

# HOW TO WRITE A TOP CREATIVE PIECE IN **UNDER** *20 Minutes!*



## **3** Tests to apply to help maximise your score

- › Demystifying a crucial creative writing technique: How to 'show' rather than just 'tell' your story to create maximum effect!
- › A dedicated section on how to come up with an idea when given a question and how to develop it fully within tight time constraints.
- › Multiple practice questions inside for you to complete to help you gradually work up your speed for the upcoming exam!



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Here is a more detailed example of how you would use the planning framework above to set out your plan and map out your story in response to a given question:

**Exam Question: A Disappearing Act!**

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<b>Story is about...</b>	A mysterious magician comes to town and makes a schoolboy disappear.
<b>Beginning</b>	Introduction – sleepy country town – main street with old cinema used for theatre shows. Ben, student at the primary school, sees a flyer advertising a performance by “The Great Flambino”, a travelling magician. He tells his friends about it and they agree to go and see it.
<b>Middle</b>	The boys go to the old cinema to see the magic show. Ben’s friend Dan volunteers to take part in a disappearing act. At the end of the show, when The Great Flambino goes to produce Dan again, nothing happens. Crowd panics and turns on magician, who disappears in a burst of fire. Ben searches frantically for his friend.
<b>End</b>	Exhausted, Ben collapses onto a case on the stage. He hears a soft tapping, and opening the case, discovers his friend. The Great Flambino had forgotten which box he had put him in.

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Having a clear structure like this for your story is very useful in an exam setting. Obviously, it doesn’t have to be written out in this great detail, rather, it can be brief, just as long as you know what’s happening (even if it’s in your head). The planning process for a creative writing piece is incredibly important, as it gives you a structure to work to, and direction for your story, so that you can then spend more of your crucial examination time in the actual writing of your story.

## 1.6 The Three Tests!

Whilst you are writing, you should consider whether what you are putting forward meets the three tests. Additionally, once you have finished writing your piece and reached the reviewing stage, these tests can be applied to your work to see whether it is good or not.

These three tests are extremely important. Writing and reviewing your work with these questions in mind will ensure that you pick up on any issues or mistakes in your work and complete the task with the best chance of attaining the best marks possible:

These are the Three Tests:

1. **Does it have a sense of order?**
2. **Can you describe your story in one adjective?**
3. **The relationship of your story to the exam requirements**

The **first question deals with the issue of structure and clarity**, the **second refers to your successful usage of descriptive words to create a “feeling” to your work**, and the **last point is specifically about making sure you have addressed the exam question/topic**.

In the exam, it is vital that you remember to go through these tests during your reviewing process. A good way to remember the Three Tests is by using the acronym OAR:

**O = order** (does your story have a sense of order?)

**A = adjective** (can you describe your story in one adjective?)

**R = relationship** (the relationship of your story to the exam requirements)

Think of yourself as a boat adrift in the sea of writing and reviewing, the OAR is what will help steer you in the right direction! Note that to meet each test, a combination of elements that together make up the entire story is what will meet the test – not just a mere addition here or there.

For example, if I were to only have a beginning, middle and end without any linkage between the story i.e. if it doesn't have a sense of order, then I would have failed test one. If I were to only use one adjective in the entire story, it's unlikely that the one adjective will create a feeling and hence, I would have failed test two. However, if I had used that one adjective and a number of others, I may have created a feeling and satisfied test two. **The point here is that to satisfy each of the three tests (and a good story would satisfy all three tests), it is imperative that you consider the entire story and whether the many elements work together to achieve the test in question.**

I will now go through each Test individually and explain how they are to be used in your creative writing exercises.

## Does it have a sense of order?

This test is about making sure your story has a clear beginning, middle and end. It's important that your work contains all these three sections because that is what drives a story – the progression from the initial scene, to the issue or action, to a resolution or conclusion.

