CfE

HIGHER ENGLISH

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BrightRED Study Guide

CfE HIGHER

ENGLISH

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NEW EDITION

INTRODUCTION

HOW THIS STUDY GUIDE WILL HELP YOU IN CfE HIGHER ENGLISH

The very fact that you're reading this suggests you are someone who takes exam success seriously.

So do we!

That's why this Guide has been carefully researched and organised to bring you all the help you might need: help with simply-worded explanations of challenging concepts; help with practising how to answer exam-type questions; help with writing convincing essays of all kinds; help with listening and talking for the Units. In short, it has everything you will need to get the exam grade you are targeting.

Go through the Contents page, and you'll find there's a chapter on each of the key sections of the course. Each one will explain the guiding principles for success and then show you how to implement them in your reading, writing, listening and talking assessments.

It's a Guide with one priority: your success. Here's how it can help you achieve that.

READING FOR UNDERSTANDING, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

This section plays a major role in the course's final exam. So being well-versed in what to expect is vital for exam success. We'll show you how to spot examiners' expectations from the wording of the questions, what types of question to expect and, most important of all, how to approach answering them in a way that will bring you top marks. You'll find our advice explained in reader-friendly language with an answers section to guide your responses.

THE CRITICAL ESSAY

Success in critical essay writing starts long before you launch into your essay. You need to know how to read exam questions and interpret their implications. You also need to know how to plan your answer, how to structure your introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion, how to deal with quotations and how to maintain a clear flow in your essay's line of argument. All this is vital if you are to translate your reading of the text into examination success. Check out the 'Critical Essay Writing' section on the Contents page, where all the key information is broken down into easy-to-follow subsections.

THE PORTFOLIO

These are going to be two of the most important essays you have ever written. That means that in essays of up to 1300 words you have to demonstrate writing skills of the kind that will truly impress examiners. There are plenty of tips for success in this Guide to help you achieve this. These take a variety of forms. In the 'Writing Discursively' section, you'll learn how to structure, argue and persuade convincingly. In the 'Writing Creatively' section, you'll find out how to bring characters alive in a variety of ways, create atmospheric settings and construct credible plot-lines. You'll also need to think carefully about how best to present your ideas in personal and in reflective essays. We'll also talk you through what you need to consider before deciding on any one genre.

SCOTTISH TEXTS

Given that there are no fewer than 14 possible writers to study, no overall Guide can help you with all of them. We'd run out of space to cover other key areas! What we have done here, however, is to choose an author from each of the three genres – drama, prose and poetry – and show you in some detail what is happening in each text. We'll discuss areas such as character, themes and language in ways that will give you a handy model for studying other authors of your own choice. We'll also give you practice in dealing with the kind of questions you are likely to encounter in the exam itself. What's more, the three authors we have chosen – John McGrath, Iain Crichton Smith and Don Paterson – are writers who will give you a real opportunity to demonstrate to examiners that you show some individuality and originality in your choices. Surely no bad thing when you are out to impress!

LISTENING AND TALKING

The reading and writing skills you have been acquiring elsewhere in this Guide will stand you in excellent stead to pass the Analysis and Evaluation and Creation and Production Units and thereby gain the overall course award. In this final section, we will give you practical tips and advice so that you can really stand out as a persuasive performer in the listening and talking outcomes of these Units. You'll also be able to practise on an assessment-type paper to polish your skills for the big day.

FOLLOW THE GUIDE!

So, don't feel daunted by CfE Higher English – just use this Guide. We've even made practical suggestions for some of the more extended and demanding work. And, to make the process of preparation all the easier, we've built in handy 'Don't forget' text boxes where key points are re-formed into nugget-sized reminders of essential facts and information. 'Things to do and think about' text boxes are also featured in every section. These make helpful suggestions about various preparatory exercises and study areas you might consider as you work towards achieving your best possible grade. You **can** do it!

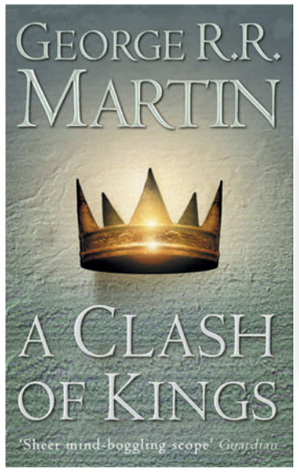
Good luck!

READING FOR UNDERSTANDING, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

SENTENCE STRUCTURE/PUNCTUATION 3

In your exam, the questions in the Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation section will usually be quite broad in their wording, inviting you, for instance, to discuss the writer's language or to analyse how he/she creates certain effects. In your answer sentence structure/punctuation may well be the only one of these items you will discuss as part of your overall answer. But don't forget to check out the possible contribution of imagery, word choice or tone as well.

