**The Individual Oral Commentary in IB**

You will have 20 minutes to prepare to make a commentary on an extract of approximately 40 lines from one of the critical study works in this course.   You will be given the passage and two guiding questions. When you return at the end of your 20 minutes, you will begin your commentary which will be taped for external moderation. Total recording time is as close to 12 minutes as possible including mandatory discussion with your teacher.  Do not go over 10 minutes.

Remember that the way in which you speak and the way in which you organize your material are as important as what you have to say: the teacher / examiner will be judging your choice of language and your skills as a speaker as well as your knowledge of the text.

Your commentary should include answers to the guiding questions but should also go beyond that to other issues arising in the passage.  You should also comment on how this passage relates to other parts of the work.

**Your commentary should follow the following format**

1. Provide the author, text, and genre of your “extract” or “passage”

2.  Briefly provide context of the passage (**use the word “context” –it is on the assessment criteria**); that is, how it fits into the work as a whole.  Do this **briefly** and remember, it is different depending on the genre of your extract (plays / poetry / novels)

3. Next, include the general meaning (a brief summary) of the selection -what happens in the passage / extract?

4. Following the general meaning, include the author’s purpose (intentions) for the extract.  For the sake of your oral commentary, the purpose of the passage can be the “thesis” of your discussion.

5. Once you have the author’s purpose, you need to decide how the author communicates the purpose (**this is where your ability to analyze will shine**).   You should discuss literary devices which will support the author’s intentions. Make sure you can link each one of these devices to the intentions of the author through a solid analysis. Also, try to make links to other parts of the text to demonstrate your knowledge of the text as a whole.

6. Continue your commentary going through each device or devise another logical order to present things on your own.

7. End your commentary with a conclusion in which you include a personal response to the piece.

**A suggestion for how to use your preparation time**

1. Read the guiding questions carefully, and keep them in mind.

2. Read through the extract.  Circle words and phrases which immediately strike you as worth comment.

3. On your work paper, take brief notes which place the piece in context.  Where does it occur and how does it relate to the rest?

4.  Decide on the author’s intentions and the devices which are used to support them.

5.  Make brief notes for an introductory statement to indicate what subjects you intend to bring up.

6.  Write brief notes on each of the topics listed in your introduction.  Include line references to help you find it. Be prepared to quote lines while discussing subjects.  Leave some space under each item.

7.  Look at your notes and see if you can say something about how these subjects appear elsewhere in the text.  Add such further remarks under each heading in your notes. (quotations or paraphrases from parallel passages in the text are an excellent idea.

8. If time permits, look again at the passage to see what you may have missed.  Jot down these ideas at the end of your list of points.

9. Review your list of points.  Prepare to use it to prod your memory.  Do not write full statements to be read aloud.

**Some tips during your commentary**

1. Read any quotes you choose to include with enthusiasm and provide line refs before you read them.
2. Don’t be afraid to “guess” about different parts / links of the selection -explore it!
3. Make sure you have BRIEF point form notes.  Remember, you only have 20 minutes to prepare.
4. **Remember not to simply summarize what happens in the selection -analyze it!**
5. If you run out of material to speak about before the required time, review your content and provide closure.  Many candidates forget to do this and the teacher then intervenes with questions which means candidates have no closure.

**Framework for Starting an Oral Commentary**

1. **First give physical context:**

This poem / passage / extract is taken from

Act \_\_\_ scene  \_\_\_ of *the play*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Chapter \_\_\_\_ of the novel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

1. **Then refine the context:**

**Either …**

Just before this extract …

explain the significance (How does the preceding action complement / contrast characters actions, interactions / mood; themes  here in this scene. Is something foreshadowed? Does the scene echo anything earlier or later)

Immediately following this extract …

explain the significance on the action and characters AS A RESULT OF this scene / exchange

**Or**

*explain how that poem complements or contrasts other poems*

1. **Say how the poem / passage in significant in terms of:**

**developing** action, plot, character, themes and our understanding of them

* action:

e.g. *this is a key moment / turning point as X happens.  We are first introduced to*

*Y who will play a crucial role in ....*

* key themes / ideas

e.g. *the theme of X is foregrounded here as .....*

* mood / atmosphere

e.g. *The mood in this passage shifts to one of fear and anxiety as X realises ....*

* character & relationships:

e.g. *we learn this about X; character X is introduced; at this point X and Y grow apart; we start to feel less sympathy towards X*

1. **General Overview, Shape**
   * 1. Give a general overview of the action of the passage or poem

In a brief sentence or two say what happens in terms of actions and characters and how plot and/or relationships develop.

b) and talk about the shape of the poem or passage?

