**Sailmaker- How to Study**

You need to know ‘Sailmaker’ inside and out since you do not know which section of the text the extract will be taken from. So how do you study? Well…

* Re-read the play – a few times at least. Knowing the text well will ensure you can identify where this extract has come from- which will make it easier for you to work out what’s going on!
* Practise the Close Reading style questions from Specimen Question Paper books
* Re-read and work with your notes as often as possible
* Practise and learn mini-essays

Example Question Types

*Page 6*

1. “Sometimes I wake up…It was getting light by the time he came back.”

In your own words summarise what happens in the opening extract. Make at least four key points.

1. marks)
2. What do the stage directions reveal to the audience in line- 10? (2 marks)
3. Identify a feature of sentence structure which suggests Alec’s resistance to the reality of the situation. (2 marks)

*Page 7*

1. Identify two examples of the playwright’s word choice and explain how they suggest the poverty of the setting. (4 marks)

*Pages 7-8*

1. “Sometimes I wake up…on and on and on.”

Alan Spence creates a contrast in the language used by father and son. Explain how this is achieved. (3 marks)

*Page 8*

1. Discuss the effect of the structure of the sentence "Then maybe yer lookin for somethin...rest ae ma days." (2 marks)
2. Quote and analyse an example of word choice which reveals that Davie feels broken.

(2 marks)

1. "(Lights up. IAN enters, running)" Discuss the significance of this stage direction.

(2 marks)

*Pages 8-9*

1. "Your da sells stuff...Soon."

**In your own words**, give examples of how Alec has complete faith in his father.

(3 marks)

*Page 11*

1. **In your own words**, explain why it is surprising that Davie is getting fish suppers for dinner on a weekday. (2 marks)

*Page 15*

1. When they boys play, there is a sense of violence: "Make a great chib!...Make ye walk the plank!". Quote two examples of word choice which convey the violence behind their imaginative games. (4 marks)

*Page 16*

1. Explain the reasons Davie gives Alec for drinking and how these could be considered lies.

(4 marks)

*Page 18*

1. "(ALEC comes forward, IAN enters with football which he passes to ALEC)" Discuss the significance of this stage direction. (2 marks)

*Page 19*

1. “Eh Billy…that coupla quid ah tapped aff ye…An by Christ I need it.”

What does the audience learn about the character of Billy? (2 marks)

1. "Things are still a wee bit tight...You'll get yer money back."

Referring closely to the text, explain how this dialogue shows clearly the difference in outlook between Davie and Billy.

(4 marks)

*Pages 19-21*

1. Referring to the whole extract “Eh Billy…that coupla quid ah tapped aff ye…What a carry on eh?”, explain why Davie is having money problems. Make at least four key points.

(4 marks)

*Page 24*

1. "We could go to America and live wi *real* Indians...We could paint wursels tae. Wear feathers an bones." **In your own words**, explain what Ian and Alec plan to do if they escape.

(4 marks)

*Page 27*

1. Choose one of the names suggested for the yacht and explain its connotations.

(2 marks)

*Page 28*

1. Explain what Davie describes in his monologue. (4 marks)

*Page 30-31*

1. "(They laugh. Boys take imaginary ball...Ea-sy!"

**In your own words** explain what the boys play in this scene. (3 marks)

1. "(They laugh...Ea-sy!"

Comment on the writer's use of word choice and how it conveys the boys' attitude towards Celtic. (4 marks)

*Page 31*

1. "Try tellin *them* that...Nothin."

Explain how the structure reveals Davie's emotions. (2 marks)

*Page 33*

1. Explain the significance of the song that Alec is singing at the beginning of Act Two.

(2 marks)

*Page 35*

1. "Aye ye told me...See ye after son."

Explain what Davie's attitude to his father is at this point. (2 marks)

*Page 36-38*

1. Explain, **in your own words**, what Alec is discussing in his monologue. (4 marks)
2. Quote an expression which demonstrates that Alec is uncomfortable with what he has been asked and explain why this is the case. (3 marks)

*Page 38-39*

1. Discuss the importance of the stage directions in "Oh ho! Fightin talk!...Ah could join a club.
2. marks)

*Page 39-41*

1. In your own words summarise what happens in the opening extract. Make at least four key points. (4 marks)
2. How is Davie’s lack of intelligence shown through his use of sentence structure?

