

Grade 12 English: Comprehension & Summary Skills Guide

Grade 12 | English Home Language | Study Guide | 2024

Free Study Resources for South African Matric Learners

1. Approaching Comprehension (Paper 1)

Pre-reading Strategy

- Read the questions BEFORE the passage (know what to look for)
- Note how many marks each question is worth (guides length of answer)
- Identify which paragraphs each question refers to
- Look for signals: "in paragraph 3", "in lines 12-14"

Reading the Passage

- Read through once for overall understanding (gist)
- Read again, annotating: underline key ideas, circle important words
- Note the tone, bias, purpose of the text (especially if asked)

2. Answering Comprehension Questions

- "State / Name / List": give brief, direct answers; no explanation needed
- "Explain": give reasons; say WHY not just WHAT
- "Discuss": detailed answer with points and explanation
- "Comment on": give your view supported by evidence from text
- "Identify": point out + quote or reference from text
- "Suggest": your own logical answer; must be plausible given the text
- "What do you understand by": explain in your own words; define + elaborate

3. Summary Writing

A summary condenses a longer text into key points in your own words.

Steps:

- 1. Read the question carefully: what are you summarising? (key word or concept)
- 2. Go through the source text and highlight ALL relevant points
- 3. Number the points; ensure you have enough for the mark allocation
- 4. Rephrase each point in your own words (paraphrase)
- 5. Write in complete sentences; do not use bullet points (unless instructed)
- 6. Do not add your own opinion; stick to what the text says
- 7. Word count: check if specified (e.g. "in 5-7 sentences" or "90-100 words")

4. Answering Language Questions

Figures of Speech Questions

Formula:

1. Identify the device by name
2. Quote the relevant words from the text
3. Explain the EFFECT on the reader

Example: "The metaphor 'the city is a jungle' suggests that the city is a dangerous, lawless place where only the strongest survive, creating a sense of threat for the reader."

Tone Questions

Tone = the writer's attitude toward the subject or reader.

Common tones: satirical, ironic, cynical, humorous, nostalgic, melancholic, optimistic, critical, celebratory, objective.

TIP Never copy long passages from the text as your answer. Comprehension tests your ability to UNDERSTAND and COMMUNICATE ideas. Paraphrase and use your own words wherever possible.