

DISCURSIVE GENRE GUIDE

Conventions & Techniques for Discursive Writing

ENGLISH

Year 10-12



Introduction to the Discursive Genre

Purpose

- To engage readers in an engaging, educated discussion about broader global themes and ideas, through an analysis of key concepts in literary texts (e.g. poetry, films, books)

Style (Tone/Voice)

- Informal and conversational – as speaker, assume the role of expert on the text/concept
- Rather than authoritatively persuading the audience, look to explore multiple perspectives
- Use an active voice – refer to texts in 'literary' present tense
- Tone should be purposeful and varied throughout writing

Audience

- An online, public audience – informed, educated readers interested in literary discussion

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
<i>Discursive</i>	A style of writing that provides a balanced discussion around a topic
<i>Thesis</i>	An assertive statement that presents your position on a topic to the audience
<i>Hook</i>	A 'sizzling start' that engages the audience and contextualises your speech
<i>Concept</i>	The key themes or topics underpinning the meaning of a text, through which audiences develop ideas, understandings and perspectives about the world.
<i>Author's message</i>	The main ideas conveyed by creators of the text (both explicitly and implicitly) and interpreted by the audience.

<i>Representation</i>	The way a person, object, setting or idea is depicted in a text
<i>Invited reading</i>	What the audience is positioned to think/feel/believe through a text
<i>Context</i>	Background information underpinning a text, critical to its understanding
<i>Aesthetic features</i>	Aspects of a text, implemented by the creator, which prompt emotional/critical reaction or further thought (i.e. choices made within the construction of a text – film techniques, language features)
<i>Cultural assumptions</i>	Ideas, beliefs or attitudes that underpin the social practices of a particular culture (e.g. towards gender, religion, ethnicity, youth, age, disability, sexuality, class, work). These ideas underpin texts and contribute to the audience's understanding
<i>Synthesise</i>	To combine different parts of elements into a whole (e.g. multiple pieces of information, perspectives) to communicate a broader idea or understanding
<i>Analyse</i>	To break down/examine the details of something (e.g. a text) in order to explain or interpret wider patterns, ideas, relationships or meaning
<i>Engage</i>	To develop an interest or greater involvement.
<i>Values</i>	The characteristics, qualities or philosophies one holds to be true (i.e., morals)
<i>Attitudes</i>	The particular feelings/thoughts held about a person, object or idea.
<i>Beliefs</i>	An idea one holds to be true, often dictating their actions or behaviour.

Structure

Year 10: Organisation and development of a discursive essay

Structure	Guidance
Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting and engaging • Relevant to concept being discussed
By-line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name only, no 'title' required
Introduction Approx. 150 – 200 words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant, interesting hook • Briefly introduce the text • Thesis statement • Scope of essay (brief outline of representation)
Orientation to Text Approx. 50 – 100 words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear introduction and summary of Text 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Brief synopsis (purpose, audience, tone, mood) ◦ Key background information • Context and broader message (relevant to main thesis/representation)
Text 1 Representation 1 Approx. 200 words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish representation to be discussed (<i>topic sentence</i>) • Introduce evidence from text to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Stylistic/literary device, language feature, structure ◦ Provide context for any evidence ◦ Explain/synthesise how evidence highlights representation • Link back to thesis (invited reading, broader messages)
Conclusion Approx. 100-150 words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit thesis and hook • Summarise main ideas • Refer back to main concept • Philosophical big picture statement – look outwardly and reinforce broader lessons or messages for audiences to consider (real world application)

Year 11-12: Organisation and development of a discursive essay

Structure	Guidance
Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting and engaging • Relevant to concept being discussed
By-line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name only, no 'title' required
Introduction Approx. 150 – 200 words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant, interesting hook • Briefly introduce both texts • Thesis statement • Scope of essay (brief outline of representations)
Orientation to Text 1 Approx. 50 – 100 words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear introduction and summary of Text 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Brief synopsis ◦ Key background information ◦ Context (relevant to main thesis/representation)
Text 1 Representation 1 Approx. 200 words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish 1st representation to be discussed • Introduce evidence from text to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Discuss character/event which demonstrates representation ◦ Provide context for any evidence ◦ Explain/synthesise quotes • Link to thesis (invited reading: broader messages, audience positioning)
Text 1 Representation 2 Approx. 200 words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohesive Link • Establish 2nd representation to be discussed • Introduce evidence from text to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Discuss character/event which demonstrates representation ◦ Provide context for any evidence ◦ Explain/synthesise quotes • Link to thesis (invited reading: broader messages, audience positioning)

<p>Orientation to Text 2</p> <p>Approx. 50 – 100 words</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohesive link: transition discussion from Text 1 to Text 2 • Clear introduction and summary of Text 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Brief synopsis ◦ Key background information • Context (relevant to main thesis/representation) • Re-state thesis (you might like to refer to hook)
<p>Text 2</p> <p>Representation 1</p> <p>Approx. 200 words</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish 1st representation to be discussed • Introduce evidence from text to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Discuss character/event which demonstrates representation ◦ Provide context for any evidence ◦ Explain/synthesise quotes • Link to thesis (invited reading: broader messages, audience positioning)
<p>Text 2</p> <p>Representation 2</p> <p>Approx. 200 words</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohesive Link • Establish 2nd representation to be discussed • Introduce evidence from text to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Discuss character/event which demonstrates representation ◦ Provide context for any evidence ◦ Explain/synthesise quotes • Link to thesis (invited reading: broader messages, audience positioning)
<p>Conclusion</p> <p>Approx. 100-150 words</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit thesis and hook • Summarise main ideas • Connect the texts – refer back to main concept • Philosophical big picture statement – look outwardly and remind audience of application of these ideas to real world contemporary context, reinforcing importance of these lessons and the texts (consider referring back to hook)

