

Guidelines on answering comparative questions.

(From official English Support Service)

- **DO** start by reading the question or questions carefully so that you are clear about what the question is asking you to do. In writing down some preparatory notes or rough work, keep the focus on the points of comparison you indeed to make, not on what you know about each text separately.
- **DON'T** set out your comparison as two or three separate, mini-essays on the texts. Wherever possible, mix and mingle your discussion of the texts.
- **DO** make sure the comparisons you make between texts are clear and explicit.
- **DO** remember that if the question is set on **THEME OR ISSUE**, it will **NOT** specify any particular theme or issue. You will always be free **TO CHOOSE** the theme or issue you wish to discuss.
- **DO** make sure that in **THEME** or **ISSUE** your focus is on a single theme or issue that can be said to be common to all of your texts. This will allow you to make coherent links between your texts.
- **DO** remember that unless the examination question specifically states otherwise, you are free to draw your comparisons from **TWO OR MORE** of the texts you have studied. If it insists that you must refer to all three texts, the question will be framed in such a way as to let you know.
- **DO** illustrate clearly and accurately from your texts – the **KEY MOMENTS** will be helpful here – but **DON'T** spend too long telling the story of the text or texts.
- **DO** remember that you must choose the appropriate points of reference, images, patterns, or key moments from your texts. You cannot deal with all the possible points of comparison in your forty five to fifty minutes of writing.
- **DON'T** feel that you must write the full name of every text every time – just do so the first time and abbreviate after that. The examiners will expect you to do this and will not mind one bit.