‘Skellig’ Critical Essay Help-Sheet

Choose a novel **or** a short story which explores an important theme.

By referring to appropriate techniques, show how the author has explored this theme.

Introduction

* Name of novel and writer
* Sum up briefly who the main character is and what they experience
* Sum up the key themes the writer reveals
* Use evaluative/emotive vocabulary

Paragraph 2 (Chps. 1-6)

* Explain what Michael is feeling at the start of the novel (e.g. worried about sister; feels unnoticed by parents; confused by what he saw in garage etc.)
* Explain what type of narration is used and why this is effective
* Explain how the opening of the novel links to/reveals the key theme.

Paragraph 3 (chps 7 and 10)

* Explain how the use of similes/description make it clear Skellig is something unusual.
* Explain how Skellig reacts to Michael initially (e.g. rude, unresponsive etc.)
* Explain how Michael reacts to finding Skellig (asks if he can help him etc.)
* Explain what this makes us feel towards Michael and what Almond teaches us through this (e.g. importance of acceptance and how friendship can begin in the most unusual of circumstances.)

Paragraph 4 (chps 9, 13, 15-17, 21-26)

* Explain Michael’s first meeting with Mina.
* Describe Mina’s personality
* Explain how Michael and Mina build up trust between them.
* Explain her first meeting with Skellig and describe how she reacts.
* Sum up what Michael learns from Mina and what Almond wishes us to realise (e.g. people can be very different e.g. different educations but there is always we can learn from everyone if we are open minded etc.)

Paragraph 5 (chps 16, 25, 27-31)

* Explain how Michael's stress/worries etc. start to grow (e.g. sister’s health deteriorates; Skellig is suffering; falls out with friends/Mina etc.)
* Explain what/who helps him to overcome these issues/obstacles.
* Explain what this teaches the reader (link this to the key theme – importance of faith/trust/hope/keeping going even when times get hard, resilience etc.)

Paragraph 6 (Chps. 39-40 and 32-38)

* Explain how Almond builds up tension/fear when the baby is being operated on and Michael is waiting to hear how it has gone.
* Explain how Michael’s friendships with Mina and Skellig help him cope with his sister’s operation.
* Explain how they helps build up his hope/strength/faith that she and Skellig will recover (e.g. symbolism of Spring, myth of Persephone.)
* Explain what Almond teaches us through this which is useful/important for us to use/realise in our lives.

Paragraph 7: Conclusion (Chps 41- 45)

* Explain what happens at the end of the novel (Skellig leaving; baby recovering and coming home; Michael thriving at school.)
* Explain how Almond creates a positive and moving ending (symbolism of chicks ; the power of belief/faith etc.)
* Sum up what themes Almond covers in the novel and what these teach the reader.
* Sum up the impact of this on our enjoyment/appreciation of the novel and how this will enhance our own lives.