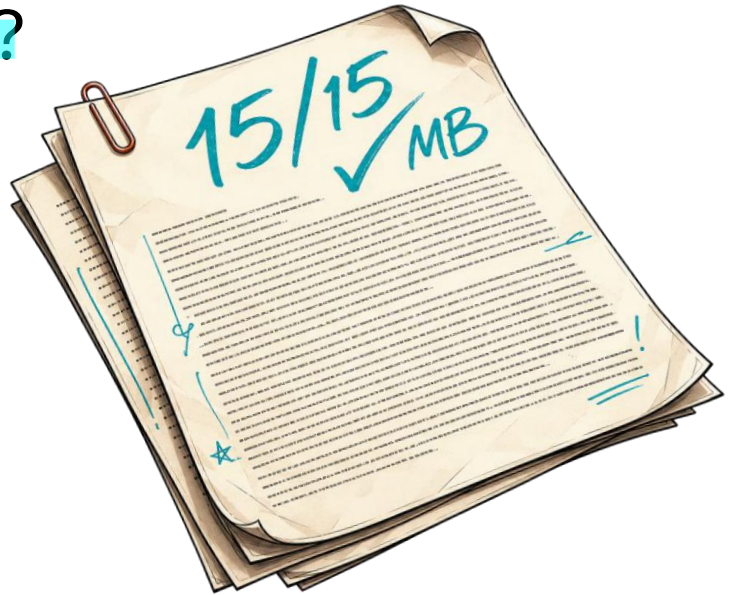




WHAT IS YOUR FOLIO MISSING?

What if **one small object** could make your entire folio feel more **sophisticated**?











ONE SMALL DETAIL = ONE POWERFUL FOLIO

Used once, it is just a detail.

But **used purposefully throughout your writing**, that object can become **a motif** – and that can give your folio a **powerful** sense of structure and meaning.





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LEARNING INTENTIONS

- ✓ Understand what a motif is.
- ✓ Analyse how using a motif will transform your writing.
- ✓ Recognise what separates 10/15 from 15/15 in folio writing.
- ✓ Begin planning a motif for your own folio essay.

WHAT THE WORD?!

One weird word before the real work...

? WHAT DOES “DEFENESTRATION” MEAN ?

Is it:

- A. Becoming frightened by windows.
- B. Throwing someone or something out of a window.
- C. Staring dramatically through a window.
- D. Removing all the windows from a building.

Make your choice. No *Googling*. All will be revealed later.

WHAT IS A MOTIF?



A motif = a **recurring image, object, phrase, colour, sound or idea** that runs through a piece of writing and helps **communicate its deeper meaning**.

WHAT TO AVOID

A motif is **not simply repeating the same word several times.**

For example: “The rain was falling. I watched the rain. The rain made me sad.”

This is **repetition**; it is not a successful example of a developed motif.

WHAT TO DO...

1. "The rain was falling. I watched the rain. The rain made me sad."



2. "The rain wept against the window. I watched each drop fall, wishing I could let my own tears fall too."



WHAT TO AVOID

1. “The **rain** was falling. I watched the **rain**. The **rain** made me sad.”



In this version, the **rain is merely repeated**; it does not develop any deeper significance.

WHAT TO DO...

2. "The **rain wept** against the window. I watched each drop fall, wishing I could let my own tears fall too." 

- ✓ "**rain wept**" transforms the weather into a motif for the narrator's sadness.
- ✓ The **falling raindrops symbolically mirror the tears** the narrator is **unable to release**.

WHAT TO DO...

2. "The rain wept against the window. I watched each drop fall, wishing I could let my own tears fall too." 

- ✓ The **rain connects** the external setting with the narrator's internal emotions.
- ✓ Rather than directly telling us that the character is sad, the motif allows the reader to infer it.

WHAT TO DO...

2. "The rain wept against the window. I watched each drop fall, wishing I could let my own tears fall too." 

- ✓ The rain now serves a clear purpose: it communicates emotional pain rather than simply describing the weather.
- ✓ If the rain changes later, it could reflect a change in the narrator's emotions.