(2 marks)

1. With close reference to the text explain how Alan Spence provides an insight into Alec’s thoughts. (6 marks)

*Page 40-41*

1. Explain the importance of the structure of Alec's exam monologue. (2 marks)
2. Discuss the importance of the stage directions in Alec's exam monologue. (2 marks)

*Page 44*

1. Explain the significance of Davie buying Alec his blazer "on tick". (2 marks)

*Page 44-45*

1. Explain the importance of the structure of Alec's school monologue. (2 marks)

*Page 45*

1. Quote the expression which reveals the contrast between Alec and Davie's lives.
2. mark)
3. Identify the tone in "(Comes back with record player)...Aye." and explain how this is conveyed. (2 marks)

*Page 47*

1. Identify a stage direction and comment on its effectiveness. (3 marks)

*Page 48*

1. Explain in your own words how Ian and Billy’s relationship differs to Alec and Davie’s. (3 marks)

*Page 55*

1. Identify the comparison Alec makes and discuss what it reveals about his relationship with Davie. (2 marks)
2. Identify a stage direction and comment on what it reveals about the relationship between father and son. (2 marks)

*Page 59-60*

1. In your own words, explain what the British Working Man is, according to the text Alec reads from. (4 marks)

*Page 62 to end*

1. Summarise in your own words what happens in this extract. You should make at least two key points. (2 marks)
2. Alec understands the deeper significance of people’s actions and inactions. How is this revealed through symbolism in the extract? (2 marks)

Mini-Essay Help

Remember, the mini-essay is essentially the main body of your argument from a critical essay, therefore you should:

* Have three or four paragraphs which include a topic sentence; introducing the quotation within the natural flow of a sentence by providing context; in-depth analysis; relating back to the question
* Remember to include reference to the extract itself as well as relevant quotations (three or four) from the rest of the text.
* A statement of intent and an evaluative conclusion are not needed
* You can write in continuous prose or in a series of developed bullet points. (Note: SQA expect *best answers* will be written in mini-essay form. **If you are running out of time, you might want to make use of bullet points (but managing your time is an important aspect of exam technique!)**

Consider how marks are gained to inform how you structure your answer. The question is marked as follows:

8–7 marks identify and comment on three or four aspects of the importance of the yacht/social class/father and son in the play, with quotations and/or specific examples to support the answer

6-5 marks identify and comment on two or three aspects of the importance of the yacht/social class/father and son in the play, with quotations and/or specific examples to support

the answer

4-3 marks identify and comment on one or two aspects of the importance of the yacht/social class/father and son in the play, with quotations and/or specific examples to support the answer

2-1 marks a generalised acknowledgement of the importance of the yacht in the play, with some generalised reference to the text

0 marks no reference to the importance of the yacht/social class/father and son in the play

*Example Questions and how to Answer Them*

1. **Extract: “Eh Billy…that coupla quid ah tapped off ye…(Sighs) Whit a carry on, eh?” (Page 19-21)**

**Money problems and ways to escape them are an important theme in *Sailmaker*. Referring briefly to the extract and in more detail to the rest of the play, explain how this theme is explored.**

* Find a quotation from the extract which reveals Davie’s money problems, how he has found himself in this situation and how this has resulted in him being in a downward spiral due to his need to escape this
* Next, consider an incident in which this downward spiral is clear e.g. the monologue depicting Davie’s attack
* Select a quotation which demonstrates how the boys try to escape their lives and the significance of their choice of imaginary games
* You could also consider how, from a young age, Alec has had to learn to accept his father’s means of escapism- drinking- therefore deals with it in a matter-of-fact way
* Think about how Alec himself tries to escape money problems as he grows up, first through religion and secondly through education

*Specimen Paragraph:*

In this extract, the writer expertly uses dialogue to reveal the theme of money problems and the ways to escape them. The conversation between Billy and Davie reveals how Davie squanders his money, since Billy says “Ye shouldnae be this skint”. Davie is “skint” since he uses gambling as a way to escape his life of poverty. Billy knows he has been gambling since he gets money in but it goes straight back out. Davie wants his life to change but does not know how to go about it in the right way. Instead of finding himself another trade, he takes chances on gambling since he does not have confidence in himself to achieve due to the loss of his wife and the loss of his job. Here, we see that Davie’s money problems centre around his losses in life, and so he is not only escaping his poverty, but also the damaging effects these losses have had on him.

