Elements of an essay

**THE QUESTION:**
- Consider the meaning and implication of key words.
- Decide how far you agree or disagree with the question and make this clear from the beginning.
- SELECT who and what you are going to write about.

**Language:**
- choice of *vocabulary*
- the tone of the language
- the mood created
- the images used and their effect
- the way the language is *structured* and the impact this has
- the effect of the particular form chosen eg. blank verse, prose etc.
- the rhythm and its effect

**Dramatic impact:**
- how content relates to and contributes to the whole plot.
- what and how this scene/passage contributes to your understanding of characters.
- its relevance to the underlying themes of the play.
- its contribution to the creation of atmosphere and mood.
- its contribution to the overall impact on the audience both at this point in the play and in the play as a whole.

**Character:** we learn about character through:
- What the character says (the language Shakespeare gives him or her to speak)
- What others say about him or her
- What the character does: his or her actions
(NB: How does the audience respond to a character at given moments?)

**Themes:**
Themes work on two levels:
- **individual level:** personal conflict: mental and spiritual confusion and disintegration. Personal convictions shaken to the core.
- **social level** eg. family ties broken, social disorder, national disorder, political upheaval
- conflict
- order and disorder
- appearance and reality
- how people deal with unexpected problems

- **Law:** justice and mercy
- **Law:** religious & secular
- morality
- how to rule wisely
- self-knowledge
- Love including: lust, love of God, sibling love etc.

**Structure:**
1. *Dynamic structure:* consists of a sequence of events culminating in a powerful denouement. *Symmetric structure:* underlies above structure – consists of various parallels and cross-references, or repeated images, symbols, and language. The effect is one of highlighting and revealing truth through constant comparison and contrasting and achieving an ultimately unifying effect.

**Important scene/passage**
- language – the effectiveness of vocabulary, imagery, rhythm etc
- action – the way the plot develops and is linked to other parts of the play
- character – significant or revealing points with regard to character
- themes – the relevance of the passage to themes expressed elsewhere in the play
- form eg. verse or prose and their effect

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