

### **Some Hints on Exam Technique**

*You cannot guarantee that the questions you are hoping for will come up in your exams, but you can guarantee that, whatever comes up, you can do your best if you bear in mind the following tips:*

1. Read the instruction page of the exam paper carefully- check:
  - a) how many questions you have to answer
  - b) how long you have got to complete the exam (note the finishing time)
  - c) any other specific instructions\* If it helps you, highlight the key instructions.
  
2. Read through the rest of the exam paper to:
  - a) note any additional instructions for each section of the paper (eg: do you have to answer a particular number of questions or all of them?)
  - b) identify which optional questions you are going to attempt.
  
3. How to choose which optional questions to answer:
  - a) Read each question available carefully
  - b) Check that you know precisely what each question is asking- highlight or underline key words in the questions
  - c) Select those questions that you are sure about and that you have sufficient knowledge on to answer at length. (If you are unsure what the question is after, better to avoid tackling it if at all possible).
  
4. Note how long you are expected to spend on each question or section. The English and English Literature papers specify suggested time allocations. Follow these suggestions- if you spend too long on earlier questions, you will find yourself running short of time in the later questions. If you fail to complete the paper, you will have lost the opportunity of gaining many valuable marks. A simple but vital tip is: **complete all questions you are asked to do in the examination.**
  
5. You are not required to answer questions in a particular order. Answer the question you are most confident about first and continue with the questions in order of confidence, leaving your weakest question until last. (The only exception to this rule is the final creative writing question on English paper 1- you are best to do this question last).
  
6. Remember- do not rush into writing down your answers. In essay type questions, you should make a quick plan of your essays in note form. This will help you keep in mind all the points you want to cover and make sure you deal with them in a logical order. About 2 or 3 minutes at most should be spent in planning each essay out.
  
7. If you have been writing an essay for a few minutes and you suddenly realise that you have misread the question and cannot really answer it at length, as a last resort abandon it and choose another one. If you have been working on the essay for some time, you may be better to continue it and include as many relevant points as you can.

8. As said earlier, do not exceed the suggested allocation of time for each question. However,
- a) If you do find yourself running out of time on the final question, it is better in the last 5 minutes or so to get down as many points as possible in bullet point or note form than to carry on in full sentences (this does not apply in creative writing essays)
  - b) If you finish early, do not waste time- reread what you have written
    - i) to spot and correct any errors in spelling, phrasing, punctuation etc
    - ii) to see if there is anything you could add to your existing answers, whether by inserting it or tagging it onto the end of your original answer by means of an asterisk.
9. Remember: make sure your handwriting is legible- you may miss out on marks if the examiner cannot read what you have written.
10. Remember: it is easier said than done, but DON'T PANIC! Do not get rushed into answering or lose concentration by watching other people scribbling away straight away or asking for lots of extra paper- they may be writing rubbish! Keep calm and concentrate on your paper.

#### Additional Tips

11. Remember: you do not want any sources of worry or distraction when you are doing an exam, so:
- a) Make sure you have brought with you the necessary writing equipment- at least 2 pens with refills/ cartridges, ink erasers, ruler, pencil.
  - b) Make sure you have a watch- but also make sure it is telling the same time as the clock in the exam room!
  - c) Get to school in good time for the exam- you do not want to be making a last minute dash and arriving late or in a panic.
  - d) Make sure you have been to the toilet before the exam- nerves play funny tricks on you and you do not want to have to do the exam going blue in the face or lose time by having to leave the exam room.
  - e) Listen carefully to any instructions given in the exam room by the exam invigilators.