A Toolbox for Approaching Your Further Oral Activity

Keep in mind that the following "toolbox" is just for reference. You are **not** expected or mandated to answer all these questions, or even half of them.

But what you **ARE** required to do is thoughtfully and critically investigate some issue of language and culture through a selection of text. How you do this will be up to your group—whether it is performing/reciting your own one-act (text) or giving a PowerPoint on the relationship between a visual text and a linguistic text or one of a myriad possibilities. You want to make sure that your analysis/performance of the text(s) is in service of <u>**what** ideas or perspectives the text reveals about **language and culture issues** and **how** the text manages to do so</u>. Finally, through this presentation you must explicitly or implicitly establish a link to one or more of the learning outcomes for Part 1:

> ➢ **Analyse)** how audience and purpose affect the structure and content of texts.
> ➢ **Analyse** the impact of language changes.
> ➢ **Demonstrate** an awareness of how language and meaning are shaped by culture and context.

IB defines "Analyze" as to **"break down in order to bring out the essential elements or structure."** (Command Terms handout)

The following criteria established by IB identifies eight questions used for student evaluation. Please read these questions and the marks level descriptors carefully so you can shape your presentation for the best possible evaluation. **BOLD** emphasis is mine.

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the text(s) and subject matter or extract

- To what extent does the activity **show knowledge and understanding of the text(s) and subject chosen** for the oral activity?
- Has the student **shown awareness and understanding of the meaning of the text(s) in relation to the subject**?

Marks Level descriptor

0: The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2: The activity shows limited knowledge and little or no understanding of the text(s) and the subject chosen.
3–4: The activity shows some knowledge and understanding of the text(s) and some awareness of the significance of the text(s) in relation to the subject chosen.
5–6: The activity shows adequate knowledge and understanding of the text(s) and awareness of the significance of the text(s) in relation to the subject chosen.
7–8: The activity shows good knowledge and understanding of the text(s) and good awareness of the significance of the text(s) in relation to the subject chosen.
9–10: The activity shows excellent knowledge and understanding of the text(s) and excellent awareness of the significance of the text(s) in relation to the subject chosen.

Criterion B: Understanding of how language is used

- **To what extent** does the activity **show understanding of the way language is used to create meaning**?
- Has the student **shown <u>an appreciation</u> of how language and style is used to particular effect in the text**?

Marks Level descriptor

0: The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2: The work shows a superficial understanding of the way language is used to create meaning; there is little appreciation of the use of language and style.
3–4: The work shows some understanding of the way language is used to create meaning; there is some appreciation of the use of language and style.
5–6: The work shows an adequate understanding of the way language is used to create meaning and adequate appreciation of the use of language and style.
7–8: The work shows a good understanding of the way language is used to create meaning and good appreciation of the use of language and style.
9–10: The work shows an excellent understanding of the way language is used to create meaning. The appreciation of the use of language and style is thorough and detailed.

Criterion C: Organization

- How **well organized** is the oral activity?
- How **coherent** is the structure?

Marks Level descriptor

0: The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1: Little organization is apparent; the oral activity has little structure.
2: Some organization is apparent; the oral activity has some structure.
3: The oral activity is organized; the structure is generally coherent.
4: The oral activity is well organized; the structure is mostly coherent.
5: The oral activity is effectively organized; the structure is coherent and effective.

Criterion D: Language

- How **clear, varied and accurate** is the **language**?
- How **appropriate** is the choice of **register and style**? ("Register" refers, in this context, to the student's use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and idiom appropriate to the further oral activity.)

Marks Level descriptor

0: The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1: The language is rarely clear and appropriate, with many errors in grammar and sentence construction and little sense of register and style.
2: The language is sometimes clear and appropriate; grammar and sentence construction are generally accurate, although errors and inconsistencies are apparent; register and style are to some extent appropriate to the oral activity.
3: The language is mostly clear and appropriate, with an adequate degree of accuracy in grammar and sentence construction; the register and style are mostly appropriate to the oral activity.
4: The language is clear and appropriate, with a good degree of accuracy in grammar and sentence construction; register and style are effective and appropriate to the oral activity.
5: The language is very clear and entirely appropriate, with a high degree of accuracy in grammar and sentence construction; the register and style are consistently effective and appropriate to the oral activity.

