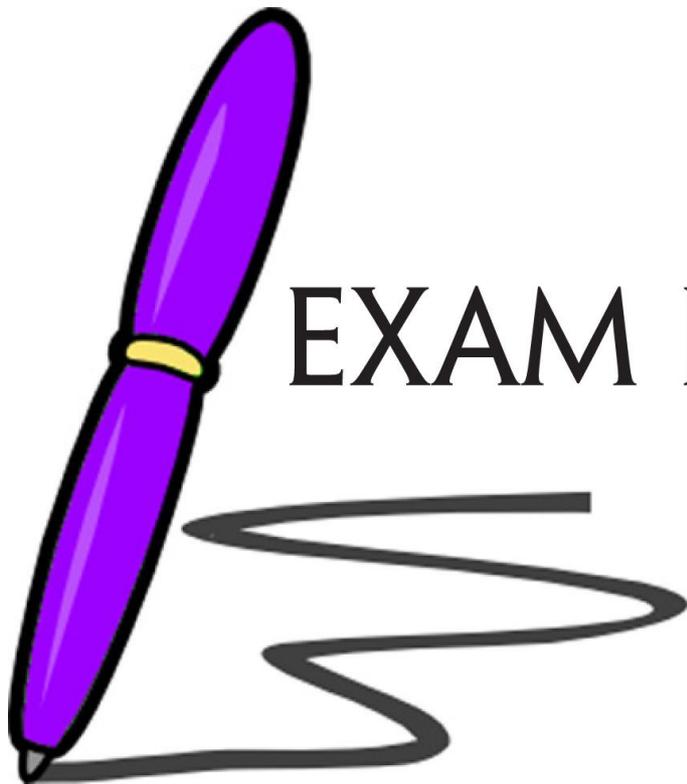




**THE  
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# EXAM LITERACY **GUIDE**

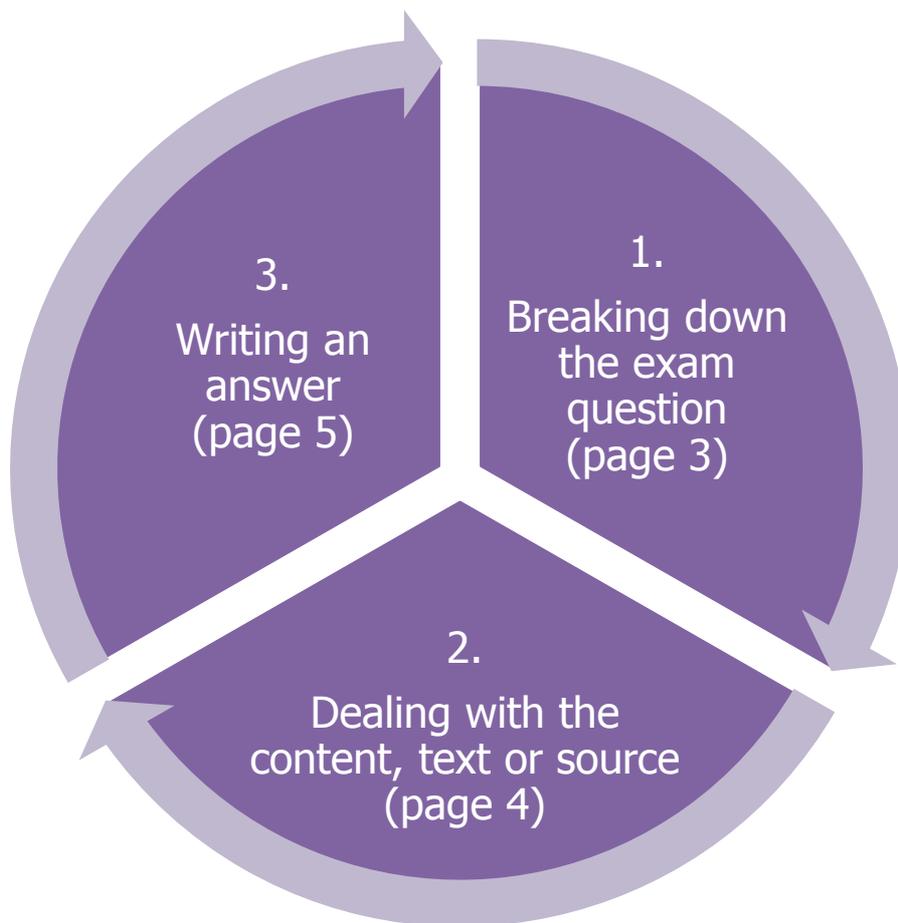
**PRIDE THROUGH SUCCESS**

## Exam Literacy – Why focus on it?

### Focusing on exam literacy in your GCSE preparation lessons:

- gives students a process and set of steps to follow in an exam
- builds resilience and confidence in exams
- improves the quality and grade of students' written answers

**Strategies for teaching exam literacy can be broken down into the following areas.**



# 1. Breaking Down the Exam Question

It is extremely important that every department across the Academy is **consistent** in the way they teach students to approach exam papers and break down the questions and tasks within.

Each and **every exam question**, no matter the subject or topic, must be broken down using the following guidelines.

**Command words** are the words in the exam question that 'tell' students what to do in their answer (e.g. 'describe', 'explain' etc.).

- In practice papers and walking talking mock papers, command words must always be **circled**.
