TUTORWOW

The Context Pack

How to use context to score, without writing a history lesson



HSC ENGLISH

Students are told context matters, then open the essay with a paragraph of dates and background. That paragraph reads like an encyclopedia entry and scores almost nothing, because it shows nothing about the text. Context earns marks only when it explains a choice the composer made, inside the same sentence as your analysis.

01 The rule: context rides with a technique

Weld context in one sentence

- **Technique and quote.** Name the device and give the evidence.
- **Effect.** Say what it does to the reader.
- **Context as the why.** Let the composer's world explain why they made that choice. All in the one sentence.

Context never gets a sentence of its own. If a detail cannot attach to a technique and an effect, it does not belong in the essay.

02 Before and after

1. A dystopian novel

Weak. The novel was written in 1949, just after the Second World War, a time of great fear about totalitarian governments and surveillance.

Band 6. The fractured, surveillance-heavy structure reflects a postwar world that had learned to distrust any single official version of the truth, so the reader feels the era's paranoia rather than simply being told about it.

The context now explains a structural choice, instead of sitting in its own paragraph as a fact.

2. A Romantic poem

Weak. This poem was written during the Romantic period, when poets valued nature and emotion over industry and reason.

Band 6. The poem's turn from the factory to the open field enacts the Romantic belief that feeling, not machinery, restores what industry strips out of us, so the shift in imagery carries the argument.

One clause of context does genuine analytical work on the poem's movement.

03 Checklist

- No context sentence stands alone. Each rides with a technique and an effect.
- Every context detail explains a composer's choice, not just states a fact.
- No dates or biography unless they change how a specific choice reads.
- My opening argues an idea, it does not set the historical scene.

Watch out. The standalone context paragraph at the top of the essay. Cut it. Move any detail that matters down into the paragraph where it can explain a choice, and delete the rest.

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