When reading through your work, the following is a good checklist to find out whether it has a good sense of order:

	YES ✓	NO ✕
<b>Does my story start with a scene or the introduction of a character?</b>	That is a good start – you're establishing the mood of the piece and introducing key elements before the action starts.	If your story begins straight away with the action or the conflict, where are you going to take it? You need to insert a "beginning" paragraph before it which sets the scene and introduces the characters and elements we need to know.
<b>Does my story have one main issue or conflict that arises after I've finished setting the scene?</b>	This is good. The scene has been set and the reader is carried along through the story by the sudden emergence of a problem or action.	If your story meanders along without a specific conflict or important event, it is simply a descriptive piece, and not a story. You'll need to think of something out-of-the-ordinary that arises somewhere in your writing.
<b>Does my story conclude with a resolution of the conflict/action and a return to some degree of normality/status quo?</b>	This is what we are aiming for, and it gives the reader a sense of closure and satisfaction, and brings the narrative full circle from start to finish.	Although some stories do end on a cliff-hanger or with a twist, these still need to be part of the Ending. Your story cannot end in the middle of the action or without any sort of resolution. If you don't have a clear Ending, try and think about how the conflict or action could be resolved or brought to a close, and write that in as your ending.

Using these pointers will help you in working out whether your story has a sense of order.

Another thing to look for in this Test is your use of connecting words. These are what help in establishing your structure and order. When reviewing your work, look out for words such as "meanwhile", "then", "later" and "eventually", which signal transitions between sections of your story.

If your story is lacking in structure or doesn't have a good sense of order, you may need to locate the problem, is it in your planning i.e. did you have a structure to begin with? Have you added enough connecting words to make it clear and better structured?

## 2.3 Sample Exam Question Three – An Action Pose



Let's see from start to finish how to write this piece given the question, following the approach as per section 1.2...

### 1. Preparation

**When:** In the periods prior to the exam.

**How:** See details of this section in **Sample Exam Question One**

### 2. Read and Understand the Question

**When:** A minute.

**How:** See details of this section in **Sample Exam Question One.**

#### **Shown In Action...**

(1) Question is asking me to create a story that features centrally a woman playing a violin.

(2) It is an image.

(3) She looks like a professional.

world. She played concerts to the rich and famous—she had trouble concentrating sometimes, when she saw a well-known actor sitting in the front row.

One day, she was told that the King of England

had asked for a performance. She was nervous, but of course she said yes. On the night she was scheduled to perform she arrived hours early and sat by herself in the auditorium, practicing. Eventually, the King arrived with his wife and children.

Anna took a deep breath and started playing. It was the best she had played in her life, and she could see that the King's family were astounded—but the King wasn't. He looked at her as if she was making no sound at all. She tried not to let this bother her, but her heart sank as she saw that everybody liked her except the King himself.

A few days later, however, invitations flooded in from all the kings of Europe, inviting her to play for them.

**O: Middle**

Again, like in the previous story, the writer has connected to the middle by using 'One day,...'. You can try this technique too!

Although this is just the start of the middle, it then progresses to present a problem – the King making no sound at all and the mystery of why everyone liked the performance except for the King.

**A: Word Usage**

See how the writer has shown (instead of telling) how nervous Anna gets through the use of phrases such as 'trouble concentrating', 'arrived early' and 'sat by herself'.

**A: Language Use**

The suspense of playing for the King and his family is shown through actions that one would normally associate with doing something nerve-racking such as 'took a deep breath'.

This is contrasted later with how disappointed Anna was through the use of the phrase 'her heart sank'.

Note how 'showing rather than telling' is so much more effective in creative writing.

**R: The Main Event**

The exam question invites us to write about an action – the action being a girl playing the violin. The story really centres on the 'playing of the violin' as opposed to incorrectly just the object of the violin. We see the playing of the violin through practice, playing for famous people, and the main event, playing for the King of England.

In your exam, try to link to the exam question as well as this story has.



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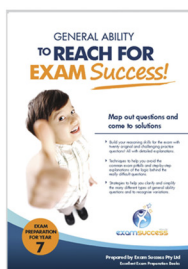
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