- In other exam prep resources, such as power points, command words must appear in **red**.

**Compare** the use of diamond with the use of graphite. **explaining** each use in terms of the bonding and structure. In your answer you should use information from the diagrams above.

(6)

**Topic words** are the words in the exam question that refer to **the topic** students should base their answer on (e.g. biological 'adaptations', 'themes' in a novel etc.)

- In practice papers and walking talking mock papers, topic words must always be **underlined**.
- In other exam prep resources, such as power points, topic words must appear in **blue**.

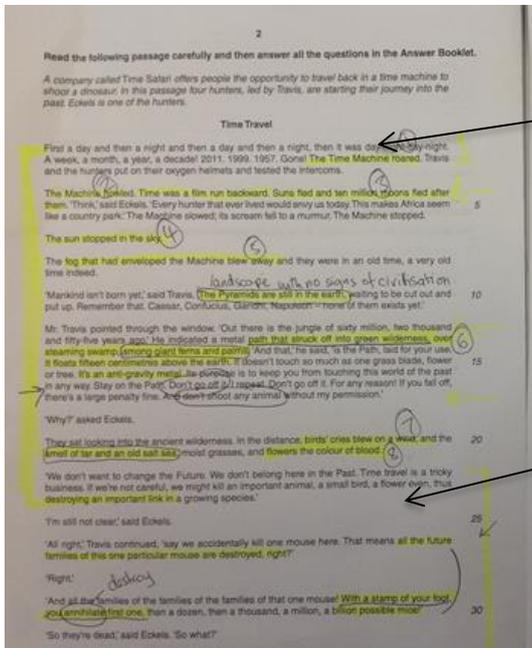
Refer to the number of **marks** given for the question.

- In practice papers, marks must always be **boxed**.

## 2. Dealing with the Content, Text or Source

For higher-mark questions that require students to write extended responses, students should be encouraged to use strategies to **find key information**, **recall subject knowledge** and **create a plan** before writing out their response.