**2. Extract: “Davie: (Hesitates)”…”Takes yacht, exits” (Page 20-23)**

**By referring to this extract and to at least two other incidents from elsewhere in the play, explain how the characters Alec and Davie change and develop as the plot progresses.**

* Think about the lack of faith Alec now has in his father about the completion of the yacht, as demonstrated in this extract
* Further explain the significance of the yacht through the importance of the turning point at the end of Act One- Alec chooses to put the yacht away, therefore representing his loss of faith in his father. Note: the next time the yacht appears is to be burned
* Alec turns to religion at the beginning of Act Two- looking to religion for what his father can’t give him
* Consider the importance of the lights going out when Davie has failed to pay the electricity bill- this is the first time Alec has been “kept in the dark” by his father
* Consider the burning of the last remnants of their past in order to keep warm. With the burning of Davie’s tools, we see that they are now on different paths

*Specimen Paragraph:*

Furthermore, lighting convincingly portrays the distance growing between these two main characters. Alec dances enthusiastically to records, when suddenly “(Music stops dead, lights go dim)”. The shock generated within the audience mirrors the impact on Alec when he discovers the truth that the electricity has been cut off because his father had failed to pay the bill. This contrasts the nature of their relationship in Act One when there were no secrets between Alec and his father, to the point where Davie openly shared details of having been beaten up due to his gambling debts. This time, Davie hides the significant truth of his situation that he cannot bring himself to share with his son. Thus, lighting subtly evokes the change in relationship between father and son. The absence of light further signifies the growing darkness in each character’s life. Despite the surrounding “dim”, Alec begins to admit to himself that his father is never going to change. Whilst he attempts to elevate himself from the situation, Davie is slowly slipping further in to darkness.

**3. Extract: “Davie (Hesitates)…Takes yacht, exits” (see above)**

**One should never underestimate the power of symbolism. Explain how symbolism is used in this play.**

* Within the extract, the yacht is seen as a means of escapism from their current life
* It presents the contrast between Davie and Billy, in particular in terms of their attitude
* The yacht is a means of enforcing identity for Billy, as a Rangers fan and a Protestant
* The yacht represents the loss of relationship between father and son throughout the play
* The yacht symbolises Davie- the burning of the yacht mirroring Davie’s lack of completion as a person

*Specimen Paragraph:*

The resolution of the play makes the power of the yacht’s symbolism clear to the audience as Davie and Billy react to their circumstances in very different ways; Billy escaping his situation while the yacht, symbol of escape and hope, is burned in Davie’s grate. On discovering the yacht in the Glory Hole Alec goes to burn it, saying that Davie was ‘always gonnae fix it up for me’ and that he ‘could always imagine it.’ Davie replies that he ‘always meant to.’ His passive attitude towards the yacht mirrors the passive attitude he has towards bettering his situation; preferring luck and gambling over practicality. As Alec describes the yacht burning, he references the sight of a Viking longboat moving ‘out to sea in a blaze with the body of a dead chief.’ The destruction of the yacht symbolises the destruction of Davie’s identity and self-worth, and the end of any hope he might have had of renewing his trade and therefore taking control of his life.

**4. Extract: “Davie (Hesitates)…Takes yacht, exits” (see above)**

**With close textual reference, explain how dramatic techniques are used in this text.**

* Consider how stage directions are used to show the moving of time
* Consider the importance of lighting e.g. the electricity going off mirroring Alec's sudden realisation of what is going on with his father
* Explain how the play itself is a flashback
* Analyse monologues and their effects
* Discuss the staging, which is focused on the flat and its surrounding areas- small, enclosed set

*Specimen Paragraph:*

Furthermore, lighting is convincingly deployed to portray the distance growing between the two main characters. Alec dances enthusiastically to records, when suddenly “(Music stops dead, lights go dim)”. The shock generated within the audience mirrors the impact on Alec when he discovers the truth that the electricity has been cut off because his father had failed to pay the bill. This contrasts the nature of their relationship in Act One when there were no secrets between Alec and his father, to the point where Davie openly shared details of having been beaten up due to his gambling debts. This time, Davie hides the significant truth of his situation that he cannot bring himself to share with his son. Thus, lighting subtly evokes the change in relationship between father and son. The absence of light further signifies the growing darkness in each character’s life. Despite the surrounding “dim”, Alec begins to admit to himself that his father is never going to change. Whilst he attempts to elevate himself from the situation, Davie is slowly slipping further in to darkness.

**5. Extract: “Davie (Hesitates)…Takes yacht, exits” (see above)**

**Language has an important function in this play. With close reference to the rest of this play, explain the purpose/function of the language used.**

* The language used at the beginning of Act One tells us when the flashback begins as old Alec speaks in Standard English and young Alec speaks in Non-Standard English/slang
* As Alec begins to gain himself an education, the language he uses becomes much more standardised
* On the other hand, Davie's language use remains Non-Standard, despite his clear intelligence
* The changes in Alec's language mirrors the changes within their relationship
* Alec slips back in to Non-Standard English when he feels that he will not succeed e.g. in the exams monologue

*Specimen Paragraph:*

Throughout the play, changes in language are highly significant. At the start of the play, Spence intelligently uses contrast to show the change in language between Alec as a young boy and Alec as a man. The voice of Alec as a child comes in to play when he answers his father with "Ah'm no really very hungry." Up until this point, Alec has been speaking in Standard English as he is the adult version of himself who has, the reader can infer, been through education. The contrasting use of Non-Standard English within this quotation comes as a surprise- a surprise which notifies the reader that this is now the voice of Alec as a child, a child who lacks education and speaks in the Glaswegian Scots dialect which he has been surrounded by throughout his life. Therefore, this clever change in language has an important function within the play- to inform the reader that, throughout his life, Alec aspired to improve himself, resulting in the Standard English in which he speaks.

**6. Extract: “Davie (Hesitates)…Takes yacht, exits” (see above)**

**At times, there are contrasting moods in the play. With close reference to the text, identify two main moods and explain how they are created and the relationship between the two.**

* Mood 1: dark, cold, discontent, melancholy, sad

- Davie suffers due to the loss of his wife

- His relationship with his son deteriorates

- He finds himself in a vicious circle due to his means of escapism

* Mood 2: cheerful, happy, jovial, amused

- At times, the relationship between father and son can seem happy and hopeful e.g. during Act One

- When Alec passes the exams which will lead him to further education, there is a sense of celebration, if momentarily

- The happy, jovial relationship between Ian and Billy is presented as a contrast

- The relationship between Ian and Alec is also cheerful at the beginning of the play since both are looking to the same means of escapism

*Specimen Paragraph:*

The need for escapism is an important theme within the play and the contrasting moods deployed within the play allow Spence to expertly demonstrate the positives and negatives associated with various means of escapism. For instance, he successfully uses word choice to demonstrate the happy, jovial mood of Ian and Alec's games which are their method of escapism at their young age. During their imaginary games, the boys refer to themselves as "pirates an explorers"- both of which occupations are heavily based in travelling and exploring the world. However, interestingly, "pirates" has connotations of violence due to the ways in which they attack and claim other ships. Therefore, despite the jovial mood effectively evoked here, there is still an element of threat behind this due to the boys' fantasies also being situated in violence. As a result, despite the cheerful mood, the reader is aware of the contrasting mood of darkness and melancholy lurking in the background through this suggestion of violence.

