



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

THE ESSAY ISSUE

NARRATIVE WRITING LEARNING NOTES		APPLICATION EXERCISES	
To be used with reference to pages 39 to 41 of the magazine			
Supplementary Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding• Planning• Brainstorming• Writing• Application exercise	p. 2 p. 4 p. 8 p. 9 p. 11	Situational Writing To be used with reference to pages 4 to 19 of the magazine	p. 15
Suggested Answers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activity 1: 5 Senses and Actions, Feelings and Thoughts• Activity 2: Dialogue, Simile and Alliteration	p. 13 p. 14	Discursive Writing To be used with reference to pages 20 to 28 of the magazine	p. 16
		Hybrid Writing To be used with reference to pages 49 to 57 of the magazine	p. 18



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

NARRATIVE WRITING: Supplementary Notes

Have you experienced our narrative skills roller coaster ride on Instagram and read our sample essays in the Issue? Here are some additional resources to help you prepare for narrative essay writing.

UNDERSTANDING: DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN TEXT TYPES

Before you embark on writing, you need to be familiar with and ready for the different essay type you are tackling. Here is a breakdown.

<p>Personal recount <i>'It was <u>my</u> proudest moment.'</i> Write about a time when <u>you</u> felt like this.</p>	<p>Narrative Write about a time <u>someone</u> had the proudest moment of <u>his</u> or <u>her</u> life.</p>	<p>Descriptive Describe the proudest moment of <u>your</u> life.</p>
<p>ESSENTIALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use vivid descriptions for character and settings development • Describe characters using 5 senses as well as Actions, Feelings and Thoughts 		
<p>CONDITIONALS Needs a 5-part storyline:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exposition 2. Rising tension 3. Climaxes 4. Falling tension 5. Resolution <p>Has a message or learning point</p>		<p>CONDITIONALS Focuses on painting a vivid picture of the particular moment. A storyline is not needed.</p>
<p>PERSPECTIVE Has a main character and has a first person point of view, i.e. you are in the story as 'I'. (Hint: Drawing from own real-life experiences would make your story more authentic.) May have a main challenge/challenger that helps to build tension.</p>	<p>PERSPECTIVE Has a main character and can be in first or third person point of view. May have a main challenge/challenger that helps to build tension.</p>	<p>PERSPECTIVE Has a main character and is usually from a first-person point of view.</p>
<p>TENSES Usually in past tense to show that the recount is about events that have happened</p>	<p>TENSES Usually in past tense to show that the recount is about events that have happened</p>	<p>TENSES Can be in present or past tense</p>



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

UNDERSTANDING: ANALYSING QUESTION REQUIREMENTS

Once you have identified your question time, you need to familiarise yourself with your task requirements. Study the features of this Personal Recount question. Can you tell what your task requirements are?

'It was **my proudest** moment.' Write about a time when **you** felt like this.

Tips: Identify the obstacles in this essay task. The **topic key words** have been bolded and genre directional words have been underlined in the example above.

- **'my', 'you'**: suggests that the task requires a first person point of view
- **'proudest'**: refers to being overjoyed at one's achievement, and suggests a desire to showcase it to others and bask in their admiration
- 'Write about': suggests that the task requires a recount that should follow a story arc
- 'a time': refers to a specific occasion and suggests that the task requires a personal recount

ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

PLANNING: CREATIVE NARRATIVE STARTS AND HOOKS

Here are 3 creative ways to begin your essay.

1. DIALOGUE – focus on conversation

“But-but Ms Ng, are you sure that I’m suitable for the Music Programme?” I asked in disbelief.

Unfazed, Ms Ng continued, “Think about it again, Faizal. Give yourself a chance. I believe you deserve a shot at this.” There was a firmness in her voice that made refusing her hard.

“Okay. I’ll... I’ll have a think, Ms Ng.” I tried to sound as non-committal as possible.

This focuses on the conversation between a student and his teacher. Readers are given hints about their topic of conversation, but not explicitly, so as to leave them guessing and reading on. They also find out a bit of the characters’ attitude towards the matter. What do you think they are talking about, and what has Faizal been asked to consider?

2. CHARACTER – focus on characters’ actions and thoughts

[Description of the student]

I sat in the school garden during recess time, humming my favourite tune to myself, “A Million Dreams”. I never tire of this wonderful theme song from the unforgettable soundtrack of *The Greatest Showman*.