ACTIVITY: SENTENCE STRUCTURE/PUNCTUATION



We want to give you some practice in answering questions about sentence structure. So, when you read and respond to the following three extracts, concentrate on analysing how the three writers use this technique to create certain effects. But remember that this is a practice test, and that you'll have to analyse **all** the writer's language techniques in the exam – not just sentence structure.

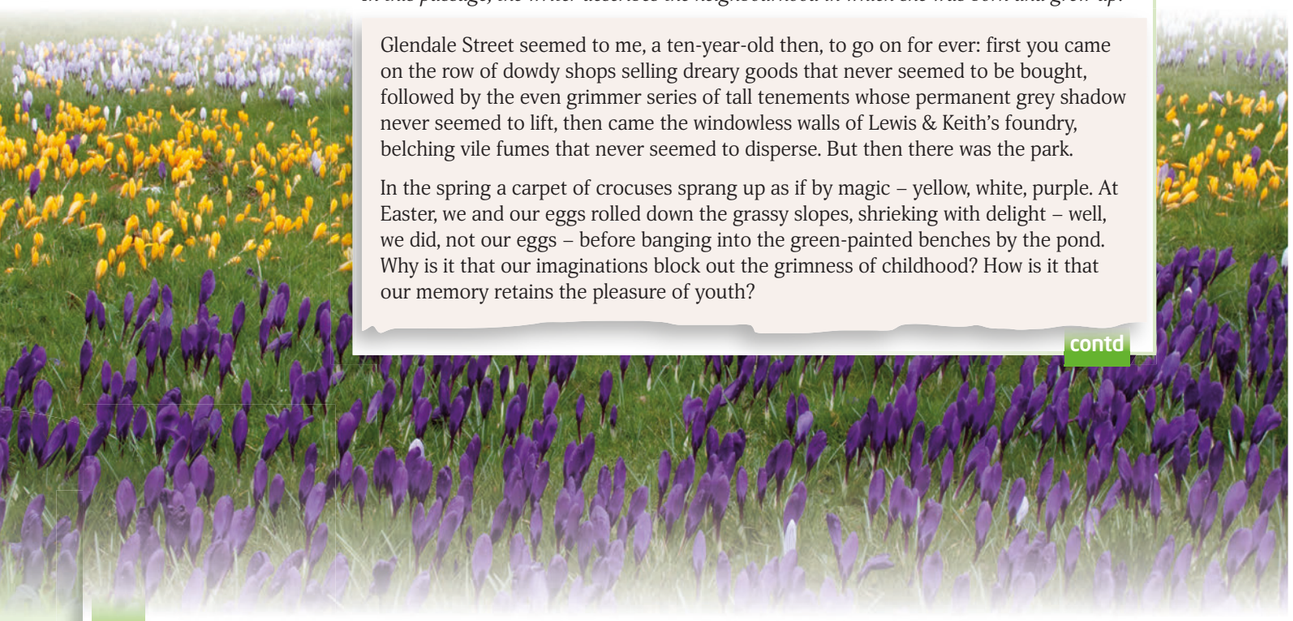
Here, a man of the Night Watch in George R. R. Martin's A Clash of Kings *swears his loyalty oath.*

Night gathers, and now my watch begins. It shall not end until my death. I shall take no wife, hold no lands, father no children. I shall wear no crowns and win no glory. I shall live and die at my post. I am the sword in the darkness. I am the watcher on the walls. I am the fire that burns against the cold, the light that brings the dawn, the horn that wakes the sleepers, the shield that guards the realms of men. I pledge my life and honour to the Night's Watch, for this night and all the nights to come.

(From George R. R. Martin, *A Clash of Kings*, Voyager, 1999)

1 How does the writer's language in this paragraph add impact to the sworn dedication of the men of the Night Watch? **4**

In this passage, the writer describes the neighbourhood in which she was born and grew up.



Glendale Street seemed to me, a ten-year-old then, to go on for ever: first you came on the row of dowdy shops selling dreary goods that never seemed to be bought, followed by the even grimmer series of tall tenements whose permanent grey shadow never seemed to lift, then came the windowless walls of Lewis & Keith's foundry, belching vile fumes that never seemed to disperse. But then there was the park.

