

Assessment

The nature of the task

At HL, students are required to write a 1,200 –1,500 word formal essay which develops a particular line of inquiry of their own choice in connection with a non-literary body of work or a literary work studied during the course.

The HL essay offers students an opportunity to develop as independent, critical and creative readers, thinkers and writers by exploring a literary or language line of inquiry over an extended period of time, refining their ideas by means of a process of planning, drafting and re-drafting. The essay requires students to construct a focused, analytical argument examining the work from a broad literary or linguistic perspective. It also requires them to adhere to the formal framework of an academic essay, using citations and references.

Explanation of the task

The HL essay is based on the exploration the student has carried out in the learner portfolio. During this exploration process, the student will have investigated a number of texts from a variety of different perspectives. In the lead-up to the drafting of the essay, the student must decide which work or body of work to focus on for further investigation, and which line of inquiry to write about in connection with it. In choosing the line of inquiry, the student can consult the course's seven central concepts. Any work or body of work previously studied in class may be selected, with the exception of the texts used for the internal assessment and the works the student plans to use in paper 2.

Selection of work or body of work

Candidates must select the texts and line of inquiry for their essay independently; however, consultation with the teacher is essential in this process. Care must be taken to make sure that the chosen work or body of work is rich enough to support a developed, focused, and analytical argument.

Students and teachers should remember that the assignment is a broad literary or literary investigation rather than a more narrowly-focused stylistic commentary task. Students should not limit the exploration of their chosen line of inquiry to a particular section or part of the work or body of work. They should aim to demonstrate in their essays their knowledge and understanding of the work or body of work as a whole. Referring to the work or body of work more broadly will make it easier for them to demonstrate such a knowledge and understanding.

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In the case of a collection of short stories, poems, song lyrics or any short literary text, candidates should refer to more than one literary text from the work chosen in order to achieve a broad focus. In this instance, it is possible for a student to also explore texts from the author of the work that were not studied in class, provided at least one of the texts was covered in class.

In the case of short non-literary texts, candidates should refer to more than one non-literary text from the same body of work by the same authorship, for example the same creative advertising agency, cartoonist, photographer or social media user. In this instance, at least one of the texts must be studied in class. If using non-literary texts in translation, these must be professional and published translations of the text.

Candidates must explicitly state, at the beginning of the essay:

- **The line of inquiry**, which may be expressed as a question.
- **The work or body of work focused upon**. This must be identified in terms of text type and author or creator, for example, “Short stories, Katherine Mansfield” or “Photographs, Vivian Maier”. When the work or body of work consists of only one extended text, the title must be provided, for example, “Graphic novel, Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*”.

Determining the line of inquiry

The chosen line of inquiry should enable a broad literary or linguistic focus for the essay. In achieving this, the course’s seven central concepts may be a helpful starting point for students in generating or determining a line of inquiry for the essay. While students do not have to trace their essay back to one of the seven concepts and the assessment criteria do not require it, working with one of the seven concepts will allow students to begin thinking about their line of inquiry as they refine their ideas and arguments. The seven concepts are briefly discussed here in relation to the assignment. The TSM has more specific examples for further guidance.

Identity

The student might be interested in an aspect of the representation of identity of a particular character or group of characters in the text, or on the way in which the text relates to the identity of the writer.

Culture

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The student might be interested in an aspect of the representation of the culture of a particular place, institution or group of people, or on the way in which the text itself relates to a particular culture.

Creativity

The student might be interested in an aspect of the representation of individual or collective creativity, or lack of creativity, within the text, or on the way in which the text represents the creativity of the writer.

Communication

The student might be interested in an aspect of the representation of acts of communication, or failures in communication, in the text, or on the way in which the text itself represents an act of communication.

Transformation

The student might be interested in an aspect of the representation of transformation or transformative acts in the text, or on the way in which the text itself is a transformative act either of other texts through intertextual reference to them or of reality by means of a transformative effect on the reader's identity, relationships, goals, values, and beliefs.

Perspective

The student might be interested in an aspect of the representation of a particular perspective or perspectives within the text, or on the way in which the text represents the writer's perspective.

Representation

The student might be interested in an aspect of the way in which the text represents different themes, attitudes and concepts, or in the extent to which language and literature can actually represent reality.

For examples of how the line of inquiry can be generated from the central concepts and for examples of possible approaches to the exploration of a line of inquiry, please consult the TSM.

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The learner portfolio and the higher level essay

The learner portfolio is **not** specifically assessed but it is an important tool in helping students prepare for formal assessment. It provides a platform for students to develop independent thinking when studying texts, reflecting on the ways their texts and responses explore cultural values, identities, relationships, and issues across a variety of topics.

