



English

Key Concept Chart

Form 3



Composition (essay) writing

► Descriptive essay

- ◆ In this type of essay, you **describe** a person, a place, a situation or event, or even feelings. The instruction in the question will tell you what type of essay you must write, e.g.

'Describe the worst day of your life', **OR** the title will lend itself to a description, e.g. 'Caught in the act!'

- ◆ Focus on **important** and **interesting** details and be **creative**, in order to capture the imagination of your reader.
- ◆ Be **vivid** and **dramatic**, e.g.

'In this desert, there is very little rain. A lonely wind tells of its sorrow as it walks along the hills of rock and plains of sand.'

This is a very clever description, which personifies the wind.

- ◆ Appeal to the reader's five senses, e.g. smell, taste, touch, sound and sight. Imagine what you are describing. Does the picture you see in your head make you feel happy, angry or disgusted? Let this come out in your **tone**.
- ◆ Your words should '**colour**' your description. Use **similes** and **metaphors** to create a picture in your reader's mind, e.g.

'My grandmother sings like an angel', instead of the unimaginative: 'My grandmother can sing.'

► Argumentative essay

- ◆ In this type of essay, you have to **convince** the reader of a particular point of view, so you should present your views **passionately** and **persuasively**.
- ◆ The instruction in the question will tell you what type of essay you must write, e.g.

'Television is eroding family values. Do you agree?'

OR

'Discuss this statement: Men should be paid bigger salaries than women.'

- ◆ Your structure should revolve around the development of an **argument** which is intended to convince the reader to agree with you.
- ◆ The main idea is to agree or disagree with the topic, with good and **logical reasons** to support your stance, **OR** you can brainstorm ideas to support the given view, then also give ideas to disagree with the same point of view.
- ◆ This kind of writing relies on **clever presentation** and/or **manipulation of facts, statistics and ideas**. The reader will not be convinced if you cannot **substantiate** (or support) your reasoning.

► Narrative essay

- ◆ In this type of essay, you **tell a story**, or narrate (give an account of) how something happened.
- ◆ Focus on an interesting storyline. **Mapping** (where you plan and break down parts of your story into key elements, e.g. character) and **brainstorming** (where you 'storm' your brain for ideas) will help you to achieve logical sequencing of the events.
- ◆ The instruction in the question will tell you what type of essay you must write, e.g.

'Write a story beginning with the words...', **OR** the title you are given will imply that there is a story to be told, e.g. 'A prophetic dream'

- ◆ Create a strong beginning, full of **suspense** and **mystery**. Think of your favourite movies and how they begin: you can tell immediately if you will be thrilled with the story or not. The following are two examples of a good opening for a narrative essay with the title: 'A prophetic dream':

Example 1: 'Welcome to your funeral', the mysterious voice said from the shadows. 'What?' Bonang gasped, edging back from the dark, gaping rectangular hole at her feet...'

Example 2: 'I woke up suddenly in the thick, black night. Was I dreaming or not?'

- ◆ Create a **setting** (the place where the story occurs); a clear **plot** (the sequence of events); interesting **characters** around whom the action revolves; a problem or **conflict**; and a **resolution** of the problem at the end.
- ◆ Use the past tense, as well as 1st and 3rd person (*I, he, she, them*) narration.

