

# *Dos and don'ts of IOC*

## **A Commentary on the repeated literary features and ideas as they specifically emerge in that extract**

- theme
- character
- details and imagery
- style and tone
- interplay of elements
- interpretation

## **IOC Tips**

### **Pitfalls**

1. No idea of context—before or after extract
2. Discussions of entire text, not extract
3. Generalisations about author's work or life inessential to extract
4. No focusing idea or organisation
5. Line-by-line translation, not analysis
6. Lack of attention to literary features—focus only on plot, characters, and ideas
7. Little attention to language—no concept of tone or style
8. Little connection made between features, ideas and extract's significance
9. Equating the author with the extract's speaker

## **Context--it's more than plot**

- What happens before/after the extract
- Character development or revelation
- Thematic development
- Interplay of work's imagery with extract's: context's imagery sets up, is significant to, or is made significant by extract;
- Change in tone;
- If poetry, compare themes, imagery, tone in poet's other poems.

## **The Extract--Interpretation**

- Establish a focus/thesis and a roadmap to organize and synthesize your observations.
- Thesis should link ideas with literary features.
- Examine the significance of the extract as a whole.
- Annotate with highlighters and symbols to force you to make these connections
- Beware of a line-by-line analysis without carefully developing a thesis. It's easy to forget to connect the pieces to the whole in a meaningful way— i.e., not in a lame conclusion.

- Identify contrasts, shifts, developments, and velocities (of character, atmosphere, language, imagery, theme) to help shape your commentary.
- Listen to the passage in your head to hear and feel the texture and pace of the language. Then connect with other features and ideas.
- Always discuss the effect of the literary features.
- Analyse how literary features contribute to the overall effect of the extract.
- Use **transitions** to help you link observations and themes with devices and structural features.

### Big Terms and Features:

theme, diction, tone, irony, imagery, sound, pace, syntax, sentence structure, metaphor, symbol, foreshadowing, conflict, point of view, characterization, character development, character flaw, narrative structure, new information, the first or last time, a discernible pattern, echoes, allusions. **Able commentaries synthesize these—they're concerned with the overall effect of the devices and features of the extract and extract's significance to larger work or context.**

If a **DRAMA**, you **MUST** explore the audience's experience.

If **POETRY**, don't neglect **TONE**; it's often fundamental and essential. How it's created, along with its specific and broader importance to the poem and its poetic context.

### Moderator's Comments

- "Too many candidates have basic difficulties in recalling the plot in detail."
- "Competent candidates proceed very quickly to **contextualize by themes and issues.**"—not just the plot
- "Coherent, individual interpretation based on key points and lines."
- "Identifying an overall conception or artistic purpose."
- Clear purpose in developing and connecting points."
- Apply the principles of literary criticism more thoroughly."
- Avoid the current reductive tendency: 'Basically she is saying that...'"
- Too many candidates still fail to recognize the artistry of their passage. Clear identification of techniques and comments in their effects remain a disappointingly small time-proportion..."
- Dramatic and poetic variations of tone, attitude, speed and so on need to be located and reasons given for them."
- (Never) fail to distinguish author from narrator."
- Analysis of the rhythms, the uses of grammar, and the syntactical organisation is needed to show how meanings and emotions have been artistically created."