

# How to write an exegesis in Creative Writing

*Writing Centre Learning Guide*

---

## WHAT IS AN EXEGESIS?

In the discipline of Creative Writing, an exegesis refers to a critical explanation of your piece, in which you explain the logic of your thought process and your choice of themes and literary techniques. When you write a creative piece, you will often be required to submit an exegesis accompanying it. The exegesis is a chance for you to justify the creative decisions you made when writing your piece. You can explain your thought process, and why you chose to include particular themes or literary techniques.

## WHY DO WE WRITE EXEGESES?

An exegesis is important because it shows the marker that you've thought about what effect you want your creative piece to have on the reader, and what creative techniques you've used to create that effect. Markers don't have the time to analyse each piece as well as read it, so the exegesis provides them with a window into the writer's head.

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD EXEGESIS?

A good exegesis clearly outlines the literary techniques and other creative decisions you made during the creation of your piece. It also gives an in-depth explanation of the purpose of your piece, and how the techniques you used and the decisions you made contribute to the overall theme(s) and underlying message(s) of your piece.

## PLANNING YOUR EXEGESIS:

If you know you'll need to write an exegesis, it's best to make notes as you write your creative piece. This way you'll have something to refer to as you plan and write your exegesis, rather than having to look back over your work and trying to remember why you made the decisions you made.

Think about the literary techniques you're using (even unconsciously), what effect you want them to have on the reader, and how that serves the purpose of your piece. You can ask yourself questions such as:

- Why did I write this piece?
- What do I want the reader to think after reading it?
- What themes am I exploring?
- What messages am I trying to convey?
- What literary techniques (such as characterisation, point of view, voice, motifs, symbolism) did I choose to use?
- Why did I choose these techniques?
- How did I use them to explore my chosen theme(s) or message(s)?

You can also write about what texts inspired you, how you made your piece similar or different to these texts and for what reason you chose to do this.

#### STRUCTURING YOUR EXEGESIS:

An exegesis can be structured like any other essay, with an introduction, several body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Each paragraph explores a single idea. For example, how a certain work inspired you to characterise your protagonist in a certain way, or, how you used symbolism to explore a certain theme.

See 'Writing Essay,' 'Introductions and Conclusions,' and 'Paragraph Writing,' for more information on how to plan, structure and write an essay.

If you quote from other sources (for example, pieces you drew inspiration from), be sure to reference them correctly using the referencing system required by your marker.

Thank you to Creative Writing students Ann Jackson and Brooke Marshall for writing this guide.