In relation to the preparation of the HL essay, the learner portfolio provides an opportunity for students to:

- reflect on the ways in which each text they read relates to the seven central concepts of the course
- keep an ongoing record of themes and issues they find interesting in relation to each of the texts they read
- explore how key passages in the texts they have studied are significant in relation to those themes and issues
- trace the evolution of their thinking and planning in connection with their chosen line of inquiry
- record references for, and ideas and quotations from, secondary sources they might want to mention in their essay
- reflect on the challenges that the HL essay poses for them as individual learners.

Guidance and authenticity

Teachers are expected to guide students throughout the HL essay; from choice of line of inquiry to submission of the essay, monitoring and advising them on the process, giving feedback on plans, and helping them to stay on task by setting timelines and stages for the essay's development. Help, guidance and support at the beginning of this process cannot be emphasised enough.

At the same time, the student must have autonomy throughout; teachers should not assign works or lines of inquiry, but should give advice on the appropriateness of ideas, question students to clarify them and make suggestions for avenues which could be explored or ways in which they might adjust their approach.

Teachers are expected to ensure that essays are students' own work and address any academic honesty issues arising before submission of the assessment. It is the teachers' responsibility to make

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sure that all students understand the importance of academic honesty, in particular in relation to the authenticity of their work and the need to acknowledge other people's ideas. Teachers must ensure students understand that the essay they submit for this externally assessed component must be entirely their own work.

While teachers should give regular feedback on students' work, they should not edit or correct their work directly. As students draw close to the end of the writing process, teachers are allowed to give advice to students on a first complete draft in terms of suggestions as regards the way the work could be improved. This could be done by annotating the draft through comments on the margin. These comments could consist in questions or prompts for further reflection and improvement. Under no circumstances can a teacher edit or rewrite the draft. The next version handed to the teacher after the first draft must be the final one.

Students should make detailed references to their primary source, using such references to support their broader argument about the text. The use of secondary sources is not mandatory. Any sources used must be appropriately cited. Essays must be students' own work, adhering consistently to the IB policy on academic honesty.

For further guidelines about the HL essay and the role of the teacher in it, please consult the TSM.

External assessment criteria—HL

Assessment criteria are used to assess students for all assessment tasks. The assessment criteria are published in this guide. The assessment criteria are the same at SL and HL for all shared components.

The following is an overview of the external assessment criteria at HL.

Paper 1: Guided textual analysis

There are four assessment criteria at HL which will be applied separately to each answer.

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Criterion A	Understanding and interpretation	5 marks
Criterion B	Analysis and evaluation	5 marks
Criterion C	Focus and organisation	5 marks
Criterion D	Language	5 marks
Total		20 marks

Criterion A: Understanding and interpretation

- How well does the candidate demonstrate an understanding of the text and draw reasoned conclusions from implications in it?
- How well are ideas supported by references to the text?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	<p>The response demonstrates little understanding of the literal meaning of the text.</p> <p>References to the text are infrequent or are rarely appropriate.</p>
2	<p>The response demonstrates some understanding of the literal meaning of the text.</p> <p>References to the text are at times appropriate.</p>
3	<p>The response demonstrates an understanding of the literal meaning of the text. There is a satisfactory interpretation of some implications of the text.</p> <p>References to the text are generally relevant and mostly support the candidate's ideas.</p>
4	<p>The response demonstrates a thorough understanding of the literal meaning of the text. There is a convincing interpretation of many implications of the text.</p> <p>References to the text are relevant and support the candidate's ideas.</p>
5	The response demonstrates a thorough and perceptive understanding of the literal meaning of the text. There is a convincing and insightful

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interpretation of larger implications and subtleties of the text.

References to the text are well-chosen and effectively support the candidate's ideas.

Criterion B: Analysis and evaluation

- To what extent does the candidate analyse and evaluate how textual features and/or authorial choices shape meaning?

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Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	The response is descriptive and/or demonstrates little relevant analysis of textual features and/or authorial choices.
2	The response demonstrates some appropriate analysis of textual features and/or authorial choices, but is reliant on description.
3	The response demonstrates a generally appropriate analysis of textual features and/or authorial choices.
4	The response demonstrates an appropriate and at times insightful analysis of textual features and/or authorial choices. There is a good evaluation of how such features and/or choices shape meaning.
5	The response demonstrates an insightful and convincing analysis of textual features and/or authorial choices. There is a very good evaluation of how such features and/or choices shape meaning.

Criterion C: Focus and organization

- How well organized, coherent and focused is the presentation of ideas?

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Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	Little organization is apparent in the presentation of ideas. No discernible focus is apparent in the response.
2	Some organization is apparent in the presentation of ideas. There is little focus in the response.
3	The presentation of ideas is adequately organized in a generally coherent manner. There is some focus in the response.
4	The presentation of ideas is well organized and mostly coherent. The response is adequately focused.
5	The presentation of ideas is effectively organized and coherent. The response is well focused.