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The Toolbox

The questions below are organized into the areas of rhetorical study**.** Some of these questions may not apply to your particular presentation, but there is a plethora of tools from which to choose**.** Use this handout for exploring your text, keeping in mind that it is neither comprehensive nor compulsory.

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In the process of exploring your text(s), you might address the following questions:

Purpose: Think about the author's purpose in creating this text and whether or not they are effective in that purpose. Make note of the following items:

➤ What are the specific reasons for the creation of the text? (*Begin with the infinitive "to"*): To inform, to move to action or inaction, to change policy or to keep things the same, to entertain, to educate, to present a subject that is controversial (polemical purpose).
➤ How does the writer/artist make the reader believe in that purpose?
➤ What are the intentions behind the message? This may be different from the purpose.
➤ What level of diction/language (visual or linguistic) is needed to achieve that purpose?
➤ How does the composition of the audience (country, age, education, socio-economic class, race, gender) shape the purpose?

Occasion: Think about what caused the author to write about this topic and whether or not it is a valid reason. Explore the following questions:

➢ What are the author's reasons for creating the text? What is the motivation?
➢ What are the historical, political, social issues surrounding the topic?
➢ What are the author's personal reasons and well as the greater world/national reasons for creating the text?
➢ What are the views characteristic of the time period and culture surrounding the work?
➢ What are the descriptions of class judgments, racial relationships, gender biases, stereotypes, of the time in context?

Speaker (*ethos* centered): Think about how who the writer/artist/organization is and what he/she knows is communicated. This should help you decide the author's credibility. Explore the following questions:

➢ Whose views are being represented in the text?
➢ What or whose interests are being served?
➢ Who or what is absent from the message that one may expect to find?
➢ What is the author's background and relationship to the topic, biases, etc.
➢ Does the speaker have a persona or mask? Can we trust it?
➢ How does the writer/artist create common ground and a sense of trust?
➢ How does the speaker make him/herself appear intelligent, reliable, compassionate, thoughtful, balanced?
➢ Is there a shift in the author's attitude or tone? Where does it shift? For what purpose?
➢ Does the author directly or indirectly states how he/she feels? Why might be significant in creating common ground.

Audience (*pathos* centered): Think about what kind of person or people the author intended as the audience and whether or not the author is able to connect with that audience effectively. Explore the following questions:

➢ Whom is (and it can be more than one) the author is trying to reach. Where do you see evidence for this?
➢ Where the author directly or indirectly address a specific audience
➢ Pathos- where the author appeals to your sense of emotion through anecdotes and figurative language.
➢ How does the author of the text manage to shape an emotional response from the audience?
➢ What reading or speaking position are you being invited to take up?
➢ Are we as the audience being asked to see the situation from a particular point of view?

The Message, or the text: (*logos* centered): Authorial, rhetorical, and literary devices and structures in the argument:
Think about the author's techniques in delivery and how effective author's methods are for rhetorical purposes - the use of subtleties, patterns, style, structure, etc. Explore the following questions:

➢ What reading or speaking position are you being invited to take up? Are we being asked to see the situation from a particular point of view?
➢ What cultural assumptions are being taken for granted?
➢ What voices or perspectives are left out of the piece? Is this deliberate or unintentional?
➢ Are there changes in point of view/emphasis? For what purpose and what is the effect?
➢ What stylistic techniques does the author/creator employ in communicating the message? Consider irony, satire, humor, exaggeration, repetition/patterns, possible symbols, significant metaphors and other notable literary and rhetorical devices.
➢ How the author show the complications related to the subject and the implications of it to you, the nation, the world, etc.
➢ How the author's structure of the argument/book influence the reader and relate to the subject, audience and purpose.
➢ How are the elements of the text (linguistic or visual) related to the problem and issue?
➢ How the author develops or deepens the aspects of the problem/issue?
➢ What connotations exist in the text? How do these reveal meaning?
➢ Are there any unintentional connotations in the text? (*Connotations that do not add to meaning but actually contradict or suggest something that is unintended.*)
➢ How is the message reasonable, logical, acceptable? How does that affect the audience's ability to embrace the message?
➢ Does the text make sure of metaphor, simile, symbol, or any other literary or stylistic features? How? Why? To what extent?
➢ How does the artist make the audience see the object (text) differently?
➢ How is language used in this work of art? (ad, painting etc.)
➢ What links exist between this work of visual art and the poem/essay/article you have presented?
➢ What do these works of art and literature reveal about the advantages and limitations of language as a way of knowing?
➢ Define the **significant parts** and figure out how they are **related**, readers and writers need to train themselves to attend closely to details. Create in order of importance for the features you discover. Instead, ask yourself: "What do you notice?" or "What do you find most interesting, strange, or revealing?"
➢ Does the message rely on imagery? What we can see, feel, hear, touch, taste, smell? What is the effect?
➢ Are any elements of the message unclear or ambiguous? Is this intentional? Why?

➢ Ask "So What?" about all significant detail, imagery, diction, syntax, figurative language. Remember complexity is the result of CHOICE on the part of the writer/artist/creator!

➢ Uncover the significant **patterns** within the text (visual or written):

Repetitions—details or words that repeat and write the number of times you see the repetition for each.

Strands—Strands are groupings of similar details or words. You should be able to explain the strand's logic if you list it as a strand—what holds it together?

➥ For example, noise/shrieking tone/piercing tone/ugly sound/wail. That is a strand of similar adjectives and/or similar nouns.

Binaries—List **organizing contrasts** (for example, open/closed, black/white, masculine/feminine, inside/outside, present/remote, self/you). These are also called "binaries."

➥ Binary oppositions are sites of uncertainty, places where there is struggle among different points of view. Finding binaries can help you find what is at stake (for the author and the audience) in the text.

➥ In analysis, think critically about binaries and imagine ways to refine and reformulate them as something more complex than either/or. Look for clues that the author is also writing the binary as more complex than it seems at first glance.

Anomalies—After you have produced your three lists, selected the most important repetition/strand/contrast from each, and written a paragraph explaining your ranking, look for details that don't seem to fit any pattern. Find anything that stands out or anything you noticed but couldn't list as a repetition/strand/binary above. Anomalies—while they can be annoying—are important because noticing them often leads to new and better ideas.

Omissions—Also look for anything that is *missing*. What does the text leave out or omit, and what are the implications of this omission? Obvious or subtle omissions can open up huge doors for your own analysis.

➢ **Plurality of Readings**: Consider what the text(s) might reveal with a plurality of readings from different perspectives:

➥ **Dominant Reading**: The reader fully shares the text's code and accepts and reproduces the preferred reading – in such a stance the code seems natural and transparent.

➥ **Negotiated Reading**: the reader partly shares the text's code and broadly accepts the preferred reading, but sometimes resists and modifies it in a way that reflects their own position, experiences and interests.

➥ **Oppositional Reading**: the reader, whose social situation places them in directly oppositional relation to the dominant code, understands the preferred reading but does not share the text's code and rejects this reading, bringing to bear an alternative frame of reference (radical, feminist etc.) in making sense of the text.

➢ **Visual Texts**: If you are looking at a piece of art, consider the following aspects in your analysis:

1.) The use of color and how it contributes to imagery
2.) The use of contrast, either in color, subject, text, or composition.
3.) The use of language in terms of meaning as well as whether you read the words as disjointed or continuous.
4.) The placement of words.
5.) The subject of the image.
6.) The artist's possible aims or intentions.
7.) Can you identify either larger personal or cultural assumptions that have affected your reading, either as a result of experience or background?
8.) After learning about the artist, do you have any new thoughts about any aspect of the image?