LET'S PUT THIS INTO PRACTICE



Football boots
could
represent:

AMBITION

IDENTITY

BELONGING

FAMILY

PRESSURE

LOST DREAM

1. FOOTBALL PRACTICE – PERSONAL

For example, in a personal essay about giving up football after an injury:

Beginning: the new boots represent excitement, potential and ambition.

Middle: the mud-covered boots represent hard work and determination.

1. FOOTBALL PRACTICE

Turning point: the abandoned boots represent injury, disappointment and lost identity.

Ending: putting them away – or passing them to someone else – represents acceptance and moving forward to a different chapter.

1. FOOTBALL PRACTICE

The key is that the meaning develops throughout your writing.



1. FOOTBALL PRACTICE

For example:

Beginning

When Dad placed the boots in my hands; their leather was unblemished and their studs untouched by dirt. They seemed to hold every ambition I had - each lace threaded with the promise of the footballer I might one day become.

1. FOOTBALL PRACTICE

Later

Months after the injury, the boots lay abandoned beneath my bed, the mud from my final match still clinging stubbornly to their leather - a reminder of the person I had once believed I would become.

1. FOOTBALL PRACTICE

Ending

At last, I retrieved the boots from the shadows beneath my bed. I no longer felt the need to wear them. Instead, I placed them in my younger brother's waiting hands and watched as he tightened the laces around a dream that had once belonged to me.

LET'S PUT THIS INTO PRACTICE



The locked door could represent:

SECRETS

THE UNKNOWN

FEAR

GUILT

GRIEF

A BARRIER

ISOLATION

2. THE LOCKED DOOR – SHORT STORY

For example, in a short story, the locked door could represent a painful memory the character refuses to confront.

The character tells themselves that their mother's bedroom has remained locked since her death.

2. THE LOCKED DOOR – SHORT STORY

In reality, the “lock” represents their guilt: they avoided visiting their mother during her final days because they could not cope with seeing her ill.

The twist is that the door was never actually locked. The character has simply never tried to open it because it represents their guilt.

2. THE LOCKED DOOR – SHORT STORY

Beginning: the closed door = avoidance. It represents the memory the character refuses to confront.

Rising action: sounds, smells or light beneath the door seem to bring the mother's presence back. The closed door = guilt.

2. THE LOCKED DOOR – SHORT STORY



Climax: the character finally finds the courage to try the handle. The door = confrontation.

2. THE LOCKED DOOR – SHORT STORY

Twist: the door opens immediately.

The door was never locked.

Therefore, the door represents a self-created emotional barrier.

It reveals that the real barrier was never physical: it was the character's guilt and fear of confronting the past.

2. THE LOCKED DOOR – SHORT STORY

Ending: opening the door cannot change the past, but it allows the character to stop shutting their mother – and their grief – away. The door = acceptance.



2. THE LOCKED DOOR – SHORT STORY

Again, the **key** is that the meaning **develops** **throughout** your writing.



2. THE LOCKED DOOR – SHORT STORY

For example:

Opening

The door had remained closed since Mum died. Each morning, I passed without touching the handle, allowing myself to believe that the lock – not my guilt – was keeping me out.

2. THE LOCKED DOOR – SHORT STORY

Rising Action

Each night, Mum's perfume seemed to drift from beneath the locked door, carrying memories I had spent months avoiding.



2. THE LOCKED DOOR – SHORT STORY

Climax

With the key trembling in my hand, I prepared to enter the room – and finally confront the mother I had abandoned in her final days.

