

Essay Question Adaptation Planner

Years 7–12 | Essay Memorisation | Part 3 of 3

WHAT IS THIS WORKSHEET FOR?

A memorised essay is only useful if you can adapt it to the actual question in front of you. This worksheet trains you to take your prepared essay and rapidly reframe each element — thesis, introduction, and each core idea — to directly answer a range of different exam questions. The goal is flexibility: you are not memorising one rigid essay, you are building a responsive argument system.

WHY THIS SKILL MATTERS

- HSC and selective exam markers are trained to identify responses that do not address the specific question. A perfectly memorised essay that ignores the question wording will be penalised.
- The thesis is the highest-leverage adaptation point: change one or two words in your thesis and the rest of the essay snaps into alignment.
- Your core ideas (evidence + analysis) rarely need to change completely — what changes is the angle: how you frame the relevance of each idea to the new question.
- Practising adaptation across multiple questions builds genuine conceptual flexibility, not just surface-level rewording.

"Your memorised essay is raw material. The question is the mould. Your job is to pour the material into the mould — not hand the examiner a shape they didn't ask for."

HOW TO USE EACH GRID

Each grid below handles up to 3 exam questions side by side. For every question:

- Write the full question in the top row.
- THESIS: rewrite your contention in 1–2 sentences that directly answer this specific question's wording.
- INTRO: note how you will reframe your contextual opening to set up this question's angle.
- IDEA 1, 2, 3: keep your evidence the same — but note how the framing sentence and link changes for this question.

You do not need to rewrite the full essay in each cell. Short notes, adjusted phrases, and key words are enough.

ADAPTATION GRID 1

ELEMENT	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3
Write the question here →			
THESIS <i>Adapt your contention</i>			

INTRO <i>Adjust the framing</i>			
IDEA 1 <i>Adjust the angle</i>			
IDEA 2 <i>Adjust the angle</i>			
IDEA 3 <i>Adjust the angle</i>			

ADAPTATION GRID 2

ELEMENT	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3
Write the question here →			
THESIS <i>Adapt your contention</i>			

INTRO <i>Adjust the framing</i>			
IDEA 1 <i>Adjust the angle</i>			
IDEA 2 <i>Adjust the angle</i>			
IDEA 3 <i>Adjust the angle</i>			

ADAPTATION GRID 3

ELEMENT	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3
Write the question here →			
THESIS <i>Adapt your contention</i>			
INTRO <i>Adjust the framing</i>			

IDEA 1 <i>Adjust the angle</i>			
IDEA 2 <i>Adjust the angle</i>			
IDEA 3 <i>Adjust the angle</i>			

WHAT STAYS THE SAME VS WHAT CHANGES

 Usually stays the same	 Usually adapts
Your core evidence (quotes) Your techniques and their labels The subject matter of each paragraph Your analytical vocabulary	Your thesis wording (always) Your topic sentences (the angle) How you link evidence back to the question Your introduction's framing sentence

NST Pro Tip

During the reading time, read the question and spend 2 minutes mentally running through your adaptation plan before writing a single word. The student who understands the question will always outscore the student who recites an unrelated essay, regardless of how well-written it is.