

# Planning Essays

Planning essays is one of the most underrated yet important part of applying your revision. There is **no point** having all this amazing analysis and not knowing what to do with it. Or even worse, getting into the exam and feeling like you don't know what to say (planning essays will eliminate this).

## Should I plan every essay even if I know what to say?

- YES, YES, YES. Even if you know what to say, having a brief plan of what you're going to say in each paragraph means you will be clear and have three separate ideas.
- You don't want to be repeating yourself, or even worse, having no clear ideas that link to the question.
- **Whether your aiming for a grade 4 or grade 9, a brief plan of your 3 points is necessary.**

## Which questions should I use to plan?

- Use all of the questions we have on The Lightup Hub.
- Use **a mix of past paper questions** and our own questions we've created in the **exam style** format.

## Example Question

*This extract is taken from Stave 1 in A Christmas Carol*

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnised it with an undoubted bargain.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's Father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a stroll at night, in an easterly wind, upon his own ramparts, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentleman rashly turning out after dark in a breezy spot -- say Saint Paul's Churchyard for instance -- literally to astonish his son's weak mind.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names: it was all the same to him.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dogdays; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

(30 marks)

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens presents the effects of isolation.

**Write about:**

- How Dickens presents the effects of isolation in this extract
- How Dickens presents these effects throughout the rest of the novella

## How to plan a question with an extract

Step 1: Read the question first and underline what it is asking you

- **here you would underline isolation as that is what the question is asking**
- **this is the most obvious, yet done the worst with students. Make sure you understand exactly what the question is asking. It says here about not just isolation, but the effects of it. That's what we will be focusing on**
- **e.g. starting with this extract, explore how Dickens presents the effects of isolation**

Step 2: Read the extract and keep the focus of the question in mind, highlight or write down any key quotes that seem like they would fit the theme

- **read through the extract and be constantly thinking how isolation is shown here**
- **here are a list of quotes that I would have highlighted/ written down that I think fit with isolation (you don't have to be super picky here, but any you think you may be able to link highlight)**
- **e.g. 'sole executor, sole administrator', 'a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!' 'solitary as an oyster', 'the cold within him froze his old features' 'a frosty rime was on his head' 'external heat and cold had little influence on him'**

Step 3: Pick out two of the best quotes of the ones you've highlighted/ written down that you could group together into your first point. Look at all the quotes you've got and think which ones you could make a point about that would link to the question

**Looking at the quotes selected, I'd pick 'the cold within him froze his old features' and 'external heat and cold had little influence on him' as they're both about the physical weather and its interaction with scrooge**

Step 4: Create a point using the word from the question and a word/phrase you will constantly refer back to that links both your quotes together.

- **The point I'd make would have 'the effects of isolation makes individuals, as embodied by Scrooge, physically and mentally cold and apathetic'**
- **The word from the question has been used 'the effects of isolation makes individuals, as embodied by Scrooge, physically and mentally cold and apathetic'**
- **My point has been made that links my two quotes 'the effects of isolation makes individuals, as embodied by Scrooge, physically and mentally cold and apathetic'**

Step 5: create two other points that are different from the one you've done from the extract. Try create points using different characters/ different points in the text to avoid repeating yourself. The aim here is to have 3 different points that answer the question. TOP TIP: make sure you still using the word from the question + your own point you can refer back to

- **Point from extract (one I've already created):** The **effects of isolation** makes individuals, as embodied by Scrooge, **physically and mentally cold and apathetic'**
- **Point 2:** Dickens shows that when the upper class intentionally ostracise and **isolate** themselves from society, this has a **direct detrimental effect on the lower classes**
- **Point 3:** Scrooge's transmogrification in stave 5 showcases how the **effects of self-isolation** and emotional restraint **can be reversed** through the transformative power of connection and compassion.

## How to plan a question with an extract

**Either:**

**A) Explore how personal responsibility is presented in An Inspector Calls?**

Write about:

- How it is shown in the play
- How Priestley presents personal responsibility

**(30 marks)**

**Or**

**B) How far does Priestley present Eric as a character who makes significant improvements?**

Write about:

- How Eric improves in the play
- How Priestley presents Eric

**(30 marks)**

Step 1: choose which question you think you'll be able to answer best and have the most insightful and varied points. Generally theme questions allow more variety of ideas as you can speak of three different characters and therefore would have three distinctly different points. However, if the theme question you feel you won't be able to answer as well, go for the character

- **I'm going to choose 'personal responsibility' as I can answer this best with three different characters**

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- **I'm going to choose 'personal responsibility' as I can answer this best with three different characters**

Step 2: either choose 3 different parts of the novel/play the character appears in if you choose the character question or choose 3 characters who represent different ideas within the play/novel.

- **For example in An Inspector Calls if I'm picking a theme question, I will do a paragraph on either Mr/Mrs Birling (as they're quite similar characters in terms of their representation of the older generation capitalists), Sheila/Eric (again, similar in their progressive socialist presentation) and the Inspector (a character who drives the plot and is Priestley's mouthpiece)**
- **For this question I'm choosing: Mr Birling, Sheila and the Inspector**

Step 3: as we did above, use the word from the question + your own point for each of the characters/ acts chosen. If you're struggling to think of a point for each, think of what the character symbolises/ represents in the bigger picture of the play/novel. Consider other key themes and how they link to that as well as the question itself. Another hack is that you can think about the best quotes you have for that character and see if you can make a point that links that quote to the wording of the question.

- **Word from the question my point**
- **Point 1: Mr Birling's sanctimonious nature crafts him as the personification of capitalist and therefore the antithesis of personal responsibility - his self-righteousness obstructs him from seeing his lack of personal responsibility**
- **Point 2: Sheila becomes the embodiment of personal responsibility as the Inspector is her moral awakening to the detrimental effects of being an irresponsible capitalist**
- **Point 3: Priestley crafts the Inspector as his mouthpiece to vocalise the importance of personal responsibility. He showcases how personal responsibility is synonymous with socialism and therefore would lead to a more progressive and fair society.**

### Summary of how to plan with an extract

1. Read the question and underline what it's asking you
2. Highlight any quotes from the extract that would fit what the question is asking
3. Pick 2 quotes that you highlighted that you could make into a point
4. Create a point using those two quotes
5. Create two other points from the rest of the novella/play that uses the word from the question

### Summary of how to plan with no extract

1. Pick the theme or character (generally recommend theme but choose character if it's better)
2. Choose 3 different parts of the novel/play the character is in or 3 different characters
3. Use word from question + own point in each of your three points