Twist

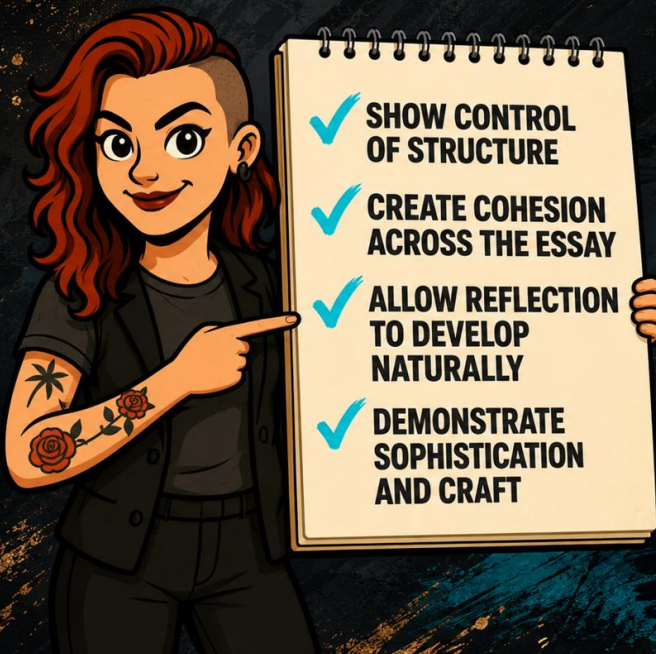
The handle turned without resistance. Mum had never locked the door; guilt had kept me outside.

2. THE LOCKED DOOR – SHORT STORY

Ending

At last, I left the door open. Morning light stretched across Mum's empty room, and, for the first time, I stepped away without pulling it closed behind me.





WHY MOTIFS IMPRESS THE MARKER

- ✓ SHOW CONTROL OF STRUCTURE
- ✓ CREATE COHESION ACROSS THE ESSAY
- ✓ ALLOW REFLECTION TO DEVELOP NATURALLY
- ✓ DEMONSTRATE SOPHISTICATION AND CRAFT

15/15 MB

THIS IS TYPICAL OF 15/15 RESPONSES.

QS MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

Writing which is broadly creative

	15-13	12-10	9-7	6-4	3-1	0
Creative: content	- strong attention to purpose and audience - As appropriate to genre: - strong creative qualities - skilful command of the genre - thematic concerns which are skilfully introduced and developed - ideas/feelings/experiences which are explored with a strong degree of mature reflection/self-awareness/insight/sensitivity - strong sense of the writer's personality and individuality	- clear attention to purpose and audience - As appropriate to genre: - clear creative qualities - clear grasp of the genre - thematic concerns which are clearly introduced and developed - ideas/feelings/experiences are explored with a clear sense of reflection/self-awareness/insight/sensitivity - clear sense of the writer's personality	- adequate attention to purpose and audience - As appropriate to genre: - adequate creative qualities - understanding of the genre - thematic concerns which are adequately introduced - ideas/feelings/experiences which are explored with an adequate sense of reflection and involvement - adequate sense of the writer's personality	- limited attention to purpose and audience - As appropriate to genre: - limited creative qualities - limited use of conventions of genre - limited thematic concerns - limited ideas/feelings/experiences explored - limited sense of the writer's personality	- very little attention to purpose and audience - As appropriate to genre: - very few creative qualities - very little use of conventions of genre - very few thematic concerns - very little evidence of exploration of ideas or feelings - very little sense of the writer's personality	no evidence of the skills required in terms of content, style and accuracy
Creative: style	- linguistic features of the chosen genre used skilfully to create strong impact - confident and varied expression enhances the purpose/meaning	- linguistic features of the chosen genre used to create impact - clear expression enhances the purpose/meaning	- linguistic features of the chosen genre used adequately - adequate expression - adequate structure	- limited use of features of the chosen genre - limited expression - limited use of structure	- very little attempt at using language effectively - very little use of structure	



QS MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

In simple terms...

Give it a point. Give it personality. Give it a pulse. Make the reader feel something — not just relief that they've reached the end.



QS MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

A Higher Creative Folio aiming for at least 10/15 should...

- ✓ Have a clear purpose and create an appropriate effect on its reader.
- ✓ Show a clear understanding of genre, whether it is a personal essay, reflective essay, short story, poetry or drama.



QS MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

A Higher Creative Folio aiming for at least 10/15 should...

- ✓ Contain genuinely creative ideas, rather than relying on an overused storyline or predictable message.
- ✓ Introduce a clear central theme and develop it throughout the piece.



QS MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

A Higher Creative Folio aiming for at least 10/15 should...

