

Kirkcaldy High School English Department



Senior Study Skills Tips

Studying for English

- Start early
- Create a study timetable
- Sit at a desk or table to study
- Avoid distractions such as TV or mobiles
- Use a variety of study methods to ensure depth of processing
- Complete past papers
- Attend study support
- Work hard in class
- Complete homework
- Ensure that notes are complete
- Use study guides
- Ask for clarification of any points you do not understand
- Read quality journalism regularly
- Sleep well and eat well

study

(verb)

The act of texting, eating
and watching TV with an
open textbook nearby.

Revision Checklist

Reading for Understanding, Analysis, Evaluation (Close Reading)

- Literary Techniques
- Question types
- Specimen papers
- Read broadsheet newspapers

Scottish Texts

- Revise poems/play and make sure you understand what is happening, key characters, themes, techniques, tone, feelings...
- Revise the similarities / differences between the poems/scenes of the play
- Revise how to set out answers (especially the final 10 mark question)
- Learn key quotations for each poem/ from different scenes of the play
- Use BBC Bitesize for support

Critical Essay

- Revise short story texts, making sure that you understand plot, characterisation, setting, theme, techniques, symbolism...
- Learn key quotations associated with character, theme, symbolism, setting
- Learn technical language that can be used when discussing the text (e.g. protagonist, antagonist, juxtapose...)
- Revise critical essay structure
- Practise planning essays by creating topic sentences that link to an essay question
- Practise writing critical essays in an hour
- Essay questions are available on SQA site in specimen paper / past papers

General Skills Revision

- Practise spelling words that you often get wrong and will use in critical essays
- Revise sentencing and punctuation use (especially apostrophes)
- Find alternatives to commonly used words and learn these e.g. 'this shows'
- Revise use of link words to use in critical essay

Websites:

- BBC News (especially the 'Features' articles which tend to be longer)
- The Guardian
- The Independent
- BBC Bitesize (for revision of texts and basic skills)
- Sparknotes

Apps:

- The Free Dictionary by Farlex
- FreeSaurus

Command Words in English

- *Identify* – pick out a key idea / piece of information and put it into your own words (understanding question)
- *Explain* – use your own words to explain a point the writer makes (understanding question)
- *Summarise* – pick out key ideas and bullet point them in your own words (understanding question)
- *Analyse* – identify a particular word / image / tone / feature of sentence structure and comment specifically on its connotations / effect / why a writer has chosen to use it
- *Evaluate* – how well has the writer created a particular effect / effective opening / conclusion? You will have to support your opinion with quotation and evidence.
- *Compare* - what similarities and/or differences exist between ideas / texts?
- *Contrast* – what differences exist between ideas / texts? Deal with both sides of the contrast for full marks.

Create Flashcards

- Write the name of a technique on one side and the definition on the other. Ask parents / carers / friends to test you on these.
- Write quotations on one side and analysis on the other. You can use these to revise for critical essays or the Scottish text paper. Read through them regularly and ask others to test you on them.
- Flashcards can be made into a booklet to keep them together. You can then also carry them around and read through them when you have a spare moment.

Colour Code Notes

- Use highlighters or coloured pens to colour code notes. This is more active than simply reading through notes.
- You could choose one colour per theme or character, for example.
- In critical essays, you could highlight analysis or reference to the question.
- In the poems, you could highlight key quotations, or areas of commonality.

Note: *Do not* just spend ages making your notes look pretty! There should be a purpose to your colour coding; you should be thinking and processing ideas, not just colouring in.

Summarise (in your own words)

- Summarise the content of each of the texts in your own words to check your understanding.
- Summarise key similarities and differences between poems/scenes in the play.
- Summarise the themes in texts in your own words to ensure that you understand them and can explain them in critical essays.



Active Reading Strategies

Read quality journalism to prepare for RUAЕ (close reading).

- Think about the intended audience and purpose of articles.
- Summarise key ideas.
- Explain what you have read to someone else.
- Look up new vocabulary.
- How effective are the introduction and the conclusion? What techniques are used to make them effective?
- Look for examples of imagery. Analyse their effect.
- Look at word choice. Think about the connotations of notable words. Why has the writer chosen them?
- Think about tone. What is the writer's attitude towards the topic, and how do you know?

Use Pictures

Sometimes, associating words with pictures can help you to remember them.