➤ **Key questions about language and cultural context** for your consideration. Not all will apply to every text, subject area, and learning outcome.

1.) Does language shape culture or does culture shape language?
2.) Can we understand texts that are written for different audiences in different times or cultures?
3.) Does language define our identity?
4.) Do our beliefs influence our language use?
5.) Should governments have a language policy for a particular nation?
6.) If language is an integral part of knowledge, can we really know and understand language?
7.) Can biases towards particular language usage be unlearned?
8.) Are changes in language directly related to the power of a group of language users?
9.) Is class a more important factor in language variation than geography?
10.) How flexible is our identity?

➤ **Consider the steps in a semiotic analysis** (*see the handout I gave you*):
The following is a list of steps that you should follow when conducting a semiotic analysis:

1.) Establish the sign to be decoded
2.) Set aside your opinion; your task is to analyze the current social significance
3.) Define/categorize the sign.
4.) Determine what the sign means (analysis of images, language, etc.)
5.) Establish a set of signs (books, ads, films, etc.) related to the sign you are decoding
6.) Point out the differences and similarities between the sign and related signs
7.) Sketch the overall context (historical, cultural, and political) in which the sign appears
8.) Develop a list of questions, concerns, and/or issues that will guide your analysis

➤ **If you are analyzing poetry**, consider the following approaches for analysis:

Title: Before you even think about reading the poetry or trying to analyze it, speculate on what you think the poem *might* be about based upon the title. Often time authors conceal meaning in the title and give clues in the title. Jot down what you think this poem will be about…

Paraphrase (for understanding): Before you begin thinking about meaning or tying to analyze the poem, don't overlook the literal meaning of the poem. One of the biggest problems that students often make in poetry analysis is jumping to conclusions before understanding what is taking place in the poem. When you paraphrase a poem, write in your own words exactly what happens in the poem. Look at the number of sentences in the poem—your paraphrase should have exactly the same number. This technique is especially helpful for poems written in the 17th and 19th centuries. Sometimes your teacher may allow you to *summarize* what happens in the poem. Make sure that you understand the difference between a *paraphrase* and a *summary*

Connotation: Although this term usually refers solely to the emotional overtones of word choice, for this approach the term refers to any and all poetic devices, focusing on how such devices contribute to the meaning, the effect, or both of a poem. You may consider imagery, figures of speech (simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, etc), diction, point of view, and sound devices (alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, and rhyme). It is not necessary that you identify all the poetic devices within the poem. The ones you do identify should be seen as a way of supporting the conclusions you are going to draw about the poem.

Attitude: Having examined the poem's devices and clues closely, you are now ready to explore the multiple attitudes that may be present in the poem. Examination of diction, images, and details suggests the speaker's attitude and contributes to understanding. You may refer to the list of words on *Tone* that will help you. Remember that usually the tone or attitude cannot be named with a single word Think *complexity*.

Shift: Rarely does a poem begin and end the poetic experience in the same place. As is true of most us, the poet's understanding of an experience is a gradual realization, and the poem is a reflection of that understanding or insight. Watch for the following keys to shifts:

1.) Key words, (but, yet, however, although)
2.) Punctuation (dashes, periods, colons, ellipsis)
3.) Stanza divisions
4.) Changes in line or stanza length or both
5.) Irony
6.) Changes in sound that may indicate changes in meaning changes in diction

Title Revisited: Now look at the title again, but this time on an interpretive level. What new insight does the title provide in understanding the poem?

Theme: What is the poem saying about the human experience, motivation, or condition? What subject or subjects does the poem address? What do you learn about those subjects? What idea does the poet want you take away with you concerning these subjects? Remember that the theme of any work of literature is stated in a complete sentence.

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Remember: You want to make sure that your analysis/performance of the text(s) is in service of **what ideas or perspectives the text reveals about language and culture issues and how the text manages to do so**. Finally, through this presentation you must explicitly or implicitly establish a link to one or more of the learning outcomes for Part

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