

Training for exams – How to deal with written assignments

by Rita Reinheimer-Wolf



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Die Einheit ist eine Materialsammlung für Lehrkräfte, die ihre Lernenden explizit auf Klausuren in der Oberstufe vorbereiten wollen. Die Anforderungsbereiche I, II und III werden nacheinander mit zielgerichteten Anleitungen, Hilfen und Aufgaben gründlich erarbeitet. Der Abschluss dieser Einheit ist eine Übungsklausur, in der die Schülerinnen und Schüler ihren Kompetenzerwerb demonstrieren können.

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Competences and skills:

The unit contains texts and tasks that can be classified as **level B2/C1** (*Europäischer Referenzrahmen*). By working with the materials, students enhance their general **reading skills**. Furthermore, they practice their competences in explaining and analysing **texts** when working closely with the extracts and materials. Students' **speaking and presentation skills** are improved by realising short talks and presentations in small groups or in front of the class. The great majority of tasks focuses on the **writing competence** of the students including all its dimensions.

Overview:

List of abbreviations:

A Analysis**D** Discussion/debate**S** Summary**C** Comment**G** Group work**T** Working with a text**CT** Creative Task**RC** Reading comprehension**W** Writing

Topic	Material	Methods/Skills
1: Language awareness	M1–M2	D, G, W
2: Comprehension in written assignments	M3–M5	C, G, RC, S, T
3: Analysis in written assignments	M6–M12	A, CT, D, G, RC, T, W
4: Comment/Discussion in written assignments	M13–M15	D, RC, W
5: Creative tasks in written assignments	M16–M18	CT, RC, W
6: The final test – A standard written assignment	M19–M20	A, C, CT, RC, W

Topic 1: Language awareness

Worksheet – Written assignments: A questionnaire

M1

1. Read the questionnaire. Respond to the tasks and tick the correct responses.
2. **Think-Pair-Share:** Get together with a classmate and discuss your responses to the questionnaire. Then, collect your challenges of written assignments with the entire class. Visualise your main challenges and discuss measures to be taken to improve the different skills.

1. What is a written assignment? Give a definition.
2. What do you consider the greatest challenge in a written assignment? Tick one or more aspects.
 - a) time management
 - b) the tasks
 - c) the texts/materials
 - d) the English language presented
 - e) your nervousness
 - f) structuring your texts
 - g) other problems
3. Explain your main problem(s) in written assignments in a few sentences.
4. Name the strategies that you apply when writing an assignment (e.g., jotting down your main ideas before starting to write).
5. How do you usually prepare a written assignment? What applies to you?
 - a) I just read my notes again.
 - b) I learn the topic-related vocabulary.
 - c) I write some texts with the help of self-study materials.
 - d) I read my former written assignments once again.
 - e) I look up some difficult grammar rules.
 - f) I don't prepare anything.

M2 Worksheet – Working with operative verbs for written tasks

1. Match the terms with the definitions/explanations in the grid.
2. Choose the three most demanding tasks from the grid and explain why they are so difficult for you.
3. Choose six terms from the grid and formulate complete tasks using the terms. Recall tasks from former written assignments.

terms	definitions/explanations
1. illustrate	a) give a concise account of the main points
2. assess, evaluate	b) state clearly your opinions/views on a topic and support your views with evidence/arguments/reference to the text(s)
3. outline	c) form an opinion after carefully considering a topic/question and presenting advantages and disadvantages
4. justify	d) use examples to explain or make clear
5. point out	e) describe and explain in detail certain aspects and/or features of a text
6. analyse/examine	f) produce a text with specific features
7. summarise	g) (re-)structure and write down
8. evaluate	h) analyse the typical features of so., then describe, explain and interpret the way in which the character(s) is/are presented
9. comment/discuss	i) give/present an accurate/a detailed account of sth./so.
10. present	j) in a balanced way, consider points for and against sth. and come to a well-founded conclusion
11. characterise	k) present reasons for positions, decisions, or conclusions
12. write (+text type)	l) give the main features, structure, or general principles of sth. (no line references, no quotations)
13. describe	m) find and explain certain aspects

Worksheet – Writing a summary

M5

Working with the text

1. Read the text and mark the essential facts about Shanaz' life.
2. Paraphrase the following sentences from the extract:
 - a) "The final decision about her education was not settled in the intimacy of a family chat, but by a group of elders, all men." (ll. 8/9)

b) "[...] Shanaz was keen to go on to university." (ll. 10/11)

c) "Ali Shezad [...] was [...] light years behind her in education, aspiration and outlook." (ll. 26–28)

d) "She is a living embodiment of all the contradictions that swirl around the lives of so many immigrants." (ll. 29–31)

e) "Within days of getting to Pakistan, she fell ill, losing all her hair and dropping down to five stone in weight." " (ll. 35/36)

3. Sum up the text. Apply the guidelines for summary writing and use the language support.
4. Exchange your summary with a classmate and use the guidelines to give peer feedback on your classmate's summary.
5. With the entire class, jot down the weak points in the summaries. Then, reflect on possible strategies to do something about these weak points.
6. Group work: get together in groups of four and find possible suitable tasks for a written assignment dealing with the text. Give reasons for your decisions.
7. As a second step, write down tasks that you do not consider suitable in connection with the text. Justify your decisions.

Going beyond the text

8. Think-Pair-Share: describe the function of summary writing in the context of dealing with (complex) texts.

M7 Language support for analysing prose



Analysing stylistic devices/choice of words/atmosphere	<p>The author makes use of/uses ... to create a/an ... atmosphere</p> <p>The use of short forms and colloquial language in direct speech suggests that ...</p> <p>The simple, short sentences in this passage quicken the pace of the action in order to ...</p> <p>The author uses metaphorical language to .../employs stylistic devices to ...</p> <p>The author's use of stylistic devices enhances the message of the text.</p> <p>The stylistic device/metaphor/... supports the message ...</p>
Analysing characters	<p>X is a flat/round character; a protagonist; an antagonist; a minor character; an antihero</p> <p>X stands in contrast to Y/forms a contrast to Y</p> <p>X is characterised by his dry humour/his sober-minded attitude ...</p> <p>X appears in a new light when ...</p> <p>X's behaviour suggests that ...</p> <p>X's reaction makes the reader understand that ...</p>
Analysing narrative perspectives	<p>The passage is presented from an omniscient/a limited point of view.</p> <p>The story is told as witnessed by the main character/a minor participant in the action.</p> <p>The events are portrayed from the point of view of a single character.</p> <p>The narrator tells the story from a remote standpoint/ knows the meaning of the events/gives a distorted view of the events.</p>