### 1. Finding key information in a source or text

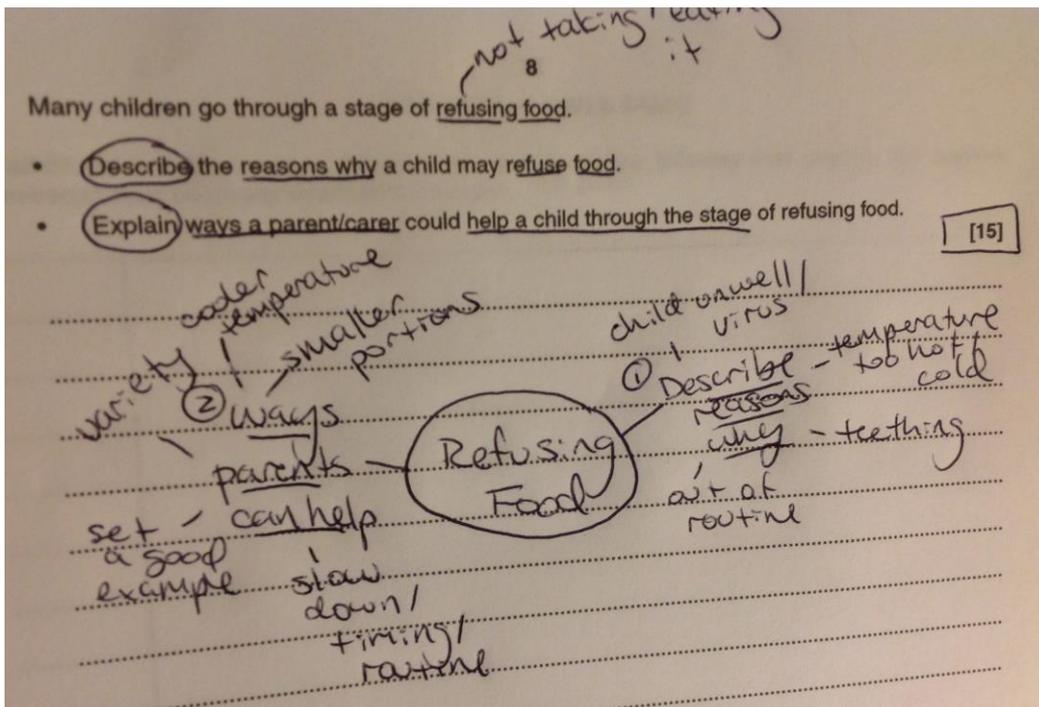


Students are allowed **highlighters** in an examination. These should be used to pick out and identify information in any sources or texts that they will need to write an answer.

It's also helpful for students to use **numbers, arrows and notes** to help them organise the information they find.

### 2. Recalling subject knowledge and creating a plan

Encourage pupils to make some kind of a **plan** for an extended response **before** writing. This will help them to ensure they have recalled all of the necessary subject-specific knowledge and/or information from the text or source and organised it in a meaningful and logical way.



### 3. Writing an Answer

Writing an answer is the final and last step in responding to an exam question. Students should be aware of and able to use a range of strategies to help them fully link their response to the question, express their ideas clearly and demonstrate subject-specific content knowledge.

#### 1. Linking the written response to the question

In order to focus their answer clearly on the topic expressed in the exam question, students should try to **use the words from the question** to formulate **the first sentence** of their response.

**Example question:** **Describe** the **reasons why** a child may **refuse food**.

#### **First sentence of answer:**

*Firstly, **one reason that a child may refuse food is because** they may be teething and experiencing pain or discomfort in their mouth.*

#### 2. Expressing ideas clearly

Students should be taught and encouraged to use **connectives** in longer written responses to exam questions in order to show a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of the information, content knowledge or ideas they are expressing.

#### **Order/Sequencing of information/ideas:**

<i>Firstly</i>	<i>Secondly</i>	<i>Thirdly</i>
<i>In addition</i>	<i>Next</i>	<i>Additionally</i>
<i>Subsequently</i>	<i>Finally</i>	<i>Lastly</i>
<i>To begin</i>	<i>In conclusion</i>	

#### **Links/Relationships between information/ideas:**

<i>As a result</i>	<i>Furthermore</i>	<i>Nevertheless</i>
<i>Moreover</i>	<i>Consequently</i>	<i>So</i>
<i>For example</i>	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Therefore</i>

#### **Comparisons between information:**

<i>Similarly</i>	<i>Likewise</i>	<i>However</i>
<i>In contrast</i>	<i>Whereas</i>	<i>Alternatively</i>
<i>In the same way</i>	<i>On the other hand</i>	

#### 3. Demonstrating subject-specific content knowledge

Finally, students should learn and memorise **subject-specific vocabulary** to use in their written answers on a range of possible topics, as it encourages pupils to give more in-depth and specific responses – leading to higher marks.

