

# LITERATURE

The essence of writing a literary analysis

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**Overview:** Literature in English, offered as a subject in majority of Secondary Institutions in Singapore, is a comprehensive subject, mainly to develop a student's critical thinking, critical analysis, and close reading.

This piece of notes serves as the foundation for literature students to develop their above-mentioned skills and explore imaginable insights, giving light to different aspirations.

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## ***I. Introduction to Structure***

### **A. Structure of Essay Writing**

Essay writing, commonly referred to as an analysis, is the primary form of answer-crafting taught to literary students. Essay writing aims to guide students to craft an invocative argument with little flaws.

#### **Primary Structure**

Point - Stating your thoughts

Evidence - Quoting / Paraphrasing

Explanation - Going into detail, the reasons why the Evidence was selected.

Link - Restating your Point.

Majority of the schools use this structure – an easy way to answer the question, but leaving little space for students to add impactful insights, albeit possible.

#### **Secondary Structure**

Statement - Stating your thoughts

Textual Evidence - Quoting / Paraphrasing

Analysis - Going into detail, using literary devices, to explain one's statement/

Deduction - What one can take away from the literature?

Unique Perspective - As a reader, what was so special about the literature?

The “STAND UP” created by my teacher of the time, Mr Carson Huang, creates a more indepth method of answering the question. With the deduction and unique perspective components, the answer is easily elevated to provide insights, thoughts, emotions, to convey understanding of the literature.

The deduction component allows students to pinpoint what they can take away from the literature, in the form of an inference. (E.g. The tiger's stripes corresponds to the number of times the author has gotten harmed)

The Unique Perspective component allows students to develop their views/thoughts/emotions, putting themselves into the persona of the poem. This component is usually answered with an assumption.

## **Advanced Structure**

Statement - Stating your thoughts

Textual Evidence - Quoting / Paraphrasing

Atmosphere-Tone Analysis - Identifying and making a statement on Tone

Analysis of Evidence - Using literary devices to explain one's statement

Deductive Statement - What one can take away from the literature?

Deductive Assumption - What did you assume from the poem? Was it addressed?

Point-of-view statement - What did you think of the poem was trying to achieve?

Unique Perspective - As a reader, what was so special about the literature?

‘ST2A2D POVUP’ is the method that I adapted from my teacher, allowing me to minimize any flaws in the argument which may cause me to lose marks. It helps me create an answer that fulfills the rubrics of critical thinking and analysis!

Atmosphere-Tone Analysis identifies the tone used by the persona in the text or persona.

## B. Literary Devices

Literary Devices, or Techniques are used in any, and every piece of literature. The difference between their usage is how common or uncommonly it is used.

### The more famous literary devices:

<b>Similies</b>	A figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, used to make a description more emphatic or vivid (e.g. as brave as a lion).
<b>Metaphors</b>	a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable:
<b>Motifs</b>	Occurs when there is a symbol that is repeated throughout a Poem/Novel. Used to put an emphasis on a hidden message.
<b>Juxtaposition</b>	Used to create contrast between two objects/words/actions by comparing them to one another to carry a message.
<b>Alliteration</b>	The occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words – to cause an effect.
<b>Allusion</b>	Used as a figurative speech to refer to someone as another famous person, place or historical event; this is an occurrence which has not happened yet.
<b>Punctuation</b>	A non-verbal method of addressing stops, emotional changes and other actions.
<b>Repetition</b>	Repetition is a literary device that involves intentionally using a word or phrase for effect, two or more times in a speech or written work. It is commonly used to emphasise a point, and create rhythm.
<b>Imagery</b>	Imagery of 5: Olfactory (Smell), Auditory (Sound), Visual (Sight), Tactile (Touch), Gustatory (Taste); used to further describe and add layers to writing.
<b>Diction</b>	The use of words, usually with a deeper meaning, to add on to the theme of the overall poem.

The analysis of literary devices creates depth in one's argument, and provides a foundation to elaborate on how words can impact the general things around them.

## II. Introduction to Poetry

Poetry, in its essence, is condensed emotion expressed by language. Majority of modern day poetry follow the free verse style (*IIB.*) Poetry conveys a poet's feelings through themes, literary devices, and interpretation. Not every interpretation should be identical copies!