Textual Features

Stylistic devices and **language features** to employ in your discursive writing:

Technique	Explanation	Example
Adverb	A word that modifies, qualifies or describes an action (verb), typically ending in “-ly”	<i>Unwaveringly, Andy uses the little power he has to push back against the status quo.</i>
Alliteration	Repeating the same letter/consonant sound at the beginning of a series of words.	<i>The author uses Aphra's right hand to symbolise her desolation and desperation.</i>
Colloquialism	A word or phrase that is considered 'informal' and is used in ordinary or familiar conversation	<i>When Gogol arrives in Calcutta, he isn't quite 'expecting the Ritz'.</i>
Emotive Language	Using strong, vivid language that invites a particular emotional thought/feeling in audiences	<i>Fear-filled and dangerously desperate, Aphra Bont is Anna's greedy step-mother.</i>
Hyperbole	Creating a heightened effect through deliberate exaggeration (used for dramatic or comic effect)	<i>For the millionth time, Sal practically begs Thornhill to return to London.</i>
Idiom	A slang or colloquial phrase, where the figurative meaning is different to the literal	<i>Heartbreak proves hard to swallow for the protagonist of the film.</i>
Imagery	Descriptive language that appeals to the senses of the reader and creates an image in their mind	<i>In the depths of her grief, she brutally stabs Elinor as villagers cry helplessly with despair.</i>
Inclusive Language	Using pronouns ('we', 'us', 'our') to establish a connection with the audience	<i>As audiences, we're invited to consider the impact of her bravery in our own way.</i>
Metaphor	Making an implied or indirect comparison between two objects or ideas.	<i>Caught between two worlds, the light once illuminating Ashima's past begins to fade.</i>
Personification	Using human qualities, attributes or characteristics to represent a non-human object, idea or thing	<i>Grief seems to taunt Anna at every twist and turn in her young life.</i>
Pun	Exploiting the multiple meanings of a single word or phrase for intended humorous effect	<i>In Thao's world, the road to success is always perpetually under construction.</i>
Repetition	Repeating a key word or phrase several times for emphasis	<i>We're reminded of Smasher Sullivan's ignorance time after time after time.</i>
Rhetorical Question	A question with a clearly implied answer, asked to invite audiences to think or reflect on the topic	<i>When we leave familiarity behind, what is left to make us feel connected to a place?</i>
Rule of Three	Words, phrases and sounds, listed three times, are more engaging, effective and memorable.	<i>The dislocation she experiences is challenging, terrifying and isolating.</i>
Simile	The comparison of one object, idea or thing with another, using the words 'like' or 'as'	<i>Like trying to rub out a birth-mark, Gogol seeks to reject his heritage.</i>

Grammar & Punctuation

- A range of sentence types (simple, complex, compound) and lengths (short, long) should be used to vary the flow and pace of your essay
- Sentence fragments can be used for effect (used sparingly and purposefully)
- Sentences can begin with a conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, so, yet, or, because*)
- Exclamation marks used for emphasis. Questions used for dramatic effect.
- Commas used for dependent clauses/phrases and for lists
- Semi-colons used to combine two independent clauses without using a conjunction

Text Sample: 'The Nature of Poison' (2022)

Poison. Whether it's ingested, absorbed, injected or inhaled, once it enters our bloodstream, it's all downhill from there. Our heart viciously pumps the contaminated blood around our body and within moments, the poison has taken control of our entire being. It floods our tissues and vital organs, leaving us defenseless. It eats away at us from the inside. Sometimes our heart even transforms the poison into chemicals, more toxic than the original substance; it deteriorates our health like a parasite, resulting in paralysis, seizures, and more commonly, death.

Conventions

- Present tense
- Point of view: *First person plural*
- Personal pronouns encouraged (we, us, our) – develop rapport with audience
- Contractions permitted – establish a conversational tone
- Language should be a mixture of formal (to convey expertise) and informal (colloquialisms), while offering reflection not only on the text, but the world
- Paragraphs can vary in length according to purpose (form follows function)
- Formatting:
 - *Masthead (as per role/context/audience of publication stated on task sheet)*
 - *Title*
 - *By-line*
 - *Inclusion of images to illustrate/reinforce*
 - *Text wrapping to be carefully formatted (i.e. text + pictures)*

Style Tips

Embedding Quotes

- When writing your discursive essay, no matter the topic, you will need to draw on evidence from texts to support your discussion.
- This evidence should be interwoven throughout your body paragraphs, in the form of quotes.
- When embedding your quotes within a sentence or paragraph, you should provide context (i.e. who said the words, and what qualifies them to speak on the topic). This strengthens the cohesion and clarity of your ideas.
- You should also embed quotes grammatically, following the rules of punctuation to ensure the evidence flows seamlessly in your writing.

Text Sample: 'Discussing *The Secret River*' (2022)

Courageously, Sal stands up to her husband and plans to take herself and the kids back to Sydney; in response, William loses his temper and attempts to hit her. When Sal tells him that hitting her won't change her mind, Will finally snaps from his rampage, realising that his wife "did not recognise him" and that in her eyes, "[he was a] violent stranger pulling at her."

Cohesion

Discursive essay must transition carefully between paragraphs. Ideas should be logically sequenced and planned ahead of time – see **Structure** for details.

Incorporate text connectives throughout to communicate your ideas with greater fluency:

