant to change. Desperate to cling to the precious memories of his late, beloved brother, Holden is terrified that by developing into an adult, he will destroy his connection to his childhood. Throughout the text,

Holden's narrative stream of consciousness reveals his emotional attachment to his younger brother, whom he describes as 'nice and smart', stating to the reader 'you would've liked him'. Consequently, Allie's traumatic and unexpected death has a detrimental effect on Holden, who 'hate[d] it whenever anybody dies', let alone someone with whom he shares a rare emotional attachment. Holden remains fearful that by developing as an adult, and hiding behind the associations and conventions of childhood he will, as an adult, destroy the already fading connection between himself and his brother. Distressed and anguished that the transition was inevitable for everyone 'except Allie', Holden cannot bear to neglect and move past guilt and other memories of Allie, just as his brother, who has 'grown up' and his parents, who were 'occupied' seem to have done. Disillusioned by the actions of the adults around him, Holden demonstrates his impenetrable desire to preserve the memory of his brother when he states that he wishes he could put some things in 'big glass cases', where they could always be recovered, and not forgotten.

Primarily, it is Holden's unflinching determination to protect the cherished childhood memories of his younger brother Allie which make him most reluctant to change.

Furthermore, Holden's period of immersion in the adult world alerts him to the isolation and responsibilities of adulthood, of which he is terrified. Despite being previously exposed to isolation in his school environment – his teammates 'ostracised' him after a lapse of judgement – Holden's connections and interactions with the adult world remain far more desolate as he is unable to understand the society around him. Demonstrated particularly when Holden aims to interact with his friend Carl Luce and other strangers in bars, Holden remains unable to form connections, which has a deprecating effect on his mental state. Criticised for his immaturity by his former friend and adolescent, Luce, who tells Holden his 'mind is immature' and interrogated 'when in the hell are you going to grow up?' Holden is again ostracised, and left isolated in an adult environment. Continuously referring to himself as 'depressed'

Topic sentence clearly states reason for student's contention. Topic sentence is analytical, not descriptive.

Smooth integration of evidence to support student's argument. Student uses a two-word quotation to demonstrate intimate knowledge of character.

Again, close reference to the text shows that the student knows the text well.

Employs a different type of evidence – a short quotation – to explain character's personality.

Linking sentence clearly reiterates the argument which has been explored in the paragraph and links it to the contention. Response echoes the key words in the topic to remind the reader that the response directly addresses the topic.

and 'lonesome' Holden is unable to cope with the prolonged effects of isolation he experiences in an adult society. Even going as far as to scream 'I am a goddamn minor' in an attempt to reconnect with his past and more significantly those around him, Holden is left distressed, and as a result, fearful of the impending isolation of adulthood, only contributing to his hesitation to develop and change.

It is not until the conclusion of the novel that Holden demonstrates his transformation of character, and is able to approach the transition to adulthood with slightly less apprehension. Although he does ultimately remain reluctant to develop into an adult, Holden, by observing his younger sister Phoebe, comes to the realisation that by developing into an adult, he does not discard all connection with childhood. Phoebe, a metaphorical representation of the innocence of all children, rides around the carousel whilst Holden fears for her safety, as she reaches for a big 'gold ring'. However, Holden comes to the understanding that he cannot be the 'catcher in the rye' for all children, as if they lose their innocence, or 'fall' off the carousel, 'they fall off'. Holden is humbled, as, like the pond at Central Park, which is 'partly frozen, partly not frozen', regardless of the inevitability of growth and change, he does not have to be entirely adult or entirely child. By realising his ability to retain segments of his childhood, such as his memories of his brother, and some of his innocence, Holden becomes far less resistant to his development as an adult.

Ultimately, Holden's reluctance to change and to develop into an adult stems from his desire to protect and preserve the memories and innocence of his childhood. As a result of his experiences of isolation in the adult world, coupled with his fear of realising and losing the memory of his beloved brother Allie, Holden develops a fear of adulthood, as he is mortified at the prospect of obliterating his connection with his childhood. Begging Allie in his thoughts 'don't let me disappear' Holden does not want to lose his connections with, and identity as, a child. As a result, it is not until he realises that he does not have to let go of his past to progress forward that Holden is able to accept the inevitability of change.

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