### A. Guide to analysing Poems

The first three things to identify for every poem is (STR):

- **Style**
- **Theme**
- **Reason**

There are many different styles of poetry, though many follow a free verse. The more popular styles include:

<b>Free Verse</b>	<p>The free verse style of poetry follows no particular style. It is written loose of any strict format, and is one of the most popular styles of writing.</p> <p>An extract of “<i>Free Verse</i>” by D. F.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>To breathe on a graphic planet, Brimming with numbers and laws; Attracting truths like a magnet, Irritably striving to understand the cause.</i></p> <p>D. F.'s poetry, “Free Verse” has no particular style, it follows no strict rhythmic scheme, and is majorly formed by words. The free verse style emphasises ‘freedom’, ‘lack of restriction’ and ‘ability to do anything’.</p>
<b>Haikus</b>	<p>A haiku is an old Japanese Zen poem, formed by three sentences of 5, 7, 5 syllabuses respectively.</p> <p><i>Matsuo Bashō's “The Old Pond”</i></p> <p><i>An old silent pond A frog jumps into the pond— Splash! Silence again.</i></p>

	The strict poetry form limits the choice of words. Poets are made to choose the language they use carefully to create a deeper meaning. This style emphasises tactical strength.
<b>Sonnets</b>	Made popular by William Shakespeare, the Shakespearean Sonnets are written with the iambic pentameter: five repetitions of up-down tone. It also has strict rhyme scheme.  Sonnets are “song”-esque poetry, often sounding lyrical. This style usually emphasises a melody sung for another.
<b>Terza Rima</b>	Terza Rima, of Dante Alighieri’s The Divine Comedy, is a lyrical poem structure, although not as famous as the above. It follows the rhythmic structure of ABA BCB CDC ... This style usually emphasises a lyrical tone of poetry.

### Poetry Themes

Majority of poetry themes revolve around the daily experiences in life or another’s life. Poetry often revolves around one main theme, though several poets may choose to use more than one theme.



(Appendix A)

### Poetry “Reason”

The effectiveness of poetry is determined by how you put yourself into the shoe of the writer. **How does the writer convey a sense/emotion? How do you react to it?**

### III. Breakdown of rubrics (Appendix B)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates an intelligent grasp of subject matter. Top answers will display freshness of insight.</li> <li>• There is good analysis and evaluation of content and presentation, and evidence of the ability to critically appreciate the text.</li> </ul>	<p>Students should attempt to use STR to answer the question. Your responses are required to have a variety of thoughts and assumptions that should be answered throughout your analysis.</p> <p>Using the ‘ST2A2D POVUP’, analysis and evaluation is easily answered, though students need to carefully assess theme.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pays close attention to the terms of the question.</li> </ul>	<p>Address all necessary components of the question.</p> <p><i>“How does the poet address racism?”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How (<b>Literary Devices</b>)</li> <li>• Poet (<b>Analysis using the poet’s POV</b>)</li> <li>• Address (<b>How is it mentioned? Is something being done</b>)</li> <li>• Racism (<b>Overall Theme? Or General Question?</b>)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive and informed personal response showing close engagement with the text.</li> <li>• Ideas are developed effectively and well supported by textual evidence</li> </ul>	<p>Recommended to analyse diction in response to the subject matter of the question, reinforcing ideas with literary devices.</p> <p>Ensure to pick apt evidence, and not over-quote. Quoting aptly shows that one knows how to make a good judgement in the quality of evidence that they wish to present.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly coherent argument, with clarity of thought and expression.</li> </ul>	<p>Do not misread the text, and ensure to use proper English to answer the question. The wrong choice of words may lead to deducted marks.</p>