[Description of the teacher]

Ms Sheena Ng always trusted her instincts and this time was no exception. She had passed her request by the Principal who gave her the authority to enrol students to the newly launched Music Preparatory Course (MPC). This was the fourth time she was asking Faizal, after his non-committal answers that he will “think about it”. She put aside thoughts of discouragement and stepped towards Faizal, telling herself that she was going to convince him this time.

These two sets of descriptions paint a picture of each character through their thoughts, highlighting the student’s love and appreciation for music and the teacher’s determination to ask Faizal to join the Music Programme. We can also infer that the student, Faizal, has a keen interest in music, and that the teacher, Ms Ng, is hesitant but still determined to approach him.

ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

3. SETTING – focus on the entire scene

In the distance was the familiar tune of “A Million Dreams” mingled with the indistinct chatter in the canteen. There I was seated on the choice bench in the school garden that I knew was under the shade at this time of the day. The soft rippling of the water was a welcome respite from a busy school day, its rhythms never failing to restore some peace in me. At the corner of my ear, I hear distinctly approaching footsteps and felt the bench squeak as someone sat down beside me.

This describes one of the character’s surroundings, and shows how attentive he is to the sounds around him, allowing them to relieve him of the day’s burdens. He seems to be particularly reliant on his sense of hearing, an interesting trait of his that might pique readers’ attention.

ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

PLANNING: BUILDING TENSION

Now that you have learnt how to start your essay, here are tips on building tension. Study the following paragraphs and decide which one offers more tension.

Example A:

My teacher's words echoed in my mind. Although I loved music and admired many famous singers, I knew I had no chance of making music. I never really succeeded in anything since I was young, and trying harder was not going to work. I had learnt to accept myself as I was and be content with being mediocre. I could not believe that my teacher would ask me, of all people, to join the Enhanced Music Programme. I was not gifted and knew it would be a struggle. However, with my classmates' and Ms Ng's persistent encouragement and support, I relented.

Example B:

My teacher's words echoed in my mind. I had always loved music and admired singers and musicians, but I knew I had no chance of being one. Earlier years saw me wishing away my thorn in the flesh, but as time went by and nothing changed, I started to accept myself as I was and let those musical dreams ebb. Hence, I was torn when my teacher made this invitation, which seemed to awaken all that I had laid to rest for years now. Why me? What did she see in me? How would I be able to play the piano or read scores? Yet she came every other day to ask about my decision, and if it was not her, some of my close classmates would prod me about it and encourage me to take up the challenge. I could only smile and thank them for their support and kind words, and shy away from their compliments. Ms Ng continued to reassure me and even acknowledged my concerns and feelings of inferiority. Strong-headed as I was, yet being comforted and boosted by Ms Ng's persistent encouragement and my close friends' support, I relented.

In Example A, tension is built but it rests on one main element and brief, almost negligible mention of another:

- 1) The character's reluctance is described in some detail but is limited to his inferiority and past failings. What are other factors that come into play to make his decision harder?
- 2) Even when teacher's and classmates' support are brought in, it is only briefly mentioned. Here, the character is convinced, but rather easily – there are few hurdles described.

In Example B, tension is built up with the following elements:

- 1) The character's hesitation is made ironic by showing how much he loves music but chooses otherwise.
- 2) Readers sympathise further by mentioning some backstory about the tragic acceptance of his failings.
- 3) Highlighting thoughts illustrate the sense of confusion and disbelief he feels.
- 4) The teacher's and classmates' encouragement, against the character's reluctance, are detailed to show how much persuasion was required.

This example describes many compounding hurdles before the character is finally convinced, which helps to build rising tension.



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

PLANNING: CLIMAX

Now that you have learnt about tension, here is how you can develop an emotionally pivotal moment in your essay. The climax is the highlight of the story that is the most exciting and full of tension and action, so dwell on the moment, since that is the question – ‘your proudest moment’.

Study the following paragraphs and decide which one offers more climactic peak in the essay story arc.

Example A:

I stood up to rousing applause from the entire school, not quite believing that I had just pulled off my maiden performance within six months of practice. My heart brimmed with joy and pride for as long as the applause sounded. It was the proudest moment of my life!

