

Other ways to revise a novel

The following suggestions for revision activities are graded as easy, less easy and hard.

Easy

- Make a list of the characters in the novel and write down a few words about each. You could also make a diagram showing how the characters relate to each other.
- Imagine that a publisher has asked you to write a short description for the back of a new edition of the novel. It must be no more than 100 words long, and it must tell a reader what the novel is about without giving away the whole story. It must also give an idea of what kind of story it is, some information about the people in it, and why a reader might enjoy it. Try to sum up for the reader what important ideas they will find in the novel
- Choose an important event in the novel. Imagine that you are one of the characters involved, and write between 60 and 70 words about what happened. To help you to get the most from your writing, think about these questions:
 - Why was it important?
 - How were you involved?
 - How did you feel about what happened?
- Pick one character and try to write for five minutes about that character:
 - What can you remember about?
 - What do they do in the story?
 - Why are they important?

They try this with other characters.

- Choose a theme or idea that you talked about when you read the book in class.

Write down at least three places in the novel where this idea is important. For each place, write down which characters are involved, and how what they say and do makes the idea clear.

Then find one key quotation from each place in the novel that you might use if you are writing about this idea in the exam. Try it for several ideas and give yourself just a few minutes for each.

Less Easy

- Choose a main character.

On a piece of paper, do a brainstorm around the character. You should include important scenes that they are involved in and themes or ideas in the novel that they represent. Note a least five quotations which you might use in an exam if you were writing about this character.

Write down how this character changed during the novel.

If you find this helpful, do it for more characters.

- Choose a theme or main idea in the novel. For example, it might be how people use the power they have, how people are changed by their expressions, or how they behave under pressure,

On a piece of paper, do a brainstorm around this idea. You should include scenes in which the idea is important, characters who show something about this idea, and at least

five quotations which you might use in an exam if you were writing about it.

If you find this helpful, do it for more ideas.

- Choose an aspect of the writer's technique in the novel. For example, it might be the use of symbols, allegory, descriptions of places and characters, or a particular narrative voice.

On a piece of paper, do a brainstorm around this technique. You should include scenes in which this technique is clear, and at least five quotations which you might use in an exam if you were writing about it. Next to each quotation, explain why you chose it to illustrate the writer's technique.

If you find this helpful, do it for other aspects of the writer's techniques.

- If the chapters in your novel have headings, choose four or five of them. Make notes on how each heading relates to the themes and events in the chapter in particular, and in the novel in general. This will give you a useful summary of key points, and a helpful revision aid.

If you find this helpful, do it for every chapter.

- Imagine you are one of the characters in the novel. Write as though you are reflecting on the events of the whole story. Looking back, what do you remember most clearly? How do you feel now about what happened? What have you learned – about yourself, about the characters, or about the world?

This will help you to revise the significance of your chosen character, and to explore events and ideas from an alternative perspective.

If you find this helpful, do it for more characters.

Hard

The first three activities are similar to the 'less easy' ones, but encourage you to explore more deeply on your own.

- Choose who you consider to be the main characters. For each one, make notes on the following things:

How they relate to other characters

What you learn about them from this.

Look out for three or four key quotations or examples to refer to in an exam. Does the character represent an idea or theme? Do they help you to understand an idea or theme in the novel?

Write down some key moments in the novel where this becomes clear, and then look for short quotations for each that you could use in an exam.

- Choose what you consider to be the main themes or ideas in the novel. They might include, for example, human nature, power relationships, racial tensions, conflict, history or the way that circumstances change behaviour.

Make notes on each idea. How is the idea developed through the novel? Pick out some key events which you would refer to if you were writing about his idea, and write down at least one short quotation from each. Are there particular characters who represent or illuminate the idea? How?

- Choose what you consider to be the most important features of the writer's techniques in the novel. For example, the use of symbolism, allegory description of places and characters, a particular narrative voice, structural devices, or the use of particular kinds of language.

Write about where in the novel these features of technique are particularly significant, and consider how and why. Select appropriate quotations to support your points.

- Imagine that you are the writer of the novel that you have studied. You have just finished writing it and you want it to be published. Write a letter to send to publishers, persuading them that your book is a good investment for them.

You will need to explain:

- What kind of book it is
- What kind of audience it is written for
- What the main themes are
- Main features of the plot
- Techniques you have used in writing the novel
- Why they will appeal to the target audience
- Why you think your novel is important.

Make sure the letter is long enough to communicate your main points, but brief enough to be interesting.

This is an excellent way of consolidating your knowledge of the novel, and helps you to become used to writing about it as a whole.

- Do some research on the writer of your novel. You might be able to find articles or books about him or her in a library, which will give you new ideas or perspectives on the novel.