YEAR 12 ENGLISH

Unpacking Essay Topics

Deconstruct exam prompts and avoid common traps

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Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Score:** _____ / 11

Match each prompt type to the best approach.

1.	Quote-based prompt	●	● **a)** focus on construction: language, structure, form
2.	'To what extent...?'	●	● **b)** explain where the quote occurs and test its idea
3.	'How does the author...?'	●	● **c)** explore the theme's complexity across the text
4.	Theme-based statement	●	● **d)** take a qualified position: partly, largely, not at all

Choose the best answer.

5. Prompt: 'Loyalty is ultimately destructive in the text.' What is the trap?

ⓐ ignoring 'ultimately' and arguing only one side ⓑ writing too much ⓒ using quotes

6. The best way to show nuance is to...

ⓐ agree with every word ⓑ write about something else
ⓒ examine conditions under which the idea is true or false

7. Which word in a prompt most often signals an absolute claim to test?

ⓐ only ⓑ the ⓒ text

Unpack each prompt.

8. 'The text suggests that hope is never enough.' Underline key words and write a nuanced contention.

9. 'How does the author use setting to explore isolation?' What must the essay focus on?

10. Rewrite this contention to be less absolute: 'The protagonist is completely evil.'

11. Write a full introduction for the prompt: 'Characters who resist authority pay too high a price.' Discuss.

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Match each prompt type to the best approach.

1. b) explain where the quote occurs and test its idea
2. d) take a qualified position: partly, largely, not at all
3. a) focus on construction: language, structure, form
4. c) explore the theme's complexity across the text

Choose the best answer.

5. a) ignoring 'ultimately' and arguing only one side
6. c) examine conditions under which the idea is true or false
7. a) only

Unpack each prompt.

8. Key words: hope, never, enough. While hope alone cannot overcome injustice, the text suggests it is the necessary spark for action.
9. How setting is constructed through imagery, structure and symbolism, and how it creates and reflects characters' isolation.
10. Although the protagonist commits cruel acts, the author invites some sympathy by revealing his trauma and vulnerability.
11. Answers will vary. Example: Answers will vary. A strong introduction gives context, offers a qualified contention (e.g. resistance is costly but the text suggests submission costs more), and signposts three ideas.

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