

Writing an assignment

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

How to Approach an Essay (Written Exam) 18th May, 2010 “ Examine how narrative perspective influences the reader in ‘ Good Advice Is Rarer than Rubies. ’”

1. Unpacking and decoding essay questions

A. Unpacking

I. What you are required to do (approach keywords): Examine ... (that means describe and explain in detail...) II. What you should write about a) (specific keywords)...how narrative perspective influences the reader... b) (general keywords)...in ‘ Good Advice Is Rarer than Rubies. ’”

III. Suggestions

The exam question suggests first of all that narrative perspective is a recognizable and worth examining feature of the story and that it has an influence on (the perception of) the reader. You may agree with this suggestion, or you may not! But in any case you should give good arguments for your position!

VI. Demands

Whatever your position might be, the essay question demands that you describe and explain in detail the use of narrative perspective in the story and its supposed influence on the reader.

B. Decoding

Before you start your essay you must, of course, be sure that you understand the terms used in the essay question.

Here the only technical term of possible difficulty is “ narrative perspective ”. It means that the action of a story is presented/narrated as seen/perceived from the point of view of a certain person. This person can be a character of the story, but needn't be. Interesting aspects to analyze in this context may be: a) the general narrative situation b) the choice of words/language in the story (as this may indicate a certain point of view) c) the use of inside views (indirect thought, direct thought, interior monologue, free indirect discourse)

1. Writing an Essay Good writing requires good thinking!

Whatever you write: It must a) be relevant to the question (address the question immediately, explicitly, exclusively) b) advance arguments (a statement is not the same as an argument)

A. Overall Structure Your essay (and we are talking about type 2 assignments here!) should be structured the following way:

- introduction (keep it short, tell the reader what you are planning to do precisely and quickly, possibly make an opening statement)
- main body (put forward your main arguments)
- conclusion (bring points made in the essay together and comment on their general significance, confirm or reject your opening statement)

B. Paragraph Structure A paragraph is a unit of thought, a group of sentences on one particular idea. A possible structure for a paragraph is the following:

- topic sentence (clear and relevant topic sentences should refer directly to the keywords of the essay question)
- development (elaborate your topic sentences, i. e. explain, define, qualify, analyze etc.)
- illustration (possible illustrations are references to facts/circumstances; reference to parts of the text/story; indirect and direct quotation)

C. Linking
Enough has been said about linking ...