- ✓ Explore experiences, thoughts or emotions with real reflection, involvement, insight or sensitivity.
- ✓ Have a recognisable writer's voice and personality — it should not sound generic or borrowed.



QS MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

A Higher Creative Folio aiming for at least 10/15 should...

- ✓ Use imagery, symbolism, **motifs** and other language techniques deliberately to create an impact, not simply to tick a technique box.
- ✓ Use clear and controlled expression, with vocabulary and sentence structures that suit the piece.



QS MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

A Higher Creative Folio aiming for at least 10/15 should...

- ✓ Follow a purposeful structure in which the opening, development and ending work together to strengthen its meaning.
- ✓ Be technically accurate: paragraphs, sentences and punctuation should be mostly correct, and spelling errors should be infrequent.



STRONG CREATIVE PIECE



QS MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

To move from clear to strong, the writing should become:

- ✓ More skilful and confident.
- ✓ More original and individual.
- ✓ More mature in its reflection or insight.
- ✓ More controlled in its use of genre.
- ✓ More purposeful in its structure.
- ✓ More powerful in the effects created by its language



THE GAME CHANGER

A motif can help turn a series of well-written paragraphs into one carefully crafted whole.

STUCK FOR A MOTIF? START HERE

PERSONAL ESSAYS

1.   **A cracked phone screen** — anxiety, damaged relationships or an imperfect self-image.
2.   **An unread message** — regret, avoidance or something important left unsaid.
3.   **A playlist or recurring song** — friendship, first love, nostalgia or growing apart.
4.  **A hoodie** — comfort, identity, protection or hiding from the world.
5.  **A mirror** — insecurity, body image, changing identity or self-acceptance.

STUCK FOR A MOTIF? CONT'D

PERSONAL ESSAYS

6.  **A photograph** — memory, changing relationships or the gap between appearance and reality.
7.  **A school bag** — pressure, responsibility or the emotional weight someone carries.
8.  **An empty chair** — absence, grief or someone who continues to shape the writer's life.
9.  **A pair of trainers** — identity, belonging, ambition or learning to move forward.
10.  **The colour green** — hope, ambition, jealousy, growth or chasing something that always seems just out of reach.



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STUCK FOR A MOTIF? START HERE

CREATIVE ESSAYS

The following examples work particularly well in short stories because they can build atmosphere, foreshadow events, and reveal character without explaining everything directly.



CREATIVE ESSAYS – TOP 10 MOTIFS

1.  **A flickering light** — uncertainty, danger, fading hope or a truth struggling to emerge.
2.  **A stopped clock** — trauma, death, a life trapped in the past or one moment that changed everything.
3.  **An old photograph** — buried memories, family secrets or a past that is not quite what it seems.
4.  **A recurring song or melody** — memory, grief, warning or an unseen connection between characters.
5.  **A reflection** — fractured identity, self-deception or a character becoming someone they no longer recognise.

CREATIVE ESSAYS – TOP 10 MOTIFS – CONT'D

6.  **A loose red thread** — relationships unravelling, danger drawing closer or seemingly separate events becoming connected.
7.  **Footsteps** — fear, guilt, pursuit or the past following the character.
8.  **Rain** — grief, isolation, emotional release or eventual renewal.
9.  **A bird** — freedom, entrapment, escape or a warning that something is about to change.
10.  **The colour red** — love, danger, violence, guilt or a secret that becomes increasingly difficult to conceal..

BUILD YOUR OWN MOTIF JOURNEY

1. What experience will I explore?

Choose your meaningful experience. It could be a relationship or period of change, a friendship breakdown, bereavement, family change, pressure, identity, failure, belonging, recovery or even growing up.

My experience: ?

2. What is my deeper message?

What do you want the reader to understand — not simply what happened?

e.g. *“Some friendships end without either person being entirely to blame.”*

My central message: ?

BUILD YOUR OWN MOTIF JOURNEY

3. What could represent it?

Choose a recurring object, image, colour, sound, phrase or action.

My motif: 





BUILD YOUR OWN MOTIF JOURNEY



4. How will its meaning develop?

→ **Beginning** — before things changed, what did the motif represent initially?

