Essay Plans: Your Most Powerful Revision Tool

Writing a full practice essay can take over an hour. A strong essay plan takes twenty minutes — and does something a re-read of your notes never will: it forces you to actively recall your themes, quotes and analysis, the way you'll have to in the exam.

This sheet sets out a five-step method for building a plan for any text. Keep it — you'll use it all year.

1

Map every theme

At the start of the year, list **every theme** in your text — not just the ones you assume will come up. Basing your revision on guesswork is one of the most common mistakes students make. Write everything down now, and use this list to pace your revision across the year ahead.

TIP Over-list now, not under-revise later — a minor theme costs you one line, not one lost mark.

2

Choose your quotes wisely

Aim for two to three key quotes per theme, chosen carefully:

- **Cross-theme** — pick quotes that work for more than one theme, so you learn fewer quotes overall.
- **Analysable** — prioritise quotes with a clear language or structural device to unpick. A quote with nothing to analyse should support your point, not lead it.
- **Well-linked** — choose quotes that connect naturally to context or to the wider text.
- **Full coverage** — pick quotes from the beginning, middle and end of the text so you can track how a character or theme develops. Many students forget this, and it's an easy way to show real depth.

TIP A quote with imagery, symbolism or a striking word choice earns more marks than a plain statement of fact.

3

Extract the techniques

For every key quote, write out the **language or structural devices** it uses. This is the analysis your paragraph will be built around — work it out at planning stage, not for the first time in the exam.

TIP Technique + effect = analysis. Always ask: why did the writer choose this word, here?

4

Learn the context

Context isn't a bonus extra. Learn about **the writer** and about **the period** the text was written in — it's one of the clearest ways to show depth of understanding, and often the difference between a good answer and a top-grade one.

TIP Two context threads to learn: the world inside the story, and the world the writer lived in.

5

Link it together

Finish every point with a **link** — to another paragraph, to the writer's wider intention, or back to the question. This is what turns a list of ideas into an argument.

TIP Try opening a link sentence with "This connects to..." or "Similarly, the writer...".

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Don't lose this sheet. Pin it up or keep it at the front of your folder, and build a new plan every time you sit down to revise a text.

Identify Your Key Themes

List every theme in your text below — not just the ones you think will come up. This is your revision map for the whole year, so be thorough now.

TEXT

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Theme + Quote Planner

BEFORE YOU FILL THIS IN

Using the key points for identifying great quotes — cross-theme, analysable, well-linked, full coverage (see Step 2 on your guide sheet) — think about them as you choose the quotes below.

1 THEME + QUOTE

KEY THEME

KEY QUOTE

TECHNIQUE

CONTEXT — TIME PERIOD

CONTEXT — THE WRITER

LINK (PARAGRAPH / WRITER / QUESTION)

2 THEME + QUOTE

KEY THEME

KEY QUOTE

TECHNIQUE

CONTEXT — TIME PERIOD

CONTEXT — THE WRITER

LINK (PARAGRAPH / WRITER / QUESTION)

REMEMBER

An essay plan is **condensed knowledge**. Later in the academic year, come back to a completed sheet like this one to help you write a full essay.

Extra Notes

Use this space for anything else worth keeping — extra quotes, technique reminders, exam board specifics, or things your tutor flags in lessons.