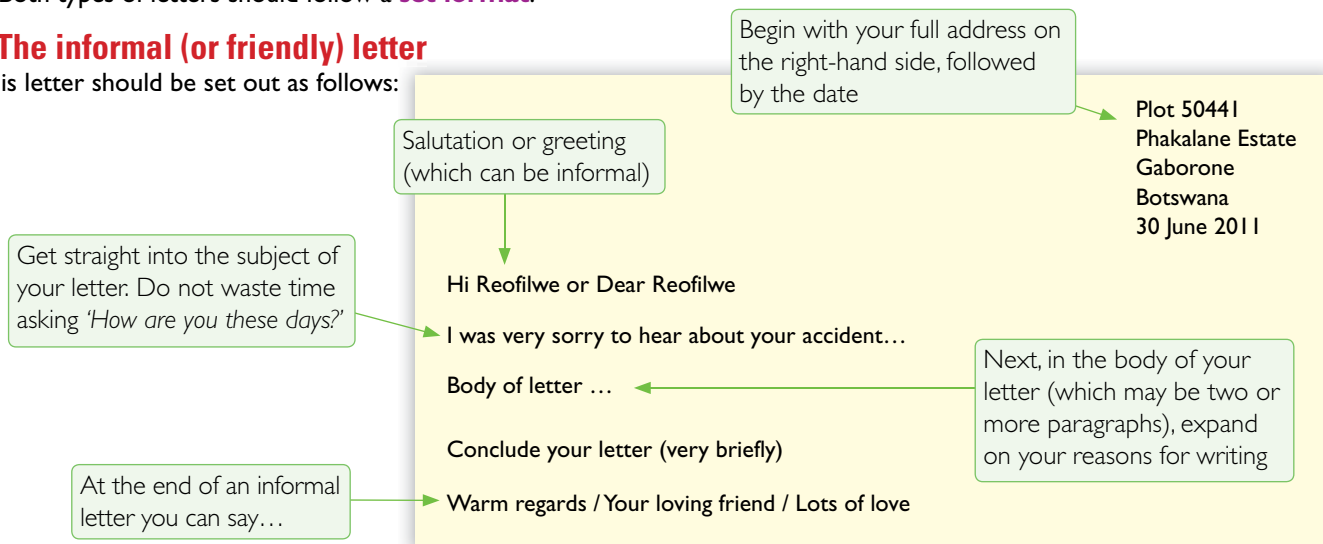
Letter writing

There are two main types of letter:

- ♦ The **informal** or **friendly** letter which you write to friends, relatives and acquaintances. The language and tone of this letter are therefore **friendly, playful** or conversational.
- ♦ The **formal** or **business** letter which you write to the Editor of a newspaper, manager of a store, a politician, or the manager of a company, for business reasons. The language and tone of this letter are **polite** and **businesslike**.
- ♦ Both types of letters should follow a **set format**.

