

Abitur Strategy

The difficulty of the text itself should *not* be the main criterion. With the help of your LDOCE or OALD you should normally be able to understand every text. A common mistake is that students come across e.g. five unknown words in the first two paragraphs and stop reading. However it can of course be a good idea to choose a text because you know something about its subject (e.g. because we dealt with it in class). Likewise it can be recommendable *not* to take a text when, even after the second reading, you still do not fully understand it.

Literary task: Even if you do not like literature in general you should at least take a look at the literary text and its questions. As a rule of thumb one can say that non-fictional texts are mostly more difficult but their questions (especially their reference to certain paragraphs) are often rather easy, whereas with literary texts it is often the other way round. The text itself is often relatively easy but the questions (e.g. characterization, interpretation, stylistic devices etc.) are more difficult, because they do not refer only to one or two paragraphs.

The main criterion are the questions on the text. Keep in mind that you get 50% of all points for them. Ask yourself e.g. the following questions: How clear is the reference of the questions, i.e. which passage(s) does a question refer to? How clearly do I understand what the question wants me to do (and what I am *not* supposed to do)? Do questions overlap? You can answer those questions of course only when you have analysed *all of them* carefully.

The second criterion are the topics for the composition. Ask yourself the following questions: How much do I know about this topic? Can I give convincing arguments and support them with concrete details/facts or can I only waffle? Can I think of an interesting title, introduction and/or conclusion?

The translation doesn't help at all for your decision. Unfortunately it is almost impossible to evaluate the difficulty of a translation quickly. Only when one has actually started translating, does one realize that passages that seemed quite easy at first glance turn out to be very hard to translate into idiomatic German.

Order of tasks: Although the translation comes last on the worksheet you should *not* do it as the last task. Experience shows that translations are often the worst part of the Abitur, especially when students are tired and/or have little time left. You can lose a lot of points when you run out of time and leave out e.g. a complete sentence. On the other hand it is much easier to write an acceptable composition in a hurry. So the recommended order is: Questions on the text – Translation – Composition.