Your ability to read & understand texts is being tested.

Above all else remember this: answer the question, the whole question and nothing but the question! Well actually, not quite – you do need some depth in your answer. This involves choosing relevant info, supporting with quotes, interpreting what is implied/suggested and evaluating it (Questions such as ‘has the writer succeeded in convincing you?’…. ‘what impact do these images make on you?’…’would you like to have shared this journey with character X?’…).

You must prove to the examiner that you can:

**Write well** – your answer needs to showcase an impressive vocabulary, to flow naturally from point to point and to offer an in-depth analysis of the text.

Pick out **relevant information**

**Rephrase** it in your own words (this shows you understand the info)

Use **quotes** (keep them relatively short) to support the points you make. Never begin with a quote – this is the writing equivalent of putting the cart before the horse and it will lose you marks. Make your point/statement FIRST, then support it with a quote.

**Interpret** texts – understand not just the specific points they make but also the view of the world being offered. This means you can see the pieces of the puzzle AND how they join together into a bigger picture or view of the world. Ask yourself if the writer is biased in any way.

**Depending on the question you may be asked to:**

Figure out the **message** of the text & the point(s) the writer wishes to make.

Offer your own **opinion** – if asked – but stick closely to discussing what’s in the text.

Comment on the **style of writing** - informative, persuasive, argumentative, descriptive. You must be able to identify techniques but MORE IMPORTANTLY you must comment on their effectiveness. Ask yourself ‘why did the writer use this style? what effect does she want this technique to have on me, the reader?’

Discuss the [**visual element**](http://leavingcertenglish.net/2011/04/visual-texts/) of the text – photo(s), book cover(s), an ad or painting.

ADVICE: Time is tight – you have only 45 minutes so you must focus.

1. Read the **questions** first, slowly and carefully. Underline important words.
2. **Rewrite the Q** in simpler language if you’re not sure what you’re being asked.
3. Read the **passage**. Underline/highlight anything you think you might use in your answers and number it (Q1 / Q2 / Q3).
4. Pay attention to **how many marks** each Q is worth – 10 marks = ½ to ¾ pg / 15 marks = ¾ to 1pg / 20 marks = 1 to 1¼pgs
5. **Don’t get stuck** making 1 point over and over – make 1 point for every 5 marks available, then add one! So 10 marks = 3 points 15 marks = 4-5points and 20 marks = 5-6 points
6. Stick closely to answering the question asked. Some questions have two parts – don’t leave out half of the Q in your answer through carelessness. Avoid including material which is irrelevant to this question.
7. Don’t simply summarise the text (unless specifically asked to) – try to figure out the overall message. You may be asked if you agree/disagree with the views expressed.
8. When quoting directly from the text USE QUOTATION MARKS. Keep quotes relatively short and only use relevant ones.
9. Be organised in your approach – make a point (in your own words), back it up with evidence from the text, then move on. Make a new point, back it up, then move on etc… However, make sure your answer flows by using phrases such as ‘also’ ‘furthermore’ ‘nonetheless’ ‘on the other hand’ ‘clearly’. Don’t use the same phrase twice.
10. Don’t wander off on a tangent, waffling on about something that happened to you in your life. This is generally completely irrelevant to proving that you can read, interpret and offer an opinion on a piece of writing.
11. Don’t spend too long on this section – you can leave space and come back to it at the end if you have time.

One very common error made my students is that they move on to Q2 but keep answering Q1. This happens a lot because students are so focused on getting the comprehension done on time. The info from Q1 is still fresh in their minds so they end up repeating themselves in the next Q. One way to avoid this is to write out the Q at the top of the page to force your brain to move on. Remember the questions are completely different so your answers should be too.

If you find yourself repeating info from a previous question

* STOP.
* Read the Q again.
* Refocus.

It’s unlikely that you are answering the Q properly if you find yourself repeating the same points in different answers.