

The Oral Commentary Process (In 7 simple steps)

1. **Prepare.** Go back over the texts. Make sure you feel comfortable with every text we have studied, that you can make connections to the many themes and motifs, and that you can navigate through Shakespeare's language effectively enough to be able to talk about the ideas in *Hamlet*.
2. **Gather and Discuss.** Arrange some study groups. Share with each other your notes and annotations; it might open up ideas you had not previously considered. Practice doing commentaries with each other.
3. **Show up on Time for Your Appointment.** Don't make me wait. Get to school early- well rested and ready.
4. **Read and Take Notes.** You will have 20 minutes to read through the passage, annotate, make notes, and create an outline for your commentary. Make sure you do all of these things; without an outline, you run the risk of running out of things to say and/or rambling on a tangent. Remember to gear your outline toward the guide question(s) provided for you.
5. **Be Calm.** The preparation that you've allowed yourself should give you a confidence in the commentary. I am *not out* to get you; I *want* you to succeed. I will, therefore, do everything I can (within what IB allows) to push you toward success. You *will* stutter; . You *will* say "um" or "like," but try not to say them too much. Don't be afraid of silence. No pause will be an awkward one.
6. **Deliver Your Commentary.** Remember to address aspects of context as well as aspects of style. In other words, how is this passage significant to the larger work (or larger body of works)? And what do you notice stylistically within the language and structure of the passage itself? Be able to intelligently use literary terminology such as irony, ambiguity, characterization, metaphor, theme, motif, diction, tension, conflict, parallel, tone, connotation, mood, point of view, narration, etc. Be able to refer to specific details in the text. Avoid discussing the passage chronologically. And ultimately, aim everything toward a purpose.
7. **Breathe a sigh** of relief. When you are finished, don't dwell on your urns, okays, and likes. Don't say, "That was horrible, wasn't it?" as you leave the room. Simply smile, breathe, and relax. This is just another thing.

A Word about Critical Literary Approaches

If you choose to comment on the desires and anxieties of a character, don't say, "I saw some psychoanalysis here ...". In the same way, if you choose to comment on the presence of materialism in the passage, don't say, "This is a very Marxist passage." You need to understand that formalism, psychoanalysis, and Marxism are different ways to approach a text. You might, then, say, "Under a psychoanalytical lens, it becomes clear that...." Or, "A Marxist reading might reveal that...." Or, "The formal qualities of the passage present.... " Make sure you sound like you know what you're talking about.