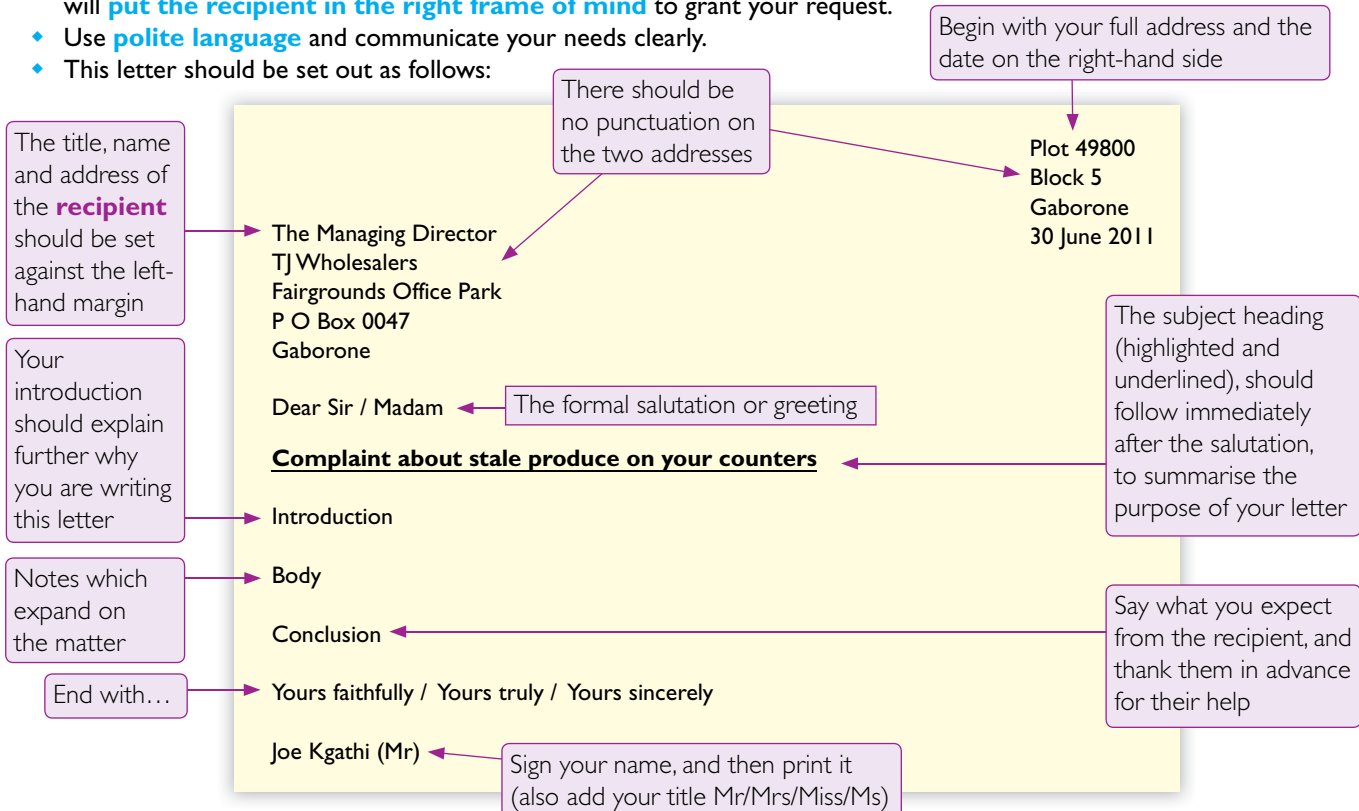
► The informal (or friendly) letter

This letter should be set out as follows:



► The formal (or business) letter

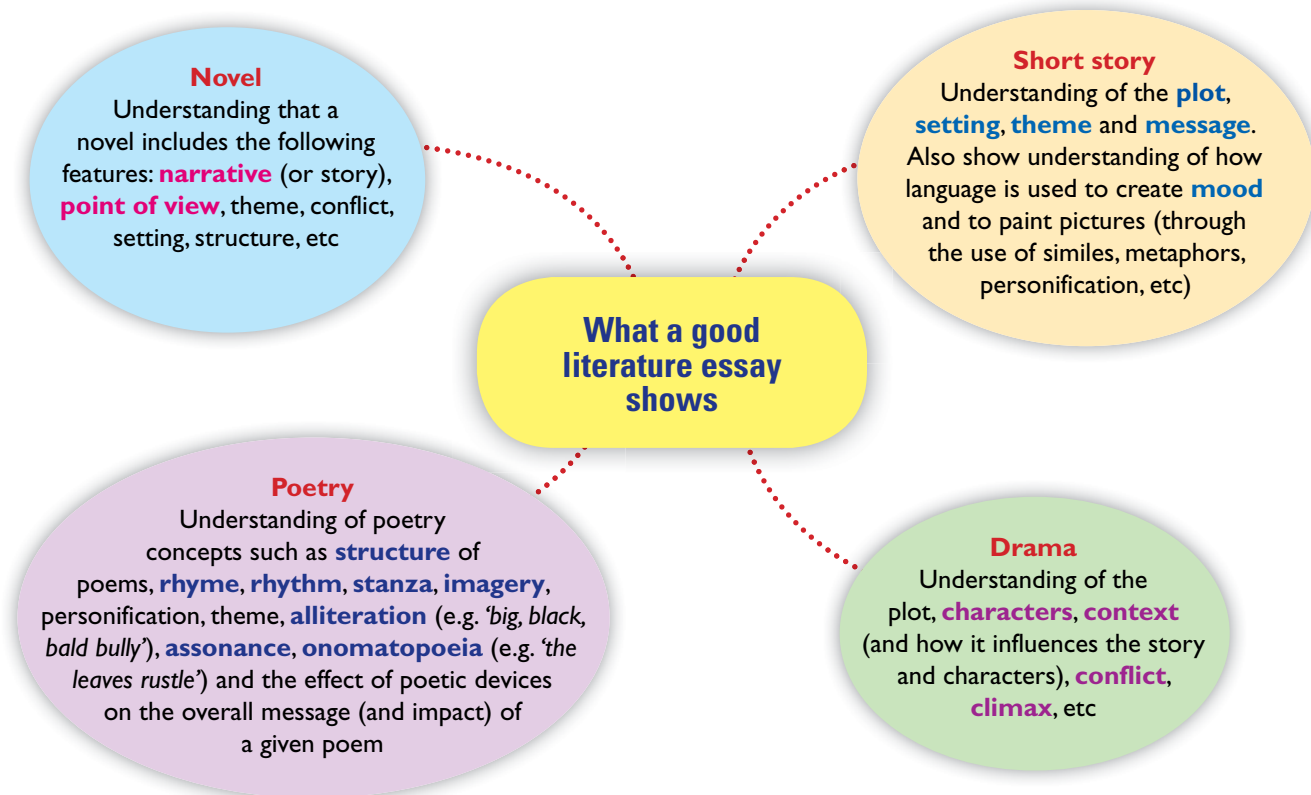
- ♦ In this letter, you are writing to someone who requires a formal letter **in order to do something for you**. Therefore, you have to write in such a way that your tone and presentation (the overall impression that you will give) will **put the recipient in the right frame of mind** to grant your request.
- ♦ Use **polite language** and communicate your needs clearly.
- ♦ This letter should be set out as follows:



NOTE: Aside from the sender's address, you should write everything else **flush** against the left hand margin. Remember to use the block paragraph method, where you leave a line between each paragraph. Do not mix paragraphing methods, i.e. indent first, then block paragraph next.

Literature (essay) writing

- Your Junior Secondary syllabus focuses on the study of these genres: **short story**, **drama**, **novel** and **poetry**. The mind map below summarises what aspects you need to know well in order to get good marks in an essay based on a particular genre.



Here are five steps that will help you to tackle literature essays more effectively.

Step 1: Be clear what your task is

- ◆ Understand the topic before you begin to work on it, i.e. break the topic up into its important parts.
- ◆ Identify **task words**, e.g. **explain** (why?); **describe** (how?); **discuss** (talk about); or **evaluate** (give your own reasons for).
- ◆ Identify **content words**, i.e. the words that tell you what the topic is all about, e.g.

'Discuss (**task word**) the incident in *Things Fall Apart* where Okonkwo cuts off the head of the head messenger with a machete (**content words**) and explain (**task word**) how this incident completely changes Okonkwo's character (**content words**).'

Step 2: Choose the relevant facts from a set book

- ◆ Which details address your topic? Make notes as ideas pop into your head, and make sure the ideas are connected.
- ◆ Make sure all your ideas are relevant to the topic or question.

Step 3: Arrange your ideas in a logical sequence

- ◆ Make notes on which idea you will begin with. How will you link your ideas?
- ◆ Jot down the main ideas and arrange them in the order in which you will present them.

Step 4: Write your first draft

- ◆ Arrange your ideas into a first draft, and once again check that what you are writing is relevant to the topic.
- ◆ Make sure you are presenting your ideas in a logical sequence.