→ **Your experience tells us what happened.**

→ **Your motif helps us understand what it meant.**

→ **Ending** — its final appearance show your growth in perspective?

EXAMPLE PLANNING

Experience

The breakdown of a close friendship after a private message was shared.

💭 Deeper message 💭

Real connection requires honesty and responsibility – not constant online contact.

Motif

The cracked phone screen...



EXAMPLE PLANNING

① **Beginning:** connection. The spotless screen glows with messages, photographs and inside jokes. The phone represents closeness and belonging.

② **Key experience:** damage. During the argument, my phone falls. A crack cuts across a photograph of me and my best friend on the screen. It begins to represent fractured trust.

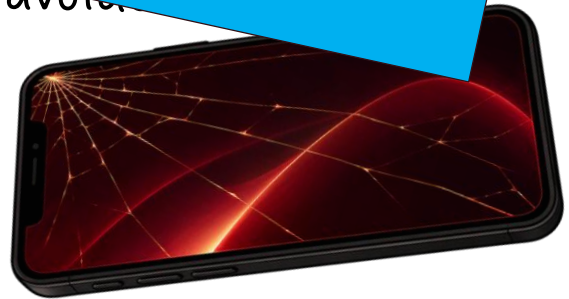


EXAMPLE PLANNING

③ **Reflection:** distortion. Every message is now read through the lens of looking back, I realise that fear is a valuable lesson. I have interpreted

④ I have switched to a person. It now represents acknowledged rather than avoided.

Avoid writing only, "This taught me a valuable lesson."
Tell us what you genuinely understand now.



MY PERSONAL ESSAY MOTIF JOURNEY

MY EXPERIENCE

What happened?

A close friendship ended after
I shared a private message online.

MY DEEPER MESSAGE

What did it help me understand?

Real connection requires honesty
and responsibility—not constant contact.

MY MOTIF

Object, image, colour, sound
or phrase?

A cracked phone screen.

1 INTRODUCE IT

What does it mean
at the beginning?



The spotless screen glowed with messages
and inside jokes. It represented connection,
trust and belonging.

2 RETURN TO IT

How does it connect to
the key experience?



During our argument, I dropped the phone.
A crack crossed our photograph as the
friendship began to fracture.

3 REFLECT ON IT

What do I understand
differently now?



I read every message through the crack.
Looking back, guilt had distorted how
I interpreted everything they said.

4 TRANSFORM IT

What does its final
appearance reveal?



The crack remained, but I switched off
the phone and apologised face-to-face.
The damage was accepted; repair was possible.

MOTIF CHECKLIST

Before you start writing, check:

- ✓ My motif connects to the essay's deeper message.
- ✓ It can appear naturally at important moments.
- ✓ Its meaning will develop — not simply repeat.
- ✓ It allows genuine reflection.
- ✓ Its final appearance will echo or transform its first.
- ✓ The essay remains about my experience — not merely about an object.



PLAN ONE BEFORE YOU LEAVE



YOUR TURN

PLAN ONE BEFORE YOU LEAVE

- 1 Choose one experience or story idea.
- 2 Choose one motif.
- 3 Decide what it means at the beginning—and what it will mean at the end.

PAUSE THE VIDEO • USE YOUR PLANNER



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DON'T JUST REPEAT IT— DEVELOP IT

A MOTIF IS NOT COPY + PASTE.



INTRODUCE IT

RETURN TO IT

REFLECT ON IT

TRANSFORM IT

—  ENGLISH WITH MRS BRIGHTWELL  —

★ **FINAL FOLIO CHALLENGE** ★

CAN YOUR MOTIF DO THESE THREE THINGS?

- ✓ Hold the writing together?
- ✓ Reveal something your narrator or character cannot say directly?
- ✓ Mean something different by the ending?



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🤔 WHAT THE WORD?! 🤔

The answer...

? WHAT DOES
“DEFENESTRATION”
MEAN ?

THE ANSWER IS...

B. Defenestration:
the act of throwing
someone or
something out of a
window.