In the spring a carpet of crocuses sprang up as if by magic – yellow, white, purple. At Easter, we and our eggs rolled down the grassy slopes, shrieking with delight – well, we did, not our eggs – before banging into the green-painted benches by the pond. Why is it that our imaginations block out the grimness of childhood? How is it that our memory retains the pleasure of youth?

contd

1 In what ways does the writer's language suggest (a) the seemingly endless nature of the street? (b) its unchanging nature? **6**

2 How does the writer's use of language in the first paragraph add significance to the park in her memory? **2**

3 How does the writer's language in paragraph two seek to win our acceptance of her views on our early years? **4**

This passage describes Harry's journey from the sports centre.

There it was again. Harry stopped and listened. That was three times now. Frost glistened like thousands of diamonds on the pavement as he stood there, motionless. His breath drifted up like cigarette smoke in the cold night sky. Tap, tap. Was it footsteps he was hearing? No. It was more like a stick. Yes, a walking stick. But it had been following him from the sports centre on Melrose Road. So why couldn't he see anybody?

'Hey, you! Show yourself!'

No answer. But the tapping stopped.

1 How does the writer's use of language capture the tense nature of the incident? **4**

2 What view of Harry's character are we offered through the writer's use of language as the boy tries to work out the source of the noise? **4**

THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

As we said at the beginning of this section, these are practice questions to help you with what to say about **sentence structure**. The words 'writer's language' in an exam should, of course, alert you to the fact that you are being invited to analyse **other** language techniques as well.

Look at all three extracts again, and this time answer the questions with reference to word choice and imagery.

DON'T FORGET

If you're struggling to identify any striking pieces of imagery or word choice to analyse in your exam paper, look for interesting use of sentence structure and punctuation!

ONLINE TEST

Head to www.brightredbooks.net and take the test on this section.

ONLINE

Learn more about punctuation by reading the guide at www.brightredbooks.net

CRITICAL READING: SCOTTISH LITERATURE

THE FINAL QUESTION: SKILLS REQUIRED

The final question in Section 1 of the Critical Reading paper is the high-value one worth 10 marks. To answer this question, you need to make links to other parts of your text or to other works the author has written, so you need to have in-depth knowledge of that text.

We'll look at the final question for poetry, prose and drama in turn.

ONLINE

For those studying poetry texts, go to the home page of the Scottish Poetry Library at www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk and key in 'Don Paterson', 'Robert Burns', 'Liz Lochhead' or 'Sorley MacLean'. Here you will find full biographical notes, some of the poems listed for study and lots of advice for further reading. You can also ask the staff for more detailed information. This is an invaluable website for CfE Higher English students. Don Paterson and Carol Ann Duffy also have useful websites of their own.

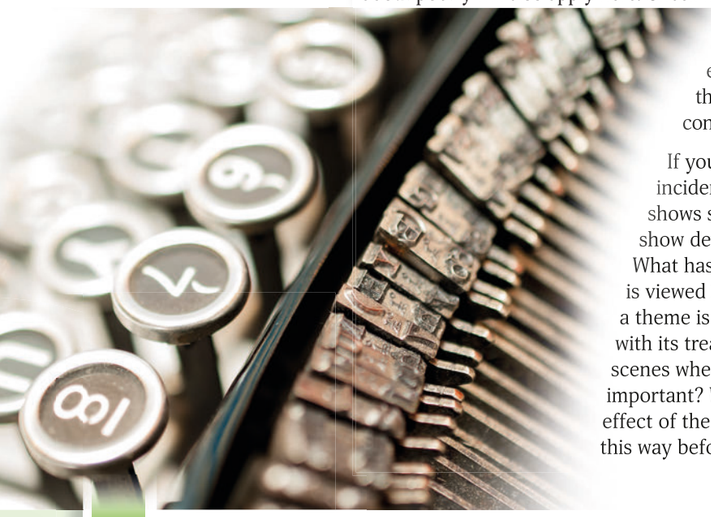
POETRY

Here, the final question will invite you to make connections between ideas and/or language that you have noticed both in this poem and in at least one other poem by the same author. For example, the poet might portray a character in another poem who thinks, reacts or relates to others in the same way as a character in the poem you are studying. Or there could be aspects of relationships that crop up more than once.

In terms of language, does the poet use a recurring style feature such as a conversational tone with enjambment? Is the poem rich in other poetic devices, or is it deliberately matter-of-fact, using everyday language? Does the poet appear in the poem, or is somebody else narrating the poem? Does the poet always write in free verse, or sometimes use a specific form? Is the poem written in Scots or English? You need to be able to make connections at several possible levels between the ideas and language of the poem in the exam paper and at least one other poem you have studied.

PROSE

If you have been reading one of the selections of short stories, then a lot of what we've said about poetry will also apply here. Check if there are certain similar or contrasting ideas, situations or characters in the extract that link to at least one of the other stories of your choice. For example, is there lack of communication between the generations, or scenes in which characters confront or misunderstand each other?



