

**Collins**

**AQA**

Approved

# AQA GCSE English Language and English Literature

Core Student Book

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# Explaining and commenting on writers' methods and effects

### What's it all about?

In this chapter, you will learn about how writers make conscious decisions about the words they choose, the techniques they use, and the way they structure and shape their texts in order to create meanings and communicate their ideas to their readers.

In this chapter, you will learn how to

- explain and comment on writers' use of language
- explain and comment on writers' use of language techniques
- explain the way writers use language to create character
- explain and comment on writers' use of structural features
- explain and comment on writers' use of openings
- explain and comment on the ways writers create meanings and effects with language, structure and form
- apply your skills to English Language and English Literature tasks.

	English Language GCSE	English Literature GCSE
Which AOs are covered?	AO2 Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views	AO2 Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate
How will this be tested?	Some questions will ask you to focus in detail on particular words and phrases. Others will identify a particular area of a text and ask you to look closely at the meanings and techniques being used in that particular part.  All the texts you will be responding to will be previously unseen.	Wider questions will ask you to analyse and comment on the overall text, paying attention to the language, the structure or the literary techniques being used by the writer to communicate meanings and create effects.  Sometimes you will be responding to a whole play or novel that you have studied in class and sometimes you will be writing about two previously unseen poems.

# Explain and comment on writers' use of language

## Learning objectives

You will learn how to

- identify the overall viewpoint in a text
- write about the effects of writers' language choices, linking them to the overall viewpoint.

## Assessment objective

- English Language AO2

Why does it matter which words and phrases the writer chooses?

### Getting you thinking

When reading a text for the first time, focus on these key questions: What is the writer's **viewpoint**? How does the writer want me to think or feel?

The writer's viewpoint will be communicated through their choice of language.

In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, George Orwell writes about a time of great change in the north of England following **industrialisation**.

As you travel northward your eye, accustomed to the South or East, does not notice much difference until you are beyond Birmingham. [...] It is only when you get a little further north, to the **pottery towns** and beyond, that you begin to encounter the real ugliness of industrialism – an ugliness so frightful and so arresting that you are obliged, as it were, to come to terms with it.

George Orwell, from *The Road to Wigan Pier*

- 1 What does Orwell describe in this extract?
- 2 What is Orwell's attitude to what he sees? Does he like it? Which words and phrases tell you this?

### Explore the skills

Now you have worked out the main viewpoint of the text, you can begin to explore the ways in which Orwell communicates this to the reader.

In the next paragraph, Orwell describes what he sees when he visits a mining town.

## Key term

**viewpoint:** an attitude, opinion or point of view

## Glossary

**industrialisation:** the growth of the steel, coal, textiles and manufacturing industries in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

**pottery towns:** towns like Stoke-on-Trent where pottery was manufactured

A slag-heap is at best a hideous thing, because it is so planless and functionless. It is something just dumped on the earth, like the emptying of a giant's dust-bin. On the outskirts of the mining towns there are frightful landscapes where your horizon is ringed completely round by jagged grey mountains, and underfoot is mud and ashes and overhead the steel cables where tubs of dirt travel slowly across miles of country. Often the slag-heaps are on fire, and at night you can see the red rivulets of fire winding this way and that, and also the slow-moving blue flames of sulphur, which always seem on the point of expiring and always spring out again. Even when a slag-heap sinks, as it does ultimately, only an evil brown grass grows on it, and it retains its hummocky surface. One in the slums of Wigan, used as a playground, looks like a choppy sea suddenly frozen; 'the flock mattress', it is called locally. Even centuries hence when the plough drives over the places where coal was once mined, the sites of ancient slag-heaps will still be distinguishable from an aeroplane.

- 3 Read the paragraph again and find examples of Orwell's language choices to complete the second column of the table.

Language choice	Example(s)	Effect: how it makes me feel and why
Adverbials	underfoot overhead ringed completely round	Create a feeling of claustrophobia because they suggest people are completely surrounded by the effects of industrialisation
References to colour		
Powerful adjectives		
Repetition		
Imagery or comparisons		

### Key term

**Adverbials:** words or phrases used to modify a verb, adjective or adverb to tell you how, when, where something is happening. Adverbials modify meaning to give the reader more information. For example:

The boy ran *clumsily* across the road.

The boy ran *gracefully* across the road.

*Resolutely*, the boy ran across the road.

*Without looking*, the boy ran across the road.





### Develop the skills

The next step is to explain the **effects** of the writer's language choices: how they make you feel and why.

#### Key term

**effects:** what a reader thinks, feels or pictures in their mind's eye as they read

- 4 Look at the way this student has commented on the effect of Orwell's use of colour.