Example B:

Never in a million dreams would I think that I could bask in the applause of a thousand people. Six months ago, that was an impossibility. I could not believe my ears – the entire school had erupted in cheers and rousing applause that seemed to go on forever. My heart swelled with joy and pride. I had come so far, and it all began from my leap of faith and that tremendous amount of faith from Ms Ng put in me. The enchanting melody that I had always sung at recess actually came from these amazing fingers of mine this time. I could make music! “Amazing performance, Faiza! You did it! What an incredible feat! I am so proud of you. We are *all* proud of you.” Ms Ng exclaimed as she gave me a hearty pat on the shoulder.

In Example A, there are descriptions of joy, pride and disbelief. However, these are too brief for the high point in this story. As you can see, reading a statement that it was the proudest moment does not make you convinced. To feel convinced, the writer needs to show the emotions by painting a picture of utter joy and pride.

In Example B, the moment of triumph is extended to show the weight of the character’s jubilation, surprise and pride. The writer has brought you, the reader, up to this high point in the story – and works to make this climax worth your while!



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

BRAINSTORMING: 5 SENSES

Now that you have learnt about tension, here is how you can brainstorm to create more vivid characters and settings.

What is your character like? Use the 5 senses for bold characterisation.

A	Sight	hair as grey as salt and pepper
B	Sound	raspy voice with a throaty cough
C	Smell	stale smell of unwashed clothes
D	Taste	an expression as sour as a lemon
E	Touch	wrinkly skin with the dry texture of paper

BRAINSTORMING: ACTIONS, FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS

For immersive characterisation, show it through **actions**, **feelings** and **thoughts**!

	JOY	FEAR	ANGER	SADNESS
A	ACTIONS			
	Sight: She punched the air in delight, a triumphant grin on her radiant face.	Sight: He pressed himself against the wall, and shielded his eyes against the light.	Sound: Breathing hard, she sarled at her opponent in fury.	Sight: He clenched his teeth in grief, his eyes brimming with tears.
B	FEELINGS			
	Touch: She felt a wave of euphoria wash over her.	Sound: He could hear his anxious heart palpitating in his ears.	Touch: She felt a hot flash of anger , her resentment a growing weight in her gut.	Touch: His heart ached with grief , and he felt as if the ground were giving way under his feet.
C	THOUGHTS			
	Smell: She breathed in the sweet smell of her long-awaited victory .	Touch: His aching head throbbed with crippling doubt .	Smell: The sour odour of pure contempt oozed from her pores.	Sight: He tried to mask his pain, but he knew that others saw through his pretence easily.



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

WRITING: VISUALS, SOUND AND CONTRAST

Mastered the tips above? Show your creativity with this writing toolkit. Go beyond the literal by using **visuals**, **sound** and **contrast**.

A. Use VISUALS to paint images with words.		
<p><u>Metaphor</u> Apply the qualities of one thing directly to another.</p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>Regret weighed heavily on my mind.</p> <p>I was a fish out of water, completely out of my depth.</p> <p>Speech is silver, but silence is gold.</p>	<p><u>Simile</u> Draw symbolic comparisons.</p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>The paparazzi outside the courtroom swooped towards the celebrity like hungry vultures.</p> <p>She stood as motionless as a corpse to avoid detection.</p> <p>His melodic laughter was like the sound of tinkling bells.</p>	<p><u>Personification</u> Give abstract ideas a human form.</p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>The camera loves her because she is so pretty.</p> <p>Lightning danced across the sky.</p> <p>Guilt followed me around like a shadow.</p>

B. Use SOUND to drive home your point.		
<p><u>Alliteration</u> Use sounds to amplify key ideas, create rhythm and build tension.</p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>They moaned and groaned in protest.</p> <p>The dark dance of death haunted her.</p> <p>He was wide-eyed in wonder.</p>	<p><u>Dialogue</u> Create speech that helps readers feel present in the moment.</p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>"You stop right there young man," snapped a menacing voice from behind me.</p>	<p><u>Rhythm</u> Use parallel sentences for impact, or vary sentence structures for a memorable rhythm.</p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p><i>Parallel structures</i> I meant what I said and I said what I meant.</p> <p>I added a dash of flair, a sprinkle of rhythm, and a dollop of poetry.</p> <p><i>Contrasting lengths</i> I glanced at Mdm Kavitha. She was on her feet, beaming at me and cheering with pride. Her energy was infectious.</p>



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

C. Use **CONTRAST** to heighten the drama.

Imagery

Use visual contrasts to intensify emotions or create comedy.

EXAMPLES:

A pair of identical twins have personalities as different as **night and day**.

A **tall and lumbering** person tries unsuccessfully to hide behind a **short and squat** bush.