#### IV. Breakdown of Model Essay

##### Model Essay by Branston - *XiaoBai's Sundays* (Appendix C)

<p>The poet makes his childhood so sombre by showing the struggles they face and how they cope with it.</p> <p>The stanza “Stall, with mother. Few cents we had, // for barren wastelands engulfed economies fine central bank. // Savouring each sweet gleam.” tells me that the poet and his mother met with financial issues when he was young.</p> <p>The word “barren” emphasises on how poor the family was as it makes me imagine a very empty and ruined life. Also, the word “engulfed” paints a picture of how their lives were instantly brought up in flames and brought apart which makes me wonder how chaotic and hectic the poet’s life was during his childhood.</p> <p>Furthermore, the poet and his mother “savouring” each sweet gleam and that tells me how they really appreciated that one ice cream, although the ice cream wasn’t expensive. “Savouring” the ice cream tells me that they enjoyed every single contact with the ice cream and tried to make the best out of what they had.</p> <p>Therefore, the poem definitely fosters a sense of understanding in me as I am able to see how the family have a very fragmented life having no wealth, yet they are still able to enjoy ice cream together and share their only source of happiness with one another.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- B1 Statement. Literary devices can be added here.</li> <li>- S3 Evidence. Chosen evidence is valid, but could be more apt.</li> <li>- S3 Inference. Strong and accurate statement.</li> <li>- A2 Analysis. Immediate analysis of diction to answer the question directly, with excellent explanation.</li> <li>- A2 Analysis. Uses a varied source for diction, analysing the physical qualities of metaphors used, using real life examples.</li> <li>- S3 Deduction and Unique Perspective. Good attempt by placing oneself into the poet’s shoes, showing a depth of concern to the text.</li> </ul>
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Furthermore, the poet makes his childhood so sombre by showing the **viewers** of how he feels towards his mother working very hard for him.

The line “Watching mother push that metal, tin cart, around” tells me that the mother is exerting lots of strength and energy just to bring up her son.

The words “metal” and “tin” use imagery to make me envision the weight of the cart and how heavy it is, which could be a symbol of the amount of responsibility and weight that the poet’s mother carries every day, knowing that her son’s future depends on how hard she works.

Additionally, the line “my ice cream slowly melts , // into a puddle of melted ice cream .” and “paddle pop, potong ; even fruity copies “ actually are metaphors of the poet's feelings. The different flavours of ice cream symbolises the different feelings of a human and that it could vary from time to time. Also, the ice cream “melting” shows how the poet feels a sense of empathy for his mother, seeing her work so hard just to raise him and provide him with a better childhood.

Therefore, the poem evokes a sense of sadness as it shows the efforts of a mother when it comes to the importance of raising her child and giving them the best of treatment, despite their difficulties.

I am able to sympathise with the poet as I acknowledge that they were not fortunate to be able to receive all the good-things in life like wealth, but they embrace their fate.

- B1 Statement. Literary devices could be added here (The use of heavy, metal imagery)
- A3 Evidence. Excellent, apt choice of evidence to analyse.
- A3 Analysis. Excellent use of imagery and symbolism to dictate a sense of sombriety. Beautiful insight.
- A3 Evidence. Although long, majority of evidence relates to the analysis.
- A3 Analysis. Symbolism and realism is added to the analysis because of one’s real life. This shows sympathetic analysis.
- A1 Deduction. The themes could have been reiterated but this conclusion shows a well-versed analysis of the poetry.
- A3 Unique Perspective. Relates, and sympathises with another individual. Ends off with a philosophical statement

### Appendices:

Appendix A: <https://storybird.com/blog/2015/3/poem-day/>

Appendix B: [2065\\_y22\\_sy.pdf \(seab.gov.sg\)](#)

Appendix C:

#### *XiaoBai's Sundays*

*Reminiscing the sultry, sunny sundays,  
holding sticks of ice cream:  
paddlepop, potong; even fruity copies.  
Wandering from stall to*

*Stall, with mother. Few cents we had,  
for barren wastelands engulfed  
economys fine central bank.  
Savouring each sweet gleam.*

*Stored; in what little we could,  
small, petite, white mini-fridge,  
"XiaoBai". Though-my  
Ice creams would be eaten by*

*him. Watching mother push  
that metal, tin cart, around  
and around the neighbourhood,  
my ice cream slowly melts, into  
a puddle of melted ice cream.*

*(L. A.)*

(i) How does the poet make the poem so sombre?

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