**Test-taking Strategies**

There are 3 basic question types: hand, head, and heart.

**Hand questions:**

* These are recall questions.
* Use your hand when you scan through the text as you’re searching for words or phrases from questions.
* Some selected response questions are hand questions.

**Head questions:**

* These are thinking questions.
* Use your head when you are asked to make judgments about events and characters.
* You also use your head when you make inferences (such as when you must determine the meaning of a word – use your hand as you scan the text, searching for the word, and read it in a full sentence, or even its paragraph. This is called reading in context and it helps you to make an inference about its meaning).
* Some selected response questions and constructed response questions are head questions.
* You must evaluate what you have read.
* This means you must make a judgment.

**Heart questions:**

* These are personal response questions.
* Use your heart when you are asked to make judgments about characters’ feelings and emotions, for instance.
* Some selected response questions and constructed response questions are heart questions.
* You must evaluate (or judge) what you have read.

Remember to use the following reading strategies at all times, especially during tests:

1. **Questioning:**

* Readers often ask questions as they read.
* Literal questions can be answered by what is on the page.
* Inferential questions can be answered by piecing together clues.
* Evaluative questions are answered by the reader making a judgment or expressing a personal opinion about the text.

1. **Predicting:**

* Readers often make guesses about future events in a text.
* It helps you to be mentally prepared for what will happen.
* Predicting makes you a more attentive reader.
* Many readers concentrate on the title and images to determine what could possibly occur in the text.

1. **Inferencing:**

* Readers infer meaning by “reading between the lines” of a text.
* Think about what you already know about the topic.
* Search for clues in the text about characters or real life people that help you to understand what is happening.

1. **Connecting:**

* Making connections is a natural and powerful way to interact with texts.
* Text-to-self connections are made when the reader is reminded of his own experiences.
* Text-to-text connections occur when a reader remembers something similar from another text.
* Text-to-world connections happen when a reader can relate world events or issue to the text.

1. **Visualizing:**

* Start small with a passage or stanza of a text.
* Try to picture what is being described.
* Make predictions based on the images you have created.
* Ask: How do these mind images change as the text progresses?

1. **Summarizing:**

* Focus on the main ideas.
* Ask yourself: What is most important about this text?
* Examine the title and the text features.
* Create a brief summary in your own words.

1. **Evaluating:**

* Readers evaluate a text by questioning it.
* What did you already know about the topic?
* What judgments can you make about the text based on whether or not the text makes sense to you, or if you thought it was enjoyable.
* Decide why you think and/ or feel the way you do.

1. **Skimming:**

* Readers quickly scan a text by moving their eyes over it to find the main idea.
* Readers who skim avoid reading every sentence.
* Focus on headings and other text features.
* Read the first and last sentence of each paragraph.

1. **Synthesizing:**

* Readers synthesize information when they combine ideas to make sense.
* Make connections.
* Activate prior knowledge.
* How do the text features help me?
* What new ideas have I learned?

1. **Thinking ‘Aloud’:**

* Readers think-aloud when they express their thoughts aloud as they read text.
* This is an effective strategy to use whenever a reader struggles with a challenging text.
* It encourages the reader to focus on the text’s meaning and it forces her to use other strategies to make meaning.

**Selected Response Questions:**

* Should take no more than 1 minute per question.
* Read carefully the question and possible responses, then apply the strategies as taught.
* Choose only one response otherwise it is not counted.
* Preparing for tests and understanding how to apply key literary devices and poetic devices means you will have a better chance of selecting the correct response.

**Constructed Response Questions:**

* Spend sufficient time on each question.
* If you have 2 questions valued at 10 marks, then spend 10 minutes on each question.
* A question valued at 5 marks should take 5 minutes.
* Read carefully the questions and determine what you are being asked to do.
* Underline key words in the question.
* Use these key words as a checklist.

**Paragraph Responses:**

* Include a topic sentence which should state your answer.
* Avoid using the word “because” in your topic sentence because the reasons will be stated later.
* Explain your opinion or ideas.
* Give a reason to prove your opinion or ideas.
* Tell how your reason supports your opinion or ideas.
* Repeat another reason and explanation, if required.
* Complete with a closing sentence that summarizes your main idea.
* Always strive for strong voice and connections to the text.

**Graphic Organizers:**

* Read carefully all directions to determine what information to include.
* Complete all steps or boxes, as directed.

**Review:**

* Take the time to review each response.
* Did you include all details, as asked?
* Did you explain your ideas?
* Did you organize your answers so that your meaning is clear?
* Did you answer every question?
* Did you include your name and section number?