

When you write your essay, it’s really important to get your tone and style right. This means that you are writing clearly, in the correct register, and in a way that engages the interest of your reader. This relates to parts of two of the Assessment Objectives for this question:

**AO1: maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response**

**AO2: using relevant subject terminology where appropriate**

**AO4: Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation**

In the table below is a list of things examiners like and dislike about essay style:

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| --- | --- |
| ***Examiners Like…*** | ***Examiner’s Don’t Like…*** |
| 1. The use of standard, formal English
2. Use of evaluative words (words that show an appreciation of the poet’s qualities)
3. A mostly *impersonal* style (one that doesn’t often use the first person pronouns, ‘I’ or ‘me’)
4. Ambitious but relevant vocabulary
5. Use of specialist terminology (poetic and linguistic terms)
 | 1. Non-standard / slang / colloquial language (except when quoting from the poem)
2. Slang evaluative words, negative words (as in putting the poem down) or no evaluative words
3. Too much use of personal pronouns (‘I think that…’ etc)
4. Over-simplified or wrong choice of words
5. Incorrect or no use of terminology
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TASK: The five extracts below (from essays about the poem *Kamikaze*) all use features that could rub up the examiner the wrong way! Using the letter codes (f) to (j), identify the fault next to each. Then, use the letter codes (a) to (e) to write a new, improved version for each.

1. ***Kamikaze* is a really cool poem. I like the way it refers to nature and stuff in the bit about his dad being a fisherman.**
2. **‘Cloud-marked mackerel’ is a very effective simile, as the audience can picture the reflection of the clouds in the fish’s scale…’**
3. ***Kamikaze* is OK but there are bits of it I don’t understand. Like the bit about the feathery prawns, I mean, what’s that all about?**
4. **The third paragraph is really good. You can really picture the fishes swimming in shoals in the sea. ‘Flashing silver’ is a metaphor.**
5. **In the sixth verse, it switches from the poet telling the story to the pilot’s daughter telling it. This works well.**

**EXTENSION:** Go back to a recent Literature essay you have written. Try to identify where you may have written something in a tone or style that might not please the examiner. Identify the reason why this might be, then write a new, improved version in your book.

**Remember these rules for good, critical writing when you next write an essay!**

 ***exam* TIPS**)

**Essay writing: getting tone and style right**