Sentences

Draw comparisons for humour or surprise.

EXAMPLES:

"What an amazing performance! Your **punishment** is to represent our school at the district level competitions next year," she laughed in jest.

Plots

Defy expectations for drama and suspense.

EXAMPLES:

The black sheep of the family redeems himself and becomes a role model.

A villain turns out to be a hero.

Watch out! Overly florid language can be distracting and make your writing hard to read. Use these tools selectively to make an impact where it counts the most!



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

TRY THIS

The sample essays provide examples of narrative essays. In the skills section, you have learnt four essential essay writing steps (Understanding, Planning, Brainstorming and Writing). Can you apply these question analysis steps to the following questions?

1. 'I've never seen my friend laugh so much!' Write about a time when this happened. (O Level 2018 1128/01 2018 Q4)
2. Write about a time when you caused great disappointment to another person. What did you do about the situation? (O Level 2017 1128/01 Q2)
3. 'The best things in life are free.' Write about some of the occasions when you have found this to be true. (O Level 2014 1128/01 2014 Q4)
4. What do you consider to be your greatest achievement? Why does it mean so much to you? (O Level 2013 1128/01 2013 Q4)

Choose a question from the list above, and use the skills you have learnt to develop an essay outline.

Understand: Take note of the text type (Personal Recount, Narrative or Descriptive) and the question requirements required for the type.	
Question breakdown	Essentials: Conditionals: Perspective:
Planning and Brainstorming: choose one of the two proposed essay structures and use it to guide your essay!	
Creative starts and hooks	Hook to your narrative story (dialogue, character or setting):



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

Exposition	Development of your main character, main challenge/challenger, and setting:
Rising tension	The main challenge/challenger and how this impacts the main character and the plot:
Climax	The dramatic peak and emotional highlight of the story:
Falling tension	How the main challenge/challenger is tackled
Resolution	Conclude the narrative Reflect on the key message of the narrative



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

NARRATIVE WRITING: Suggested Answers

ACTIVITY 1: 5 Senses; Actions, Feelings and Thoughts Exercise Answers

Here are our suggested answers to the exercise on **5 Senses** and **Actions, Feelings** and **Thoughts**. What other creative ideas did you have for this section?

1	As the cold steel bar clamped shut across my thighs and we were about to take off, I thought that now it was far too late to change my mind about taking the ride.	The sense of touch here and thoughts are used here to show the protagonist's sense of regret and dread.
2	People on the ride waved their arms in euphoria to touch the brilliant sky and I saw triumphant grins on their faces.	Visual descriptions of actions show people's jubilation in a strong contrast with the main character's feelings.
3	Amidst the wafting scent of candy floss and popcorn , I heard bouts of hysterical screams from fellow riders that grew louder with each twist and turn.	The smells and sounds are used here to create a realistic experience of the protagonist's experience riding the roller coaster.
4	As the car crept its way up the rail, I sneaked a peek and saw the ground falling away from us.	The sense of sight is used here to heighten the protagonist's feelings of anxiety.
5	When the car finally lurched into freefall, I felt my stomach flip in nausea, churning with the sour taste of fear.	A mix of emotions right before the plunge show the extent of the main character's terror.

ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

ACTIVITY 2: Dialogue, Simile and Alliteration Exercise Answers

Here are our suggested answers to the exercise on use **Dialogue**, **Simile** and **Alliteration**. Did you have other unique responses for these questions?

1b	<p>"You are in for the ride of your life," laughed a menacing voice from behind me. It was someone who was just exiting the ride that Ana and I were queueing up for.</p>	<p>This example of dialogue shows a person taunting the protagonist about the ride, heightening the character's sense of fear.</p>
2b	<p>I was like a fish out of water, completely out of my depth.</p>	<p>This simile is used to compare the protagonist to the qualities of a dying fish to show the extent of his or her discomfort and disorientation.</p>
3b	<p>The dark dance of death haunted me. I could no longer hold my fear in. I screamed like my life depended on it.</p>	<p>The use of adjectives and nouns starting with 'd' her create alliterative rhythm that is used to describe death and amplify the character's sense of fear.</p>



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

SITUATIONAL WRITING: Application Exercises

TRY THIS

In the skills section, you have learnt four essential essay writing steps (Understanding, Planning, Brainstorming and Writing). The sample essays provide examples of formal application letters for a **pre-school sector** work experience, as well as a **hospitality industry** work experience.