* + Is there a distinctive movement in it, towards a climax or change, or towards one point and then in another direction?
  + does it fall into several clear sections? If so how do these relate or link?
  + Are there tensions or oppositions or contrasts? Between what? or whom?

1. **Common features / central ideas**

If you want to point out any common features that occur in the poem that relate to other Songs of Innocence or Experience this adds context

1. **Now explain the main intention and techniques**

The poet's / playwright's / author’s main intention in this passage / poem is to

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **VERB to show intention** | **Aspect / Theme developed** |
| * criticize the … * highlight the … * explore the … * develop the … | theme of …  character of …  the  relationship between …  the conflict between … |

**in particular,**

There may be some another key intention here or a refinement of the above

The main techniques through which he does this are:

* the use of …   to convey …
* references to … to highlight …
* a tight / regular rhyme scheme of x  to reflect
* a regular / rigid stanza form to reinforce the sense/idea of …

see below for advice on planning your techniques

**When planning you could create TWO COLUMNS**

* one for intentions
* one for techniques

Add to each column as you read and track the poem/passage. The techniques and intentions should be familiar to you – remember to focus primarily on THESE lines.

**a) Write down the techniques you notice**

the regular rhyme scheme

**b) refine them as you go adding detail – new patterns you notice**

the regular aabb rhyme scheme / use of rhyming couplets

**c) try and add the EFFECT and IMPACT of techniques**

the regular aabb rhyming couplet rhyme scheme to convey Blake's attempts to capture and "frame" the Tyger in images and words

**d) you may add more EFFECTS as you go**

and to reinforce the duality Blake recognizes in the Tyger – the complementary the Lamb and Tyger in each of us, the opposition between forces of good and evil, the way the Tyger inspires awe and fear

**These may not occur in this order – you may see effects before you recognize patterns to the technique**

THE MATCH THE TECHNIQUES to the INTENTIONS to produce your plan

Think of different techniques you will be talking about. Know these in advance. Here are some to get you going. Remember if you are studying drama to think about **Literary techniques, Dramatic techniques,** and for poetry, **Poetic devices**

**Verbal or Linguistic (not a comprehensive list)**

1. Structural Features (rhyme, rhythm, lineation, stanza layout, sentencing, repetition, echoes, contrasts, antithesis, symmetry and balance in lines, foreshadowing, flashback)
2. Imagery (images, symbols, allusions (classical / biblical), similes, metaphors, personification)
3. Sound Devices (alliteration, onomatopoeia, assonance)
4. Diction / Word Texture
5. Speaker / Narrative voice (who is talking? to whom?)
6. Tone (how this is achieved)
7. Other (use of irony verbal/situational/dramatic, puns, pronouns, hyperbole, turn-taking/interruptions, forms of address)

**Non-verbal or Paralinguistic**

1. Dramatic devices (staging, set design, offstage action, onstage action, entrances and exits, costumes, props,)
2. Other: references to time, place, weather, juxtaposition of people, places, action
3. Posture, gesture, stance, facial expressions
4. lighting, sounds (off and on-stage)
5. costumes, clothing

**TRY and always think of how the techniques are used to develop these aspects: This is NOT a complete list**

* **Characters and Relationships** *shown through*

***verbal cues:*** *diction, forms of address, turn-taking/interruption -, who directs subject matter, who dominates speech, pronouns, tone of voice (look at punctuation), pace of speech (see punctuation)*

***non-verbal******cues:*** *posture, gesture, stance,*

* **Plot and action** *shown through*

***verbal cues:*** *subject matter, language, humour, reported action, foreshadowing, flashback,*

***non-verbal cues:***objects on stage / mentioned, symbols

* **Setting and Atmosphere** *shown through*

***verbal cues:*** *references to place, time, weather, diction*

***non-verbal******cues:*** *lighting, sound effects, costume, props, stance, gesture, positioning, set design*

* **Issues, Themes and Ideas (conflicts/tension)** *shown through*

***verbal cues:*** *topic of conversation, images, symbols,*

***non-verbal******cues:*** *stance, symbolism of setting*

* **Tone** **and Mood** *shown through  - think of humour, tensions, conflicts*

***verbal cues:*** *topic of conversation, images, symbols, diction, contrasts in imagery, structural features of the prose or poetry, angle of vision, puns/ verbal irony*

***non-verbal******cues:*** *characters' stance, posture or positioning, off and onstage action, noises, dramatic irony (situational)*