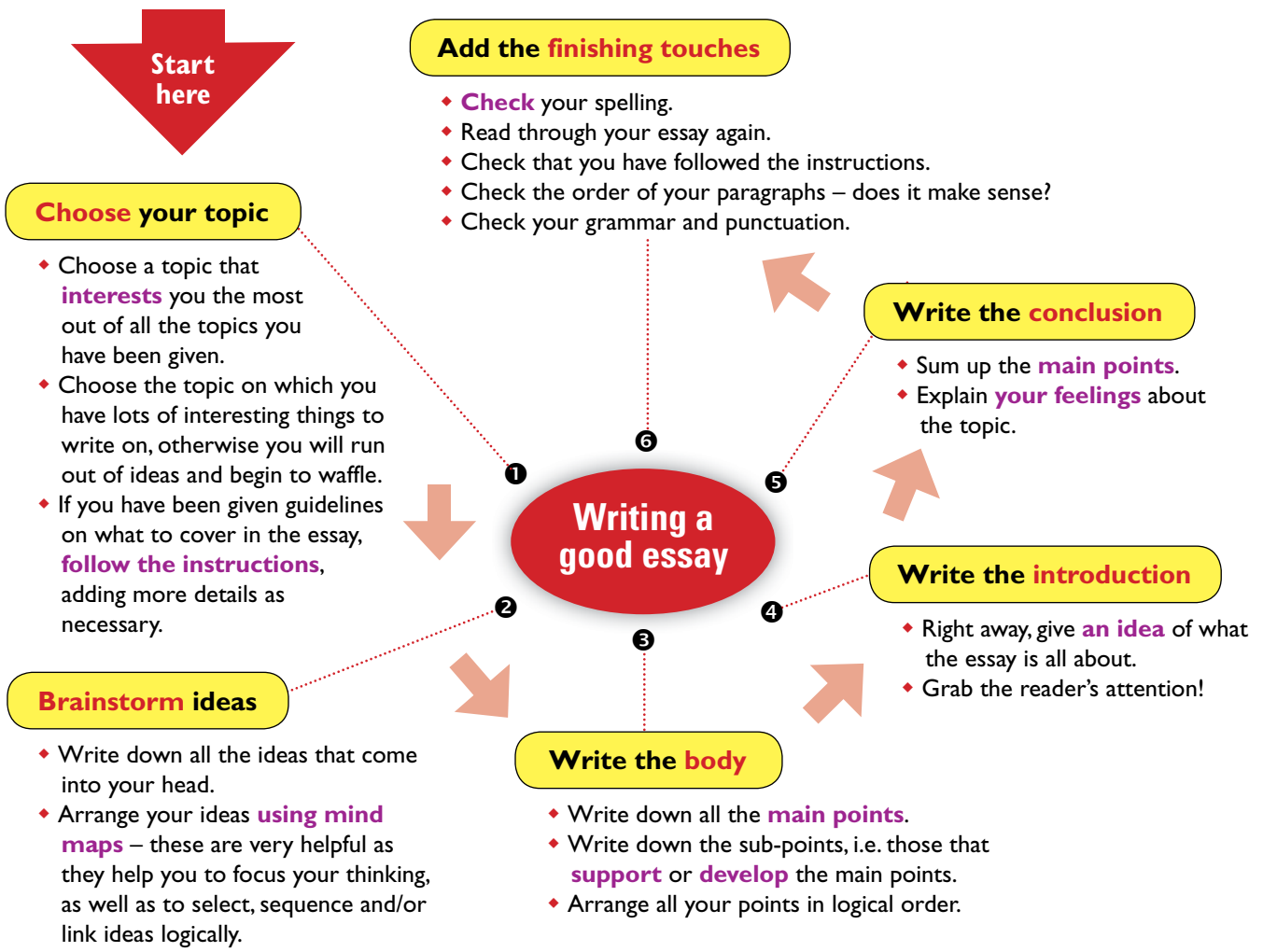
Step 5: Write your essay, and check your work before you hand it in

- ◆ Check spelling and grammar.
- ◆ Make sure each paragraph focuses on one main idea, and that paragraphs flow well from one to the next.
- ◆ Check that you are addressing the topic throughout, i.e. that your text is always relevant.

Lastly, if you want to quote what a character says in a set book (word for word), use inverted commas as you have been taught.

Tips for effective essay writing

Six steps to writing a good essay in an examination



A good essay

- ♦ is well structured and focused
- ♦ is arranged logically
- ♦ grabs the reader's attention
- ♦ uses colourful language which will appeal to the reader's imagination and senses
- ♦ lists references used as necessary

Paragraphs: the secret to easy reading!

- ♦ Do not forget to paragraph your work. Paragraphs will make your essay easy to read.
- ♦ Each paragraph should have a **topic sentence** (which introduces or sums up the information in the paragraph) and **developers** (which provide further details in the paragraph), e.g.

Thabang and Tlotlego were very busy the week before Christmas. ← topic sentence

They watered the garden and cleaned the house. ← developer

They washed and ironed their clothes. Then we all went shopping for presents.

↑ developer

↑ developer

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ISBN 978-99912-594-7-5



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