

# Analysing questions

Before you start answering an essay question you should read it very carefully. Study it closely, and try to analyse it fully. Make an effort to

understand the problem it is posing, or the topic it is asking you to explore.

To do this you should *write out the question fully and accurately* on the papers you will be using for the construction of your essay plan. (See **Questions** page 66)

You should make every effort to analyse the question carefully so as to understand the principal issue or concept behind it.

Most questions contain within them (even if by implication) both key terms and instruction terms.

*‘Examine the significance of Iago’s role in Othello’*

*Examine* here is an instruction term because it tells you to discuss the topic in a general manner.

*Iago’s role* is a key term because it sets the limit of the question and is asking you to focus attention on this particular aspect of the play.

*‘Compare and contrast liberal-democracy and state-socialism as forms of government’*

*Compare and contrast* are instruction terms because they indicate that you should be looking for any similarities and emphasising differences in the two systems of government.

*liberal-democracy and state-socialism* are key terms because they specify the two forms of government which should be examined.

Other typical instruction terms are – *Discuss, Evaluate, Illustrate, Outline, Review, Trace, Explain* – because they tell you what to do with the topic and which approach your answer to the question should take.

(See **Instruction terms** page 37)