

The HL Essay - May / first Draft

To begin *thinking* about the HL essay, remember the seven course concepts: **identity, culture, creativity, communication, perspective, transformation, and representation.**

In a nutshell, your job is: to create a thesis statement that interests you (in connection with a course concept and one text or body of work) and write a paper. This topic is YOURS to choose. There are no prompts involved.

The basics:

- The HLE is a 1200-1500 word formal, academic essay.
- The HLE is a processed essay and will take time to develop. (My recommendation: have a complete “final” draft by August 2021)
- The HLE is based on work(s) or text(s) studied in the course. (This means you can choose a literary text OR a non-literary text: advertisement, documentary film, etc)
- Students select their own topic, title, line of inquiry and thesis.
- Students cannot base their essay on any work or text that was used for the (Final) Individual Oral or that will be used for Paper 2.
- It is NOT a requirement to use or consult secondary sources.

The Process:

1. Look back at your learner portfolio. What literary work(s) and non-literary text(s) jump out? What interests you? Alternatively, look at the 7 concepts of the course. What do you find interesting or worth exploring in greater depth?
2. Narrow your ideas down into a possible topic, title or question you want to answer. Talk with your teacher, with your peers, with anyone who will listen. Clarify your ideas and arguments through discussion.

3. Once you have decided on a line of inquiry, draw a spider diagram for it. Branch out from each aspect of your thinking and answer all parts of it in relation to the text or work you are focusing on. Share your thinking with others to clarify your ideas even more.
4. Write a thesis statement which will come at the end of the first paragraph. In your thesis statement, provide a focus for your essay. What are you arguing and why?
5. Quote hunt. Find quotations from the primary source that help you explore your line of inquiry. Rewrite them on pieces of paper. Look for similarities between the quotations and start to cluster them. What is the guiding idea behind each cluster of quotations? Could this 'guiding idea' become a 'topic sentence'? How might these tie in to the thesis statement?
6. Write an outline to your essay using your spider diagram, thesis statement, quotations and more. Make sure you stick between the 1200-1500 word limit.

For the actual descriptors, we refer you to the IB *Language A: Language and Literature* guide.

Criterion A - Knowledge, understanding and interpretation

There is excellent knowledge and understanding of the work or text shown through the essay and a persuasive interpretation of their implications in relation to the chosen topic. One's analysis needs to be supported by relevant examples from the text or work in relation to the focus of the essay.

Criterion B - Analysis and evaluation - 5 marks

The essay must show how a writer's choices (both narrow and broad) shape meaning in relation to the focus/topic presented.

Criterion C - Focus, organization and development - 5 marks

The response must be well organized and effectively structured (a line of inquiry being developed) in order to score top marks for this criterion. The response should make a case and develop it thoroughly with examples that are well integrated throughout.

Criterion D - Language - 5 marks

The response must be written effectively and accurately. Students should use an academic register and strong style.

[The HL Essay Rubric](#)

** My NOTE: Considering shorter texts for the HL essay such as non-literary (advertisements, poetry / lyrics) is smart because that leaves literary texts (*Handmaid's Tale*) open for you to use at the end of the course for Paper 2.