**7. Extract: Start…”After the funeral” (Page 6-8)**

**Grief is an important theme in this extract. With close reference to the rest of the play, explain how the theme of grief is explored.**

* From the extract: we see the family trying to come to terms with the loss of the mother e.g. through the religious sign Alec believes he sees
* We see the long-term effects loss has on Davie e.g. through the vicious circle he finds himself in due to gambling and alcohol
* Davie also feels incomplete without his wife which has a knock-on effect on all areas of his life
* Alec looks to other means to find the spiritual guidance that his mother is no longer able to provide e.g. through religion
* The relationship between father and son falls apart without the presence of a mother

*Specimen Paragraph:*

Grief is an important theme in this extract and the writer cleverly uses repetition to explore this theme at the beginning of the play. When Davie has to announce the news of the loss of his mother to Alec, he informs him he's "got a bit of bad news for ye son." This quotation is repeated a few lines later, but this does not signify Davie repeating the phrase to his son. Instead, the phrase feels repeated to Alec as he does not feel that the news truly sinks in the first time he hears it. He finds it difficult to come to terms with the news of the loss of his mother. Therefore, the initial response to grief is explored within this extract, demonstrating how it can be so difficult to believe to the extent that we almost refuse to believe it. As the text progresses, we will see the extent to which this initial shock changes and affects the lives of both Alec and Davie.

**8. Extract: “Davie: Ach naw son”…end of page 41)**

**With close reference to the rest of the play, how is Alan Spence able to move seamlessly through time?**

* The big focus here is stage directions and how these signify the passing of time
* Remember, the songs used also demonstrate the passing of time e.g. My Generation signifies that we are now in 1965
* There is a motif within the stage directions of the two notes played on the mouth organ, harking back to the beginning of the play when Alec "sees" a lonely boy outside playing this, which is a manifestation of himself
* The language used by Alec makes clear whether young or old Alec is speaking through the use of either Standard or Non-Standard English
* Alec's monologues allow the passing of time, particularly through his school education so as not to enter the outside world

*Specimen Paragraph:*

Spence successfully uses monologue to move seamlessly through time. Alec's monologue on his time at school allows five years of education to pass through the remembering of details of some of his lessons as the adult Alec reflects on his school experience. The monologue ends in "University here I come" to demonstrate that this monologue encompasses his entire secondary education. Depicting his education as a monologue allows the audience to realise that the effects of Alec's education are far more important than the education itself: he can only remember a few lessons but the education allows him to improve his life away from his father and the working class life he leads. Furthermore, due to the enclosed setting in which the characters live, Alec's education had to move quickly and seamlessly in order to prevent the necessity for a further set or for additional characters from outside of the characters' small, enclosed, working class reality.

**9. Extract: “Davie: this is part of the furniture”…end**

***Sailmaker* is a play that explores the relationship between father and son. With close reference to the text explain how this theme is explored.**

* Think about the lack of faith Alec comes to have in his father about the completion of the yacht
* Further explain the significance of the yacht through the importance of the turning point at the end of Act One- Alec chooses to put the yacht away, therefore representing his loss of faith in his father. Note: the next time the yacht appears is to be burned
* Alec turns to religion at the beginning of Act Two- looking to religion for what his father can’t give him
* Consider the importance of the lights going out when Davie has failed to pay the electricity bill- this is the first time Alec has been “kept in the dark” by his father
* Consider the burning of the last remnants of their past in order to keep warm. With the burning of Davie’s tools, we see that they are now on different paths

*Specimen Paragraph:*

The relationship between father and son reaches its crisis point in this extract from the end of the play and the writer expertly uses symbolism to portray this. The yacht is burned to heat the house and is described as being "like a Viking longboat, out to sea in a blaze with the body of a dead chief." Just as a Viking longboat creates images of battle, sacrifice and death, so too the writer suggests that father and son have gone through battle, sacrifice and death together, resulting in a loss of the possibility of there ever being a true bond between father and son at this stage. The death image represents the end of Davie's hopes of recovering himself. The battle image reminds the reader of the many battles which have occurred between father and son. The image of sacrifice connects to how Alec is sacrificing his relationship with his father for the sake of self-improvement. Through all these reasons, it is clear to the reader that, at this stage, Alec is moving on from his father and Davie, like the longboat, is being sacrificed to its end. In light of this, the relationship cannot be changed or redeemed and, thus, like the yacht itself, ceases to exist.