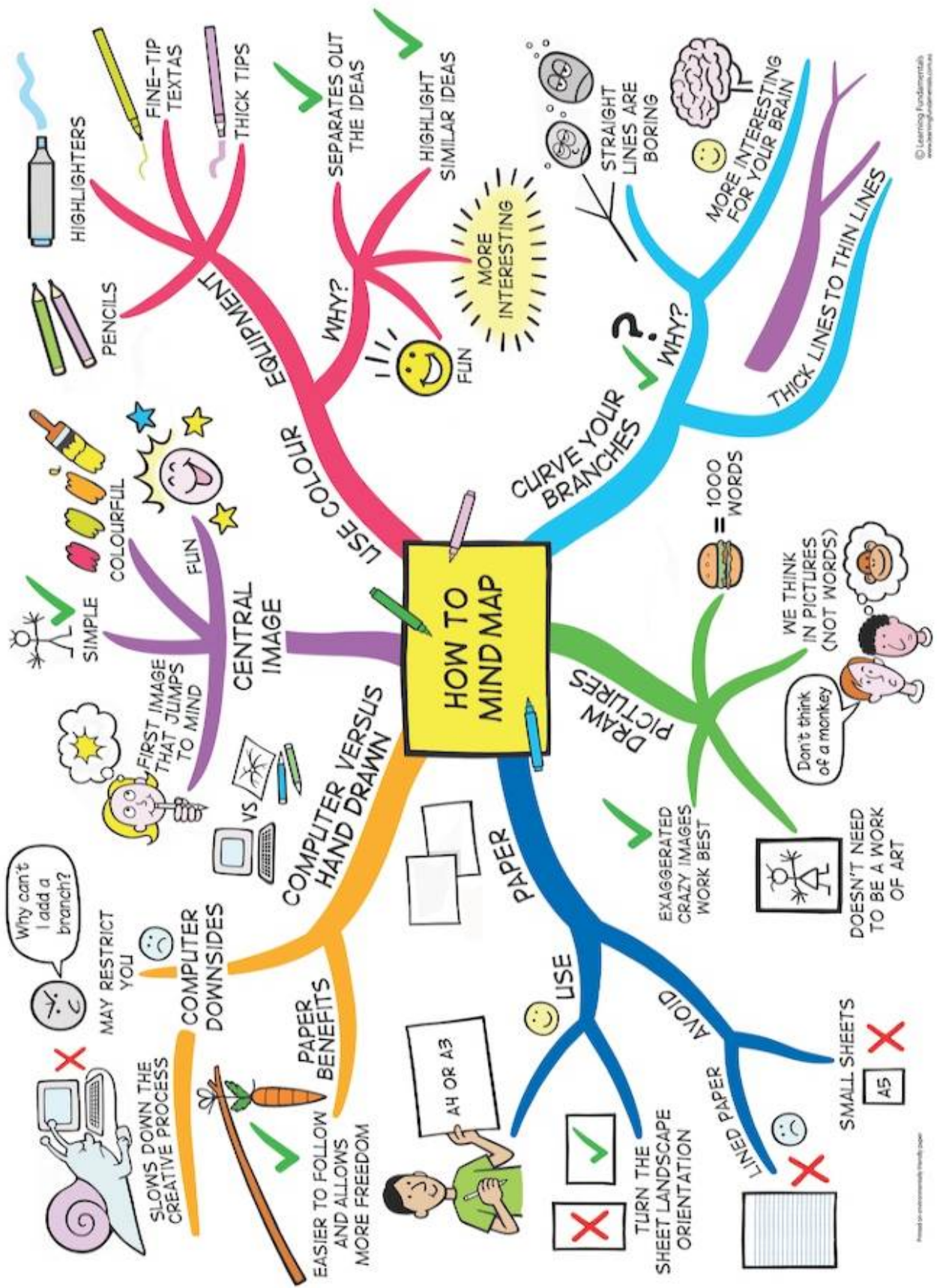
- Storyboard key ideas/events in texts.
- Draw pictures that go with key quotations. Look at them alongside quotations when you are revising.



“I give you an onion”

Use Mind Maps

- Mind map key elements of texts, such as plot, character, setting, theme, symbolism.
- Mind map critical essay plans: put the question in the middle and relevant points / quotations around the outside.
- Mind map commonality between poems/scenes in the play: put a theme in the middle and note which poems/scenes/quotations link to this theme.
- Use mind maps when actively reading RUAЕ texts.



Critical Essay Planning

- Mind map critical essay plans: put the question in the middle and relevant points / quotations around the outside.
- Plan topic sentences for different essay questions. Make sure these link to the question and concisely introduce the topic of the paragraph.
- Practise writing introductions and conclusions for different essay questions.
- Practise writing critical essays within a time limit (45 minutes-1 hour).
- Your English teacher will be happy to mark extra essays!

Use Mnemonics

Imagery =

Metaphor

Personification

Simile

Use Post-its and Posters

- Stick key ideas up on your bedroom wall.
- Write quotations on post-it notes and look at them regularly.



Find a Study Partner

This could be someone in your class or you could rope parents / carers / siblings into helping you.



- Ask someone to test you on learning techniques and their definitions.
- Ask someone to test you on remembering quotations and explain your analysis to them.
- Explain key points about your texts to others and encourage them to ask questions.
- Analyse texts with a partner, ensuring that you challenge each other to comment on the effect of techniques.

Sample Study Timetable: English

| Week | Session 1 | Session 2 | Session 3 | Session 4 | Session 5 |
|------|------------------------------|--|---|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Prose: Plot | Prose: Character Study (1) + Quotations | Prose: Character Study (2) + Quotations | Prose: Key Themes + Quotations | Prose: Symbolism / Techniques |
| 2 | Critical Essay Structure | Link Words / Technical Language / Spelling | Critical Essay Planning | Timed Critical Essay | Active Reading of Article |
| 3 | Poem 1 | Poem 2 | Poem 3 | Poem 4 | Poem 5 |
| 4 | Poem 6 | Compare Poems | Compare Poems | Practice Scottish Text Paper | Active Reading of Article |
| 5 | Literary Techniques | Understanding Questions | Word Choice Questions | Imagery Questions | Sentence Structure Questions |
| 6 | Tone Questions | Effective Conclusion Questions | Comparison Question (H) | Active Reading of Article | Active Reading of Article |
| 7 | Practice Close Reading Paper | Prose Quotations and Analysis | Critical Essay Planning | Critical Essay Planning | Timed Critical Essay (unseen question) |
| 8 | Active Reading of Article | Most Difficult Poem(s) | Most Difficult Poem(s) | Poetry 10 mark Question Practice | Active Reading of Article |

Use a variety of approaches to revision. Rather than simply re-reading notes, create flashcards, mind maps, posters, add pictures...

Find the method of revision that works best for you.