If you are studying a novel, then look for other incidents in the novel where, for example, a character shows similar or contrasting behaviour, or where they show developing understanding or emotional depth. What has caused this change? Perhaps one character is viewed in several ways by others in the novel? Maybe a theme is revisited in a way which parallels or contrasts with its treatment elsewhere in the novel? Are there other scenes where setting or atmosphere seems particularly important? What does setting contribute to the overall effect of the incident on the reader? Has setting been used this way before?

DRAMA

Many of the points about variations in character, theme and setting discussed above also apply to a passage taken from a play.

With a play, however, the action unrolls via dialogue, which needs to be carefully examined for typical speech characteristics. Do some characters have topics to which they regularly return? Do characters typically appear to ask questions, give instructions, sound optimistic or pessimistic, talk about trivia, act violently, need help or say too little or too much? How well do characters listen to each other? Are there moments when this changes? What is the effect of this change on us, the audience?

Are there stage props that take on symbolic meanings in different parts of the play? Does lighting change at any key points? And what is the effect of this? Do stage directions differ here from an earlier episode? Do the costumes of the characters change at any point? What do the changes tell us?

THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

Don't leave revising your knowledge of links until the last minute. Get together regularly with a friend or someone in your class, and look for links between two stories or two poems, or between two characters as they appear at various stages in a novel or play. Note down your ideas and add them to your revision notes.

DON'T FORGET

Having your own copy of a text is always a good idea because you can use it to make notes in the margin about parallels, links, similarities or contrasts. If you also add in page references, it will save you lots of time when you come to revise.

ONLINE TEST

How well have you learned this topic? Take the test at www.brightredbooks.net

WRITING DISCURSIVELY

Here you have a choice between writing an argumentative essay, a persuasive essay or a report. We'll deal with the special skills required for report writing later. Let's look first at argumentative and persuasive essays. What exactly are the differences?

- An argumentative essay is one in which you explore and evaluate opposing viewpoints on a controversial topic in formal and strictly neutral language, calling on objective data before offering any final opinion of your own.
- A persuasive essay is one in which you attempt to win over the reader to your view on a controversial topic. Here, too, there will be researched data to substantiate your viewpoint, but it will not be similarly balanced as in an argumentative essay. Contrary viewpoints may be entertained but only to be dismissed. Here the language will be unashamedly emotive with recourse to various rhetorical devices in its attempts to win reader approval.

ARGUMENTATIVE AND PERSUASIVE: THE SHARED ELEMENT

Each option – argumentative or persuasive – offers a radically different approach to a topic. But they also share elements in common. Before you select either one or the other, let's find out what these are.

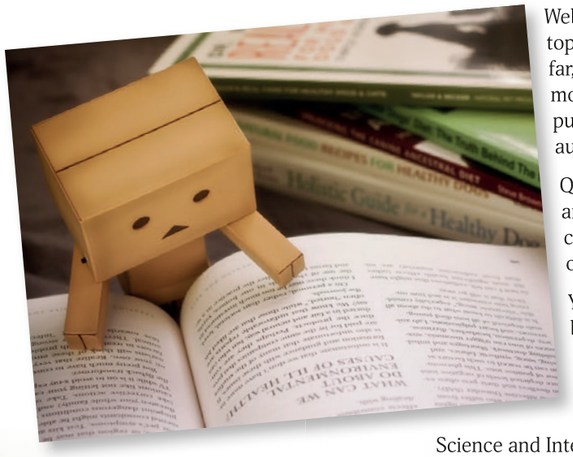
WHY IS THIS PARTICULAR TOPIC ATTENTION-WORTHY?

No matter which approach you choose, your introduction must establish sufficient background information to convince the reader that the topic is sufficiently important and compelling to be worth reading about – particularly if it is not currently in the news.

IS MY RESEARCH THE BEST AVAILABLE?

In both types of essay, you need to acknowledge your sources at the end. So, how well will your list read?

Nutritional 'facts' from the website of a fast-food manufacturer could hardly be taken to be evidence of sound research.



Website information might be useful as a starting point for topics that have only recently touched our consciousness. So far, these might not have been dealt with in book form, but more traditional topics will have been explored in peer-reviewed publications. The latter are usually the most reliable and authoritative sources.

Quality journals and newspapers employ acknowledged experts and pollsters whose accuracy and readability can usually be counted on. These, of course, can be viewed online, mostly free of charge.

You will impress the marker by providing a balance of paper-based and electronic sources.

