

ESSAY WRITING

GCSE English and English Literature essay

Title:

“Here’s much to do with hate, but more with love.” Compare the presentation of hate and love in *Romeo and Juliet*, with specific reference to Act 1 Scene 1 and Act 2 Scene 2. Is the play more about love or hate?

Information:

To qualify for the highest grades, you must consider:

- the moral, philosophical and social significance of the text
- the writer’s narrative craft and appeal to the reader
- details of language exploited for implication or suggestion
- social and historical context
- literary tradition

This sounds very complicated and challenging, but don’t worry! Your teacher will help you, and also you can follow the plan below:

Plan:

1. Introduce the play by saying it is full of both love and hate. These were (and still are!) very popular and traditional themes to write about. Do some research (or see “*Romeo and Juliet* – Shakespeare’s story?” from the Background section of this book!) and write a paragraph on how the story has been handed down over the years.
2. Discuss the hatred displayed in Act 1 Scene 1. Right from the earliest lines, the servants go out of their way to engage in conflict, Tybalt inflames it, and the Prince reveals that this is the third time the families have brawled in the streets. The citizens are also tired of the fighting. Perhaps discuss the concept of “honor” and how it was displayed in late 16c. Italy (is it much different from today?)
3. Discuss how the mood of the play changes when Romeo enters Act 1 Scene 1. He is lovesick. Look specifically at his use of oxymorons to show how confusing love and hate can be for people (Romeo in this case).
4. Move on to look at Act 2 Scene 2 in detail, explaining how Shakespeare makes it such a romantic scene.
5. Answer the question, “Is the play more about love or hate?” ensuring you support your opinions with references to the play.

Resist the temptation to re-tell chunks of the story. If you write what happens in the play, it should be because you are going to make a point about it!

Remember: Point
Evidence
Explanation

In your “explanation” sections, ensure from time to time you comment on the **language** used in your “evidence” and how it “works.” Comment on Shakespeare’s skill/craft as a writer.

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“Point, Evidence, Explanation” – example

When you are writing an essay, especially one which is based on a text, the “Point, Evidence, Explanation” model of writing is a simple and effective way of making sure you are keeping on track.

Point – the idea you want to put across, the point you are making – this is done briefly.

Evidence – this is where you back your point up by using a quotation or reference to something in the text.

Explanation – this is where you fully explain your point, usually referring to the evidence.

Everyone might have similar or even the same points and evidence. The real difference comes in the “explanation” section – this is your main opportunity to show how well you have understood the text (and the question) and to show off your writing skills.

Say that I am tackling point 2 of the essay plan, how Shakespeare creates an atmosphere of hatred in Act 1 Scene 1. There are many points that I could make. Here is an example:

Point – Right from the opening of the play, Shakespeare wants to make it clear that, for the Capulets and Montagues anyway, Verona is a world of constant violence and upheaval.

Evidence – Sampson: I strike quickly, being moved...A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

Explanation – These are lines **five** and **seven** of the play. Shakespeare immediately sets a provocative tone of menace for both the audience and the characters on stage. The choice of “dog” is deliberate – so deep is their animosity that even an animal of the rival house will “move” Sampson. It could also be a metaphor, indicating Sampson’s hatred of the Montagues, referring to each member of their family as a dog! He needs little excuse to break out into violence.

In fact, as we soon witness, they deliberately go looking for opportunities to create disorder.

This is work at the highest level. Go for it! You might not write as much as this, but the principle is always the same – Point, Evidence, Explanation.

(Top tip – don’t forget to vary your sentences and vocabulary, especially the sentences which begin your paragraphs. If you write every Point, Evidence and Explanation in the same way, your essay will become boring very quickly! Your teacher will help you with this.)