Kickstart your essay by Planning and Brainstorming using the table provided! Can you apply the skills you have learnt to plan and develop an essay response that supports a **retail business** work experience?

Title	Write a succinct title that establishes the purpose of your letter
Introduction	Introduce yourself: State your purpose:
Body Paragraph 1	Use emotional appeal: Paraphrase, add detail and link information back to the question:
Body Paragraph 2	Elaborate on skills and qualities: Paraphrase, add detail and link information back to the question:
Body Paragraph 3	Explain how this opportunity will benefit you: Paraphrase, add detail and link information back to the question:
Conclusion	Remember to state your thanks in your conclusion



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

DISCURSIVE WRITING: Application Exercises

TRY THIS

The sample essays provide examples of expository and argumentative essays. In the skills section, you have learnt four essential essay writing steps (Understanding, Planning, Brainstorming and Writing). Can you apply these steps to the following questions?

1. Some people like to stand out from the crowd; others just want to be part of it. Which do you prefer and why? (O Level 2018 1128/01 Q5)
2. It is often said that people are too concerned with getting things and spending money. What is your opinion? (O Level 2017 1128/01 Q3)
3. To what extent do you agree with the idea that some teenagers lead an unhealthy lifestyle? Give reasons for your views. (O Level 2016 1128/01 Q4)
4. Do you agree that we can learn from the mistakes of others or do we need to learn from our own experience? (O Level 2016 1128/01 Q2)

Choose a question from the list above, and use the skills you have learnt to develop an essay outline.

Understanding	
Question breakdown	Subject/topic words: Degree/extent words: Directional words: Your stand:
Planning, Brainstorming	
Introduction	Hook: Thesis statement:



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

Body Paragraph 1	Point: Elaboration: Example: Link:
Body Paragraph 2	Point: Elaboration: Example: Link:
Body Paragraph 3	Point: Elaboration: Example: Link:
Conclusion	



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

HYBRID WRITING: Application Exercises

TRY THIS

The sample essays provide examples of hybrid essays. In the skills section, you have learnt four essential essay writing steps (Understanding, Planning, Brainstorming and Writing). Can you apply these steps to the following questions?

1. Describe a place which means a great deal to you. Why is it so important? (O Level 2017 1128/01 Q1)
2. Describe a childhood toy, or a game you played, which still means a great deal to you. Why is it so important? (O Level 2016 1128/01 Q1)
3. Which person has the greatest influence in your life at the present time and why? (O Level 2014 1128/01 Q3)
4. What do you consider to be your greatest achievement? Why does it mean so much to you? (O Level 2013 1128/01 Q4)

Choose a question from the list above, and use the skills you have learnt to develop an essay outline.

Understand: take note of the dual question requirements!	
Question breakdown	Subject/topic words: Degree/extent words: Directional words:
Planning and Brainstorming: choose one of the two proposed essay structures and use it to guide your essay!	
Introduction	Introduce your narrative story: Introduce your stand:



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES

Body Paragraph 1	
Body Paragraph 2	
Body Paragraph 3	
Conclusion	Conclude the narrative Reflect on the points discussed and affirm your stand



ACTIVITY KIT AND LEARNING NOTES



ABOUT US

Our Present Perfect Story

OUR PRESENT PERFECT STORY

Present Perfect is at once a type of verb tense in the English Language and our vision for what readers of our magazine will gain from their reading experience. As a verb tense, the present perfect refers to an action that has occurred in the past and that has relevance to the present. This is a metaphor for our project. Alongside our sister magazines *Broader Perspectives* and *REPRESENT*, the *Present Perfect* team works to equip our readers with relevant skills and knowledge, and to empower our student readers to find relevance and joy in learning about the English Language. In addition, we work to help readers develop a sound understanding of the past and present contexts shaping our world. Lastly, we work to inspire our readers to find ways for meaningful personal and social engagement in the present to order to help realise the perfect version of *their* future society.

In the grand scheme of things, the measurable impact of a magazine is small. Still, we believe that the possibilities we can help to create will be greater than the sum of its parts. Thank you for coming along with us on this change-making journey as an educator, a student and a reader.

"Infinite past makes present tense."

– Eleanor Wong, *The Campaign to Confer the Public Service Star On JBJ*

We want to hear from you!

Tell us what you think! Scan this code or visit our site to share your thoughts. Three respondents will be randomly picked to win a specially curated magazine bundle!



tiny.cc/PPessay2020