Criterion D: Language

- How clear, varied and accurate is the language?
- How appropriate is the choice of register and style? (“Register” refers, in this context, to the candidate’s use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the analysis).

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Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	Language is rarely clear and appropriate; there are many errors in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction and little sense of register and style.
2	Language is sometimes clear and carefully chosen; grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction are fairly accurate, although errors and inconsistencies are apparent; the register and style are to some extent appropriate to the task.
3	Language is clear and carefully chosen with an adequate degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction despite some lapses; register and style are mostly appropriate to the task.
4	Language is clear and carefully chosen, with a good degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are consistently appropriate to the task.
5	Language is very clear, effective, carefully chosen and precise, with a high degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are effective and appropriate to the task.

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Paper 2: Comparative essay

There are four assessment criteria at HL.

Criterion A	Knowledge, understanding and interpretation	10 marks
Criterion B	Analysis and evaluation	10 marks
Criterion C	Focus and organisation	5 marks
Criterion D	Language	5 marks
Total		30 marks

Criterion A: Knowledge, understanding and interpretation

- How much knowledge and understanding does the candidate demonstrate of the works?
- To what extent does the candidate make use of knowledge and understanding of the works to draw conclusions about their similarities and differences in relation to the question?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	<p>There is little knowledge and understanding of the works in relation to the question answered.</p> <p>There is little meaningful comparison and contrast of the works used in relation to the question.</p>
3–4	<p>There is some knowledge and understanding of the works in relation to the question answered.</p> <p>There is a superficial attempt to compare and contrast the works used in relation to the question.</p>
5–6	<p>There is satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the works and an interpretation of their implications in relation to the question answered.</p> <p>The essay offers a satisfactory interpretation of the similarities and differences between the works used in relation to the question.</p>
7–8	<p>There is good knowledge and understanding of the works and a sustained interpretation of their implications in relation to the question answered.</p> <p>The essay offers a convincing interpretation of the similarities and differences between the works used in relation to the question.</p>

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9–10	<p>There is perceptive knowledge and understanding of the works and a persuasive interpretation of their implications in relation to the question answered.</p> <p>The essay offers an insightful interpretation of the similarities and differences between the works used in relation to the question.</p>
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Criterion B: Analysis and evaluation

- To what extent does the candidate analyse and evaluate how the choices of language, technique and style, and/or broader authorial choices, shape meaning?
- How effectively does the candidate use analysis and evaluation skills to compare and contrast both works?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The essay is descriptive and/or demonstrates little relevant analysis of textual features and/or the broader authorial choices.
3–4	<p>The essay demonstrates some appropriate analysis of textual features and/or broader authorial choices, but is reliant on description.</p> <p>There is a superficial comparison and contrast of the authors' choices in the works selected.</p>
5–6	<p>The essay demonstrates a generally appropriate analysis of textual features and/or broader authorial choices.</p> <p>There is an adequate comparison and contrast of the authors' choices in the works selected.</p>
7–8	<p>The essay demonstrates an appropriate and at times insightful analysis of textual features and/or broader authorial choices. There is a good evaluation of how such features and/or choices shape meaning.</p> <p>There is a good comparison and contrast of the authors' choices in the works selected.</p>
9–10	The essay demonstrates a consistently insightful and convincing analysis of textual features and/or broader authorial choices. There is a very

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good evaluation of how such features and/or choices contribute to meaning.

There is a very good comparison and contrast of the authors' choices in the works selected.

Criterion C: Focus and organization

- How well structured, balanced and focused is the presentation of ideas?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	The essay rarely focuses on the task. There are few connections between ideas.
2	The essay only sometimes focuses on the task, and treatment of the works may be unbalanced. There are some connections between ideas, but these are not always coherent.
3	The essay maintains a focus on the task, despite some lapses; treatment of the works is mostly balanced. The development of ideas is mostly logical; ideas are generally connected in a cohesive manner.
4	The essay maintains a mostly clear and sustained focus on the task; treatment of the works is balanced. The development of ideas is logical; ideas are cohesively connected.
5	The essay maintains a clear and sustained focus on the task; treatment of the works is well-balanced. The development of ideas is logical and convincing; ideas are connected in a cogent manner.

Criterion D: Language

- How clear, varied and accurate is the language?

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- How appropriate is the choice of register and style? (“Register” refers, in this context, to the candidate’s use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the essay).

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Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	Language is rarely clear and appropriate; there are many errors in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction and little sense of register and style.
2	Language is sometimes clear and carefully chosen; grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction are fairly accurate, although errors and inconsistencies are apparent; the register and style are to some extent appropriate to the task.
3	Language is clear and carefully chosen with an adequate degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction despite some lapses; register and style are mostly appropriate to the task.
4	Language is clear and carefully chosen, with a good degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are consistently appropriate to the task.
5	Language is very clear, effective, carefully chosen and precise, with a high degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are effective and appropriate to the task.

