

ESSAY Examples and Advice

Advice

Read the question twice.

Underline the most important words

5 minutes for your notes/draft + 30 minutes writing

For your draft/notes, try to do a table covering everything and giving you the structure of the essay (see examples below). Or try a SWOT analysis (almost always works for essays).

2 sides of paper, max 3 (no time for more)

No bullet points

Example 1

« Discuss the developments in grape growing, winemaking and the marketplace that have shaped the wines of the Languedoc over the past forty years.”

Grape growing	
Past	Present
Lower quality grapes: Aramon, Alicante Bouschet	Quality grapes (“cépages améliorateurs”: Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, etc.
Nearly all red	More white such as Picpoul, Viognier, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, etc.
400 00 ha+	236 000 ha > arrachage
Planted everywhere	Site selection
High yields	Controlled yields (average 40 hl/ha)
Conventional	Organic
Manual	Mechanized
Gobelet training	Globelet + Posts/wires
No irrigation	Irrigation allowed
	Climate change > Hotter and drier

Winemaking	
Past	Present
Cement and wooden vats	Same + stainless steel + all options
No temp. control	Temp. control
No sorting	Sorting and selection
Red wine vinification	All styles vinification
	Pneumatic press
	Barrel fermentation
Carbonic maceration	Destem, traditional fermentation, longer fermentations and macerations
No real hygiene	Very hygienic
Old barrels / concrete maturation	New barrels, more oak
Bulk production	Individual and estate bottling

Marketplace	
Past	Present

Local	International
High domestic consumption	Lower domestic consumption > exports
Bulk cheap wines	Inexpensive to very premium: Pays d'oc (<3€) to Grange des Pères (100€)
Trade structure: Coops	Coops, négociants (international brands such as Gérard Bertrand) and independent producers (e.g. Léon Barral, Daumas Gassac).
Vin de table	IGP & AOC (in 1982 10 AOCs in Languedoc, now 50)
Quantity	Quality
	300+ flagship estates
Farmers/unqualified	Qualified, knowledgeable, well travelled
	Adapting to market
No marketing / promotion	Marketing eg Sud de France

Introduction

No region in the world has gone through such as much change as the Languedoc has over the past 40 years. It is a real revolution. In all aspects, this changes have been adopted: in the vineyard, in the cellar and in the marketplace.

Conclusion

This change is still ongoing and at this pace it will be the next classic wine region in France.

Example 2

Compare Hill of Grace 2012 / Jacob's Creek Shiraz Cab 2016

	HENSCHKE Hill of Grace	Jacob's Creek Shiraz Cabernet
Viticulture	Different plots of land	Large & multiple sourcing area
	Very old vines	
	Hillside vineyards	Flat and
	Biodynamic	Conventional
	Dry farming	Irrigation
	Cooler climate	Hot climate
	Low yield	High yields
	Hand harvest	Machine harvesting
	Sandy soils	
	150 year old vines	Young wines
	Non grafted vines	Grafted vines
	High density plantings	Low density
Winemaking	Monovarietal	Blend
	Sorting	
	Non intervention	Technical intervention
	Fine French oak	Staves / oak chips

	Longer ageing (18 months)	6 months
	Indigenous yeasts	Exogenous yeasts
	Longer bottle ageing	
	Longer fermentation (1 month) & maceration	Shorter fermentation (7 to 10 days)
	Unfiltered	Filtered
	Low sulfites	
Resulting wine	Confidential production	Mass market wine
	Iconic	Generic
	Starting to show tertiary aromas	Youthfull
	High Price 400+€	Entry level price 7 €
	Has potential for further ageing	To drink now
	Several layers of concentration, more complexity	Monodimensional
	Structure (tannins, acidity)	
	Terroir focused wine	Varietal wine
	Investors/collectable wine	Off trade, widely available

Intro: The 1st wine comes from Pernod Ricard, a major national brand, the other one from a family owned small estate known for its high quality wines.

Conclusion: Both wines are representative of Australia's winemaking possibilities. On the one hand mass market, technical good quality value wine, on the other hand terroir focused wine.

Example 3

BLENDING IS COMMON IN BORDEAUX. EXPLAIN WHY, GIVING EXAMPLES.

- What is being asked? Blending, Bordeaux, examples
- Identify the key points to cover: red, white, dry, sweet. Balance in wines
- Give some examples

Bordeaux is the largest wine region in France covering no less than 115 000 hectares. All styles of wines are produced: white red and rosé, still and sparkling, dry and sweet. All these diverse wines have something in common: they are made blending different grape varieties.

Balance

The main reason why Bordeaux wines are made using blends is a matter of balance in the wine.

A red Bordeaux blend is primarily composed of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc, with smaller portions of Malbec and Petit Verdot (and very occasionally, Carménère). Merlot and Cabernet, the two main grapes, are complementary. As a matter of fact, Merlot brings roundness and fruit-driven aromas (Black Cherry, Raspberry, Plum). Cabernet Sauvignon brings tannins and structure along with savoury characteristics (savory black currant and pepper flavours). This kind of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon blend became so popular that it was imitated in the new world (mostly in California) under the name of "Meritage".

When it comes to whites, wines are made using a blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon and sometimes Muscadelle. Sauvignon blanc adds nerve and zest to sémillon which can be fat and monodimensional. Muscadelle adds youthful fruitiness to sweet whites, grapey flavours, and is always a minor constituent in the sweet blends.

Vintage variation

Bordeaux region has a maritime climate with important vintage variation. Therefore on a given year a grape variety can be importantly affected both in terms of quality and quantity. Relying on different grapes helps to limit the consequences of a bad vintage.

For example, merlot grapes bud, flower, and ripen earlier than Cabernet Sauvignon, and are much more susceptible to coulure, which can seriously affect quantity and quality of the wine. Therefore it is more widely planted on the right bank of the Gironde, where climate is cooler. A typical Médoc recipe, on the left bank, is 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc, 20% Merlot, while a typical St-Émilion recipe, on the right bank, might be closer to 70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Franc.

Sémillon is easy to cultivate, as vigorous as Sauvignon Blanc, but flowers slightly later and is not particularly susceptible to coulure, nor is it a victim of disease, apart from noble and grey rot. If the harvest of Sauvignon Blanc is smaller on a given vintage, the whole of the crop will not be affected as sémillon will not be affected. The classic recipe for a dry white from Bordeaux (e.g. Entre deux Mers) is 70% Sauvignon Blanc and 30% Sémillon and it is 80% Sémillon and 20% Sauvignon Blanc for sweet white wines such as Sauternes.

As a conclusion we can say that Bordeaux blends are a major historical characteristic in Bordeaux. Classic blends have evolved over time, with more merlot being used in reds to give some roundness and earlier drinking wines, but a major question is, what will come out of these classic blends with climate change and grape varieties moving up North?