

A stack of three smooth, grey stones is positioned on the left side of the frame. The stones are balanced one on top of the other. They rest on a light-colored, fine-grained sand surface. In the foreground and middle ground, several concentric, hand-drawn circles are visible in the sand, creating a ripple effect around the base of the stone stack. The background is a soft, out-of-focus expanse of sand.

# Heuristics

The Study and Production of Texts  
semester II – Isabella Martini – Week 5



Left  
brain

I know exactly who I am.

# Right brain

I am everything I wanted to be.



Mercedes-Benz  
The best or nothing.



# Heuristics

- Helps discover things to say about what you are studying
- Two broad categories:
  - 1. Observation strategies
  - 2. Interpretive prompts

# Five steps

1. Notice and focus + ranking
2. The Method
3. Asking “so what?”
4. Paraphrase
5. Identifying a “go to” sentence

# 1. Notice and focus + ranking

- Step #1 - list details you notice (words, images)
- Step #2 - rank the details (specific features of the subject matter)
- Step #3 - say why 3 things you selected struck as most interesting/strange/revealing or significant

# 1. Notice and focus + ranking

- \*interesting = the beginning of an analysis
- \* strange = noticing oddities and things that initially seem not to fit; features that are not explainable
- \* revealing/significant = requires you to make choices that can lead to interpretive laps

## 2. The Method

- Working with patterns of repetition and contrast:
  - What repeats?
  - What goes with what? (strands)
  - What is opposed to what? (binaries)
  - What does not fit in? (anomalies)

## 2. The Method

- Step#1 – list **exact repetitions** and the number of each (words/images) meaning- carrying words
- Step #2 – list repetition of the same/similar kind of words/details (strands); be able to **explain the logic of the strand**
- Step #3 – list details or words that form or suggest **binary oppositions** and select the most important ones, which function as organising contrasts
- Step #4 – choose one repetition/strand/binary and write a paragraph on **why you think it is important**
- Step #5 – locate **anomalies**, exceptions to the pattern you have found



# 3. Asking “So What?”

- Pushing observation to conclusion
  - What does the observation imply?
  - What does the observation matter?
  - Where does this observation get us?
  - How can we begin to theorize the significance of observation?

# 3. Asking “So What?”

- Observation > So What > Implication
- Implication > So What > Conclusion



# 4. Paraphrase x (times)

## 3

- Step #1 – Locate a short key passage (also a sentence, or a phrase, just to begin with)
- Step #2 – Assume you don't understand it completely
- Step #3 – Substitute other concrete language for all key words (produce a parallel version)
- Step #4 – Repeat this 3 times (on the same sentence/phrase; which makes 3 parallel versions)
- Step #5 – Ponder the difference in implication among versions

## 5. The “Go To” sentence

- A characteristic way of putting things -  
it reveals how the writer thinks/  
approaches the world



# 5. The “Go To” sentence

- Step #1 – Select one single sentence, a characteristic one, a sentence shape that repeats, or that can be found at a certain habitual spot.
- Step #2 – Describe the structure of the sentence (how was it built? word order, kinds of words, and sentence type – coordinate, subordinate)
- Step #3 – Decide how this sentence reveals tendencies of the way the writer thinks

“A sentence is the shape thought takes”.



# Counterproductive habits of mind

- Premature leaps
- The judgement reflex
- Generalizing
- Naturalising our assumptions  
(overpersonalising)

# Homework for Lesson 6

- Pair/group work – Apply **Step #1 + Step #2** (notice & focus + ranking; the **Method**) on the essay on p.31 of the IELTS Masterclass, and upload your notes on Google Drive.
- Study IELTS essay useful vocabulary: <https://www.ielts-mentor.com/essay-vocabulary>





**Apply Step #1 & Step #2  
of Heuristics to this text**

Recently, scientists worried about climate change have urged governments to introduce measures to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that are seen as its main cause. Simultaneously, politicians and environmentalists have urged individuals to make changes to their lifestyle. I shall argue that governments and individuals should take joint responsibility for this problem.

Firstly, industry accounts for a large proportion of the greenhouse gas emissions, and this can only be controlled by government action. Measures could be taken to discourage pollution, such as limiting or taxing the use of fossil fuels. Alternatively, subsidies could be offered to industries to clean up their production processes. If these ideas were adopted, I believe that businesses would regard pollution as a financial issue.

Secondly, only discussion between governments can ensure that solutions are successful. The Kyoto agreement, for example, tried to reach global agreement on how to address the problem. Without such co-operation, it seems to me that efforts to reduce fuel consumption are unlikely to be effective.

However, national and international policies will only succeed if individuals also change their lifestyles. For example, people could think more carefully about how they use energy in their homes. By using less electricity, installing energy-efficient light bulbs and electrical appliances, or investing in solar panels, individuals can make a real difference.

In addition, I think individual attitudes to transport need to change. Instead of making short trips by car, people could choose to walk, cycle, or take a bus. Since cars are a major source of the problem, changing our behaviour in this area would have a major impact.

In conclusion, I would maintain that only a combination of international agreements, national policies, and changes in individual behaviour will succeed in preventing further damage to the environment.