

**How was your understanding of cultural and contextual considerations of the work developed through the interactive oral?**

You will do this for each of the presentations (so two reflective statements for two oral presentations if you are in the SL and three oral presentations and reflective statements if you are in the HL). The reflective statement will be handed in to your teacher.

The reflective statement will be marked out of 3 marks using assessment Criterion A, but this will be done externally by an examiner. Your teacher might mark this himself or herself for internal purposes. It may be that your teacher marks all of the reflective statements that you generate as opposed to just the one that you submit with the essay at the end of the process. However, only the one you select to be sent off with the essay will be marked by an IB examiner.

These are the level descriptors for the 3 marks that can be awarded for the reflective statement:

**Criterion A: Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement**

**To what extent does the student show how their understanding of cultural and contextual elements was developed through the interactive oral?**

[Note: The word limit for the reflective statement is 300–400 words. If the word limit is exceeded, 1 mark will be deducted.]

Start Here:

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	Reflection on the interactive oral shows superficial development of the student's understanding of cultural and contextual elements.
2	Reflection on the interactive oral shows some development of the student's understanding of cultural and contextual elements.
3	Reflection on the interactive oral shows strong development of the student's understanding of cultural and contextual elements.

Below are two examples of reflective statements, one weak, one strong:

**Student Sample 1**

My understanding of the culture of the Ibo was deepened through the discussion we had on religion in *Things Fall Apart* (Chinua Achebe). We debated whether Ibo religion with its emphasis on the afterworld and the spirits was based on faith or superstition and came to the conclusion that this was too superficial and artificial a way of looking at the question. A better approach would be to say that the Ibo religion is based on a cosmology that goes beyond understanding of life and death into a perpetual cycle between the living, the dead and the unborn and as such there is the feeling that the ancestors are constantly watching over the present and can be venerated, honoured or indeed shamed.

Okonkwo's visit to the Agbala shows the reader that the superstitious approach comes more from him than the religion itself as he is in a state of perpetual paranoia and power struggle. Unlike the wise chief priestess Ezeani, who reveres the ancestors and looks to them as vanguards of the present, Okonkwo despises his most immediate predecessor, his father, and in doing so breaks with the Ibo tradition. It is

this transgression that causes him to become superstitious, as he no longer has the faith and confidence in the past that any honourable Ibo member of society should, and therefore he acts in increasingly compulsive and violent ways.

The class debate developed this idea in interesting ways: at first most of the class felt that the purpose of *Things Fall Apart* was to suggest that the Ibo religion is a rigid system and not as flexible and forgiving as Christianity and this was why it failed to keep the village together. However, provocative questions and statements such as 'who exactly leads the village to its downfall after all?' and 'surely Achebe is looking at culture in a more sophisticated way than this!' slowly took us to a different conclusion.

The interactive oral was a powerful and transformative experience that made us think about culture in *Things Fall Apart* more carefully and reflectively. It made us consider how culture in general cannot be considered as something that exists of its own accord without taking into account the people that embody and dramatize it.

#### **Examiner's grading and comment**

**3 points: Reflection on the interactive oral shows strong development of the student's understanding of cultural and contextual elements.**

This grading is based upon:

Criterion A: Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement

*To what extent does the student show how their understanding of cultural and contextual elements was developed through the interactive oral?*

#### **Student Sample 2**

In our class we studied the play *Death and the Maiden* by Ariel Dorfman. It was a good play and I really liked it. In the class discussion we talked about many things, like justice. The discussions were interesting and I feel that I really got a lot out of them.

When we discussed justice there were many interesting things that came up, for example the way that the main character wants to take justice against her former torturer. This was an interesting conversation and it made me think about culture in Chile. The culture of Chile is such that people take justice into their own hands. She wants to do this and this was something that we debated in the class.

I felt that I also learned about the role of women in South American culture through the discussion. In my culture women are free but in the South American culture they are not. Women in this culture really have to fight for their rights and it's not really fair at all. I feel this strongly coming from my cultural viewpoint.

I felt that this was developed through the discussion we had because we said many things about the main female character and gave many examples of how she is not free. For example, her husband does not listen to her and Dr Miranda, her torturer, raped her.

All in all I felt that it was a really interesting conversation that we had in the class and it definitely helped me develop my understanding of culture in *Death and the Maiden* for the reasons that I have already given. I would add that there were also contextual elements that I understood more because of the interactive oral and this was a good thing because I now feel I know the work much better.

#### **Examiner's grading and comments**

**1 point: Reflection on the interactive oral shows superficial development of the student's understanding of cultural and contextual elements.**

Grading based on:

Criterion A: Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement

*To what extent does the student show how their understanding of cultural and contextual elements was developed through the interactive oral?*

## EXERCISE 3

Study the student samples given above. Can you give five reasons explaining the strengths and weaknesses of each reflective statement?



The reflective statement is a chance for you to consider your own perception of the work as a way of knowing. Consider how your specific approach to the text shapes the meaning that you derive from it. This perspective will depend on whether you can relate to the characters or not, and in which ways, the extent to which you are drawn into the style and what your response is to the ethical dilemmas and cultural variants presented in the text.

Stop

## Supervised writing

In the supervised writing leg of this learning experience, you are asked to write in a limited period of time about each of the works studied, working from three prompts given to you by your teacher. You will be expected to write in continuous prose for a period of about 40–50 minutes. There is no word limit for the supervised writing exercise. This work will be handed in to the teacher at the end of the exercise.

You will be allowed to have the relevant text with you, plus any annotated notes taken in class during the teaching of the work in question. However, you will not know what the prompts are before the exercise, and you are not allowed to have access to study guides or any other secondary material.

This part of the process is designed to make you think more about the work in translation you have studied. You do not need to worry so much about the format of the supervised writing, and it does not have to be a formal essay. Your teacher will advise you more precisely on the style and format of the piece expected. The main idea is to generate a piece of writing that you will later develop into an essay.

Your teacher will give you three to four prompts. You are expected to choose one and write on it. Choosing the right prompt will be crucial. Not only do you want to generate a good piece of supervised writing, but the supervised writing is also meant to be the foundation for the essay that you will write later: it is the germ of an idea that you will develop under your teacher's supervision into a fully fledged essay.

The prompts will be fairly general questions about themes, characters or techniques in the work. You can expect them to relate to the kinds of discussions you will have had about your work in the classroom.

Here are some examples of the kinds of prompts that you could find your teacher giving you:

- Discuss which of the minor characters in this work plays the most important role.
- Which characters in the work have as a primary role the portrayal of the culture? (In other words, which characters seem to be there mainly to suggest cultural archetypes?)
- Elaborate on the use of symbols in the work studied.
- Write on the use of motif in the work.
- Discuss the role of imagery in the work you have studied.
- What is the role of tradition in the work?
- Discuss the significance of the landscape in the work.
- Explore the way that time unfolds in the work.

● **Examiner's hints**

The supervised writing exercise is not marked by the IB and is meant to develop your work in progress as you move towards the final essay that you will submit for this part of the course.

● **Examiner's hints**

Make sure that you ask your teacher to clarify any prompt that you do not understand before you start writing about it.