Alternatively, try www.idebate.org. Click on the 'Debatabase' strap-line at the top of the Home page, and you will find 14 headings such as Education, Health, Politics, Society, Sport, Science and International, each containing dozens of associated debates with well-articulated arguments for and against. Check out the bibliographic references at the end of each contribution to ensure that there is authoritative backing to the points made.

This Point/Counterpoint format makes it particularly helpful for argumentative essays, although its enormous database of facts makes this site equally useful for persuasive writing, too.

contd

AM I SURE OF THE GENRE FEATURES?

Be careful when you set out to write an argumentative essay that you don't slip into personal views along the way – this will destroy any claim you have to objectivity. Similarly, when you are writing a persuasive essay, be careful not to end up simply presenting information, rather than seeking to persuade.

IS MY INFORMATION UP-TO-DATE?

News is available in multiple media forms 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so there is no excuse for outdated information or statistics. Check the publication dates of books, journals and newspapers and the posting dates of websites before you begin to take notes. This is particularly important in fast-moving research areas such as stem-cell or cloning technology.

HAVE I CHECKED FOR PLAGIARISM?

Be warned! When you are taking notes for your research, do not just 'lift' huge tracts of text and use them without acknowledging them. This is theft, and experienced examiners have a sixth sense for detecting it. Often, this 'lifting' is accidental, but you can avoid any problems by using a highlighter to differentiate quotations from your own notes, and recording the author's name and status, place of publication and date of extract. You could also just put the idea straight into your own words, while acknowledging the author's idea.

SOUNDING AUTHORITATIVE

Whether you are taking the argumentative or persuasive route, you need evidence to back your case, just as you do in your critical essays. In the critical essay, evidence takes the form of close reference to the text or a quotation. In the argumentative or persuasive essay, evidence is the backing of what we call authority. It can take several forms:

- Opinion of an acknowledged expert in the field from, for example, a publication, learned journal, academic website or quality newspaper.
- Poll/survey: findings should be recent. In popular-interest topics, you could consider perhaps a straw poll taken by your year group.
- Official or commissioned reports.

Be careful here, however. Do not overwhelm your case with endless facts; you are being assessed on the quality of the case you are making. Too many facts can obscure this. But without authority of some kind, you are attempting to make a case simply out of your own subjective opinions. You need the added weight that authority can bring. Having some form of expert on both sides of an argumentative essay will help, as will the opinion of a respected source in a persuasive one. But do not overuse authority – it is only there to support **your** case.

THINGS TO DO AND THINK ABOUT

For all their differences, argumentative and persuasive essays share characteristics in common:

- **Illustrative examples or anecdotes** to aid readers' understanding
- **Expert opinion** to support or criticise a point of view
- **Analogies** to suggest parallels with other situations to aid understanding
- **Polls or survey results** to demonstrate research-backed evidence
- **Warnings** to indicate ability to follow through implications of findings.

How they each use these shared features is, of course, very different, as we'll find out later.

ONLINE

If your topic reflects current issues and debates, the chances are that published texts might not have caught up with them fully yet. Online quality journals and newspapers can help greatly here. Key in your topic or issue into the search engine, followed by the quality online newspaper of your choice (for example, the *Independent*, the *Guardian*, the *Herald* or the *Scotsman*) to see what is available.

ONLINE

A useful source of often quite short and readable reports is available at www.brightredbooks.net

DON'T FORGET

You will never be penalised for opinions that run counter to those of the examiner. You are being assessed on the strength of your argued case, not on the nature of your beliefs.

DON'T FORGET

You **must** acknowledge your sources at the end of your essay. A good mix of electronic and published sources looks impressive. Find out how to present them on page 113.

ONLINE TEST

Head to www.brightredbooks.net and take the test on this section.

BrightRED Study Guides

CfE HIGHER

ENGLISH

Dr Christopher Nicol

This BrightRED Study Guide is the ultimate companion to your CfE Higher English studies! Written by our trusted author and experienced English teacher, Dr Christopher Nicol, this book is full-colour and packed with clear and accessible information, excellent examples, activities and advice. Inside, you will find:

- **Full of essential course information and fully up-to-date with SQA course changes,** arranged in easily digestible double-page topic spreads.
- **Detailed full-colour** diagrams, illustrations and data boxes to make sure all that study sticks!
- ***Don't forget*** pointers offering advice on the key facts to remember, and on how to avoid common mistakes.
- ***Things to do and think about*** sections encouraging the regular review of key points covered.
- ***Digital Zone* activities and tests** to supercharge your learning efforts online!
- **An index** of key terms to help when revising.

Your future's bright with BrightRED Study Guides!

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