

Supported focus – Comparative literary argument

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Language A: Literature · HL

Scope and prerequisites

IB Language A literature first assessment 2021; English focus. This supplemental reference covers only the listed preparation outcomes. School selections, full-guide procedures and required live or recorded performance are separate.

- Compare choices in two literary works
- Use context and contrasting readings to develop a reasoned interpretation

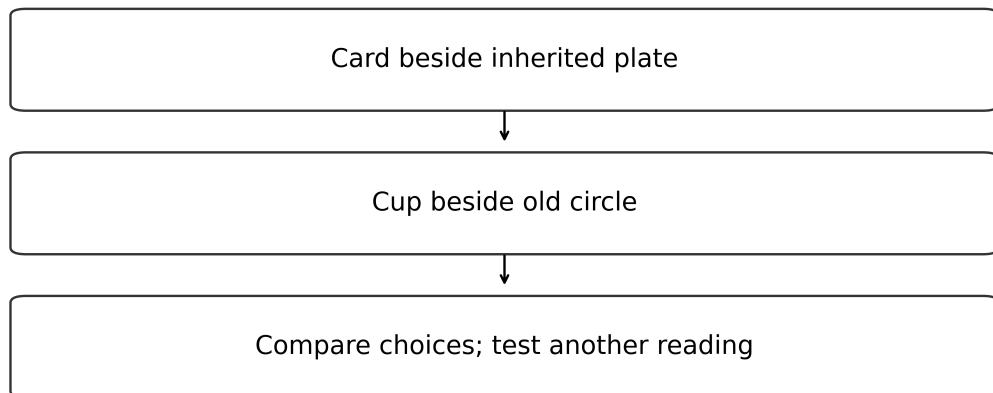
Prerequisites: Close reading ; comparative claim; context versus biography.

Explain and choose the method

A lyric can compress a moment while a novel develops events across a longer narrative.

Paper 2 requires a comparative argument about two studied works, supported by precise knowledge and authorial choices.

A comparative argument explains a relationship through both texts. Use a shared question, then analyse a distinct choice in each text. “Both concern belonging” is a start, not a developed comparison. The original classroom context supplies no biography; analyse wording before suggesting a broader interpretation.



Original diagram of the worked relationship; read the full wording and qualifications.

Existing worked example: Build a paragraph about how time is arranged in each work: repetition may return a poem to one moment while retrospective narration

revises an earlier event. Explain how this difference shapes the reader’s understanding of memory.

Complete original context

Original classroom texts, written for this supplement. They are not school-selected assessed works.

Text A – The label Every morning I polished the brass plate beside the door. It carried my father’s name, and visitors asked for him even after I took charge of the shop. I answered their questions, found the parts, and wrapped each purchase. Still, at the door, they thanked the name on the plate. One afternoon I put a small card below it: “Ask for Leila.” The next visitor read the card aloud, hesitated, and then asked me where the hinges were. I left the brass plate shining. The card stayed too.

Text B – A space on the shelf (original poem) I cleared a place beside the cup, not where the cup had been. The shelf kept its old circle; the new wood still looked clean. By evening, two rings darkened it. I did not rub them out.

Context supplied for this exercise: both texts are contemporary original classroom writing in English. No author biography, translation history or evidence about a real society is supplied. Compare what the wording permits; do not invent historical facts. A real course comparison must use the school’s eligible studied works.

Independent practice and checked reasoning

■ Transfer 1

Compare how both texts represent making a place for a new identity. Write a complete comparative paragraph with quotations.

Reasoning: Both texts make identity visible through a small addition rather than complete replacement. In A, “Ask for Leila” gives the worker a public name beside the inherited brass plate, turning unnamed labour into recognition. In B, “beside” rather than “where” preserves the old cup’s place while creating another. A’s hesitation before a visitor speaks Leila’s name stages a social adjustment; B’s two darkened rings make coexistence visible without a visitor. The difference is between recognition through language and belonging through shared space, not a simple opposition between keeping and destroying the past.

■ Transfer 2

Identify one contrasting reading that complicates a wholly optimistic interpretation of A, without inventing biography.

Reasoning: Leila must add a request to be recognised, and the visitor hesitates, so recognition is not automatic. Keeping the shining plate may suggest respect, but could also show the inherited name retains authority. Both readings need the supplied details and should remain interpretations, not claims about the author’s family.

■ Transfer 3

Explain how you would transfer this method to two actual studied works and what must be verified before making historical-context claims.

Reasoning: Choose a question-led comparison, select precise scenes and authorial choices from both works, and test a counter-reading. Verify editions, eligible works, reliable contextual evidence and the relevance of that context to textual details. A general biography cannot replace analysis.

Limits and next use

Do not imply every poem or novel works this way; verify the selected works. Context should illuminate details rather than replace textual evidence with a history lesson.

All tasks here are public original practice with authored guidance. They are not official questions or fresh diagnostics. Existing protected tests and mocks remain separate.