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Higher level essay

There are four assessment criteria at HL.

Criterion A	Knowledge, understanding and interpretation	5 marks
Criterion B	Analysis and evaluation	5 marks
Criterion C	Focus, organisation and development	5 marks
Criterion D	Language	5 marks
Total		20 marks

Criterion A: Knowledge, understanding and interpretation

- How well does the candidate demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the work or body of work chosen?
- To what extent does the candidate make use of knowledge and understanding of the work or body of work to draw conclusions in relation to the chosen line of inquiry?
- How well are ideas supported by references to the work or body of work in relation to the chosen line of inquiry?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	<p>There is little knowledge and understanding of the work or body of work shown through the essay in relation to the line of inquiry chosen.</p> <p>References to the work or body of work are infrequent or are rarely appropriate in relation to the chosen line of inquiry.</p>
2	<p>There is some knowledge and understanding of the work or body of work shown through the essay in relation to the line of inquiry chosen.</p> <p>References to the work or body of work are at times appropriate in relation to the chosen line of inquiry.</p>
3	<p>There is satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the work or body of work shown through the essay and an interpretation of its implications in relation to the line of inquiry chosen.</p> <p>References to the work or body of work are generally relevant and mostly support the candidate's ideas in relation to the chosen line of inquiry.</p>
4	There is good knowledge and understanding of the work or body of work shown through the essay and a sustained interpretation of its

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	<p>implications in relation to the line of inquiry chosen.</p> <p>References to the work or body of work are relevant and support the candidate's ideas in relation to the chosen line of inquiry.</p>
5	<p>There is excellent knowledge and understanding of the work or body of work shown through the essay and a persuasive interpretation of their implications in relation to the chosen line of inquiry.</p> <p>References to the work or body of work are well-chosen and effectively support the candidate's ideas in relation to the chosen line of inquiry.</p>

Criterion B: Analysis and evaluation

- To what extent does the candidate analyse and evaluate how the choices of language, technique and style, and broader authorial choices shape meaning in relation to the chosen line of inquiry?

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Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	The essay is descriptive and/or demonstrates little relevant analysis of textual features and the author's broader choices in relation to the chosen line of inquiry.
2	The essay demonstrates some appropriate analysis of textual features and the author's broader choices in relation to the chosen line of inquiry, but is reliant on description.
3	The essay demonstrates a generally appropriate analysis and evaluation of textual features and the author's broader choices in relation to the chosen line of inquiry.
4	The essay demonstrates an appropriate and at times insightful analysis and evaluation of textual features and the author's broader choices in relation to the chosen line of inquiry.
5	The essay demonstrates a consistently insightful and convincing analysis and evaluation of textual features and the author's broader choices in relation to the chosen line of inquiry.

Criterion C: Focus, organization and development

- How well organized, focused and developed is the presentation of ideas in the essay?
- How well are examples integrated into the essay?

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Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	<p>Little organization is present. No discernible line of inquiry is apparent in the essay.</p> <p>Supporting examples are not integrated into the structure of the sentences and paragraphs.</p>
2	<p>Some organization is apparent. There is little development of a line of inquiry.</p> <p>Supporting examples are rarely integrated into the structure of the sentences and paragraphs.</p>
3	<p>The essay is adequately organized in a generally cohesive manner. There is some development of the line of inquiry.</p> <p>Supporting examples are sometimes integrated into the structure of the sentences and paragraphs.</p>
4	<p>The essay is well organized and mostly cohesive. The line of inquiry is adequately developed.</p> <p>Supporting examples are mostly well integrated into the structure of the sentences and paragraphs.</p>
5	<p>The essay is effectively organized and cohesive. The line of inquiry is well developed.</p> <p>Supporting examples are well integrated into the structure of the sentences and paragraphs.</p>

Criterion D: Language

- How clear, varied and accurate is the language?
- How appropriate is the choice of register and style? (“Register” refers, in this context, to the candidate’s use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the HL essay).

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Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	Language is rarely clear and appropriate; there are many errors in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction and little sense of register and style.
2	Language is sometimes clear and carefully chosen; grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction are fairly accurate, although errors and inconsistencies are apparent; the register and style are to some extent appropriate to the task.
3	Language is clear and carefully chosen with an adequate degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction despite some lapses; register and style are mostly appropriate to the task.
4	Language is clear and carefully chosen, with a good degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are consistently appropriate to the task.
5	Language is very clear, effective, carefully chosen and precise, with a high degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are effective and appropriate to the task.