

Tackling LTB6 – the Synoptic Unit

In the **Synoptic Unit** exam, you will have to tackle a range of texts. Most likely, they will all be unfamiliar to you, but you can always tackle them in the same way. You will get most of the material (the “pre-release”) a week before the exam, and will spend time during that week familiarising yourself with it, and making sure that you can see emerging connections and comparisons between the texts.

1. Read the texts. Take each text in turn rather than reading the whole paper. There is always a theme to the materials.
2. When you have read the first text from start to finish, you need to read it again – this time with a pen in your hand. You are going to make notes as you go: perhaps picking out words that you are unfamiliar with and checking their meaning, thinking about the choices of vocabulary used for character and setting; identifying the narrator and the type of language that is being used ... as well as anything else that you think may be important. At this stage, you'll probably write lots of notes – that's okay. Later on, you'll transfer the notes that you think are really important to the copy of the paper that you take into the exam with you.
3. Now is the time to move on to the next text. This is likely to be a critical response to the first text. Here, what you need to do is read it with an eye to how it applies to the first text, and also how it can be applied to things you have read elsewhere.
4. The remaining texts are going to be on similar lines – so you need to read and make notes in just the same way as you have previously.
5. You take a copy of the pre-release materials into the exam with you – although there is a limit to how much annotation is permitted.
6. The exam tests all five assessment objectives and (handily!!) tells you which ones are being tested in which question.
7. **Question 1** will ask you to make connections between a new text (or texts) on the paper with the first pre-released text and will probably target AO2 and AO3
8. **Question 2** will ask you to relate the other materials in the pre-release to the theme covered, and will probably ask you to relate them to your own reading in some way. AOs 1, 4 and 5 are likely to be the targets here.

Have a go ...

Read the first section of this extract, giving careful consideration to:

- words that you are unfamiliar with - check their meaning,
- vocabulary used for character
- vocabulary used for setting
- narrative voice
- the type of language that is being used

When you have done that, share your findings with a partner. The rules of the exam say that you cannot discuss the materials with your teacher(s) but you can discuss them with one another. See if you have picked out anything different.

Then move on to the next two sections. By the end of the passage, you should have a pretty clear idea of the character and the setting of the novel; you may also be able to make some assumptions and find some links with other texts you have read.

Make a note of what you think you know, and how you can link this extract to other texts you've read.

Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.

...

In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June.

For it was the middle of June.

...

For Hugh always made her feel, as he bustled on, raising his hat rather extravagantly and assuring her that she might be a girl of eighteen, and of course he was coming to her party tonight, Evelyn absolutely insisted, only a little late he might be after the party at the Palace to which he had to take one of Jim's boys,—she always felt a little skimpy beside Hugh; schoolgirlish; but attached to him, partly from having known him always, but she did think him a good sort in his own way, though Richard was nearly driven mad by him, and as for Peter Walsh, he had never to this day forgiven her for liking him.

She could remember scene after scene at Bourton—Peter furious; Hugh not, of course, his match in any way, but still not a positive imbecile as Peter made out; not a mere barber's block.

...

She stood for a moment, looking at the omnibuses in Piccadilly.