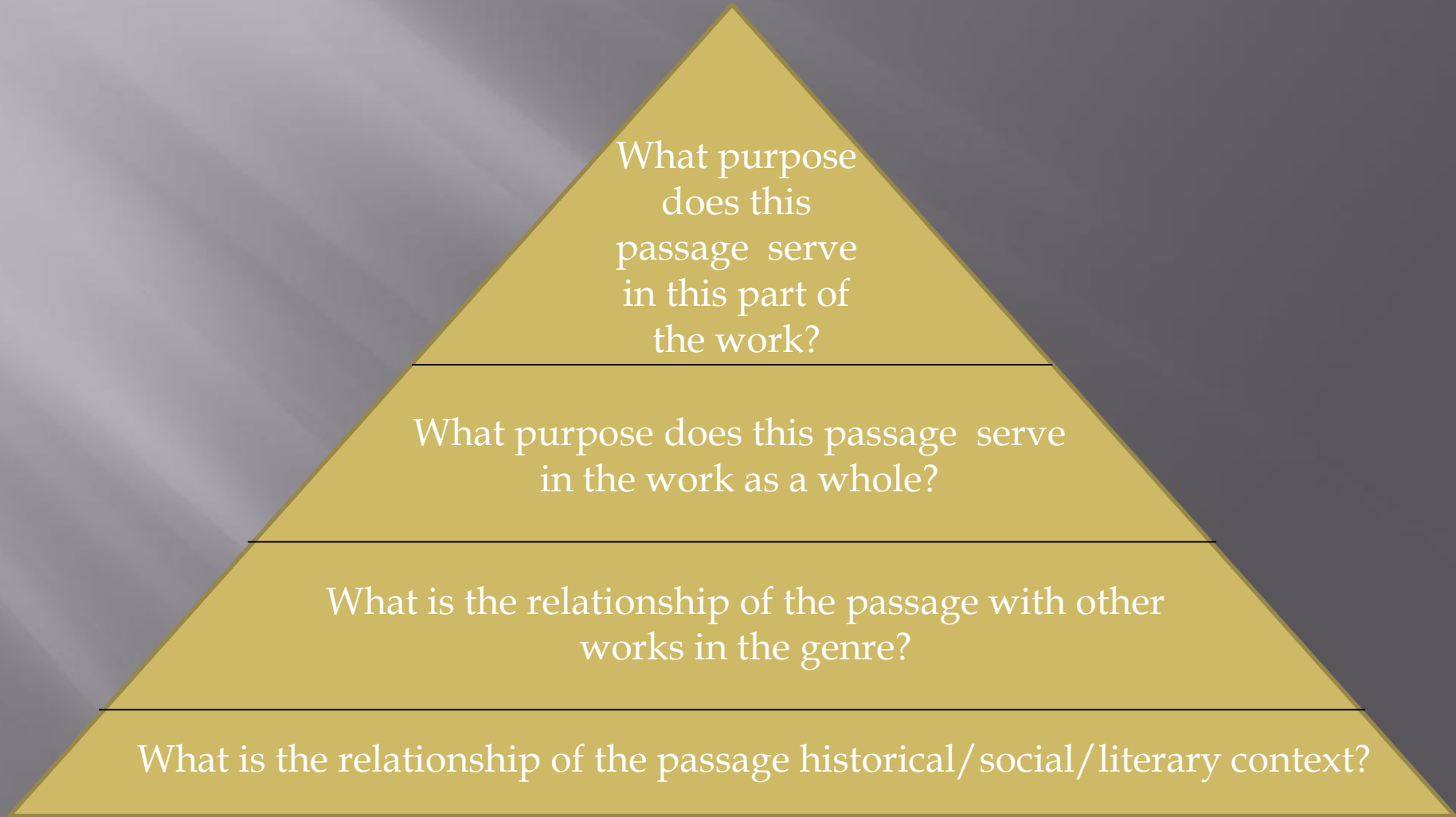


# HOW TO APPROACH A TEXT

Introducing Commentaries

# Different ranges of approaches from the specific to the most broad



# What purpose does this passage serve in this part of the work?

- ▣ Content and Style of Passage

# Grammar

- ▣ Difficult concepts
- ▣ Reoccurrence of grammatical forms
- ▣ Difficult constructions

# Lexicon

- ▣ Different possible interpretations
- ▣ Phrase/word choice (archaising, phonetic issues, repetition, epithets (oral theory))

# Style

- ▣ Figures of speech/Rhetorical analysis
- ▣ Metrical implications
- ▣ Other stylistic features
  - Word repetition
  - Word order

**What purpose does this passage  
serve in the work as a whole?**

Relationship of passage to other parts of the work

# Structural Issues

- ▣ Examples:
  - Analepsis
  - Prolepsis
  - Witness statement
  - Speech
  - Ekphrasis
  - Descriptions
  - Presentation of characters

# Thematic

- ▣ Examples
  - Anticipation
  - Recapitulations
  - Reflections
  - Ambiguities
  - Contradictions

What is the relationship of the  
passage to the Genre?

# What is the Genre?

- ▣ Genre
  - Definitions
  - Relationship with other works in the genre
- ▣ Specific stylistic devices and content according to genre

What is the relationship of the  
passage to its  
historical/social/literary  
contexts?

# Historical/Social

- ▣ Explanation of events
- ▣ Sources
- ▣ Adherence to reality
- ▣ Relationship to social context
- ▣ Philosophical

# Literary

- ▣ Allusions to other works
  - Which kind of allusion?
  - interpretation of allusions (within and outside the corpus)
  - Why is allusion there?
- ▣ Narratological issues
- ▣ Characterisation
- ▣ Rhetorical techniques
- ▣ Focalisation
- ▣ Mythology

# Writing your Commentary

# Scholarly Commentaries

- ▣ As you get more familiar with scholarly commentaries, you will find that they differ according to the tastes and interests of the commentator. Some commentaries will have a linguistic or philological emphasis, some will focus rather on historical or literary features. In this exercise, you have the same freedom of choice. You will be expected to comment on extremely striking elements in the text even if they are outside of your field of interest, but it is perfectly acceptable to do so in passing, and use the greater part of your word count to discuss issues that are central to your own interests.

# Introduction

- ▣ Context
- ▣ Content
- ▣ All connected with the work you are reading
- ▣ A few sentences are enough! Do not elaborate: apart from this brief introduction, you should avoid description in your commentary and focus on analysis.

# Critical Analysis

- ▣ This is critical analysis, but again in the broadest meaning.
- ▣ You are free to present what you discover about the passage in an original order. Do not slavishly follow our outline of how to approach a passage from above.
- ▣ We suggest an essay style, but a line by line commentary is allowed.
- ▣ Synthesise the research that you have done according to our guidelines above to make a coherent discussion of the interesting features of the passage.

# Bibliography

- ▣ A commentary, whilst not an essay per se, still needs to show evidence of research into scholarly debates through:
  - Use of scholarship to ratify arguments
  - Use of scholarship to place your argument within context of debate
  - Use of scholarship to show originality of argument
  - Use of scholarship to reference debates about which you do not go into detail