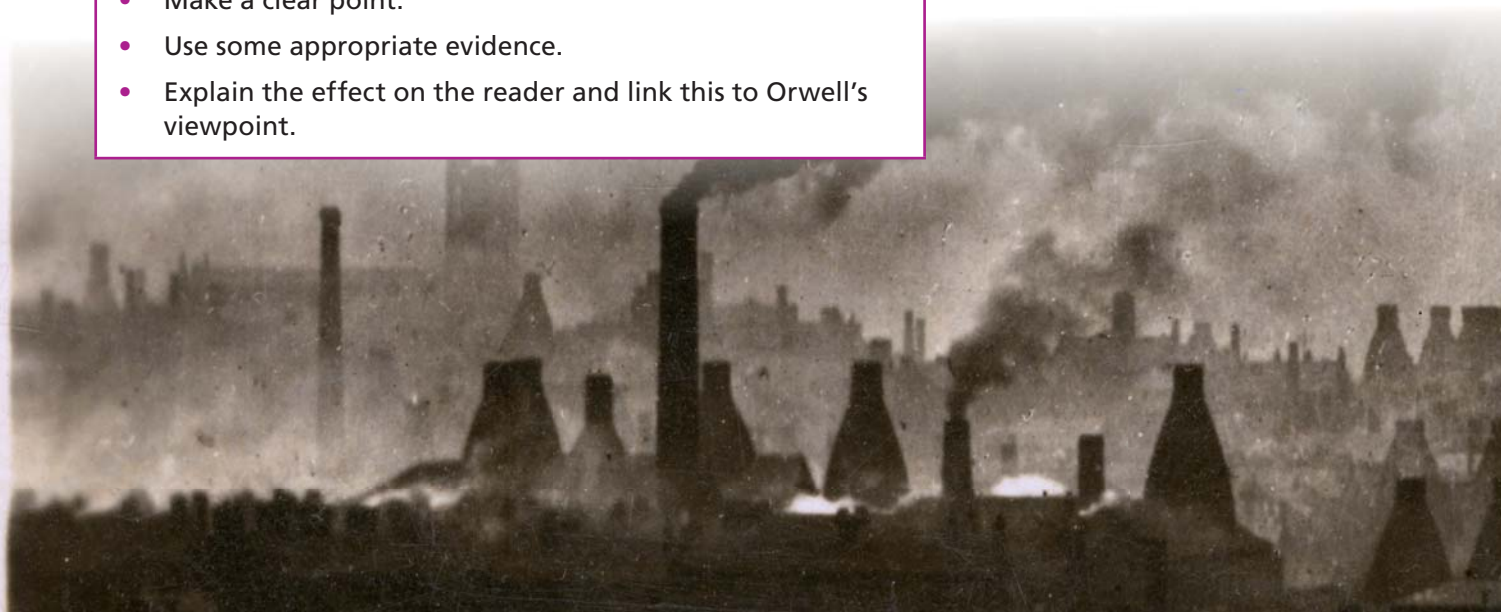
*Orwell uses colour references to create a sense of danger or threat. He describes the fires as moving like 'red rivulets'. All the other colour references are 'grey' or 'brown' which creates a feeling of death and decay. The use of 'red' is a contrast to this and makes the fires caused by the slag heaps seem even more noticeable and dangerous. Orwell is suggesting that the industrial north of England is a dangerous, hellish place to live and work.*

Identify the point, the evidence, and the explanation of the effect. Has the student thought about how certain words make the reader think, feel or imagine? How has the student linked this effect to Orwell's overall viewpoint?

- 5 Which other language choices from your table suggest living in the industrial north might be unpleasant or unnatural? Choose the two examples you can write most about. Make notes about their effects in the final column.
- 6 Now write a short paragraph about one of your examples explaining what effect you think it creates and how it helps to communicate Orwell's viewpoint to the reader.

#### Checklist for success

- Make a clear point.
- Use some appropriate evidence.
- Explain the effect on the reader and link this to Orwell's viewpoint.



## Apply the skills

Now you have selected two or three specific examples of language to explain and comment on, you are ready to form a response to a question. Complete the following task.

How does Orwell use language to communicate his viewpoint about the industrial north of England?

- 7 Make a brief plan first of all. You might want to use the one below as a guide for each paragraph.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| • <i>Orwell is suggesting that the north of England has been completely taken over by industrialisation</i>  | clear overview of writer's viewpoint           |
| • <i>he uses adverbials to create a sense of how claustrophobic it is for the inhabitants</i>  | identification of a language feature           |
| • <i>examples of adverbials include 'round', 'underfoot', 'over-head', 'all round', 'between', 'covered with'</i>  | examples, using direct evidence                |
| • <i>this creates a sense of claustrophobia as he seems to be suggesting that the effects of industrialisation are surrounding the people who live there</i> | explanation of the effect of the language used |

- 8 Repeat the planning process for each point you want to make and write your response.

### Check your progress:

- ▲ I can interpret the writer's viewpoint and make detailed comments about a range of carefully selected words and phrases to support my interpretation.
- ▲ I can clearly explain the writer's viewpoint, using some relevant examples to support my explanation.
- ▲ I can identify the writer's viewpoint and refer to one or two words and phrases from the text.



# Explain and comment on writers' use of language techniques

## Learning objectives

You will learn how to

- identify and explain the effects of some language techniques in a non-fiction text
- comment on these techniques in your own writing.

## Assessment objective

- English Language AO2

How do writers use language techniques to influence the way you think about things?

## Getting you thinking

Good writers use language techniques to get their viewpoints across.

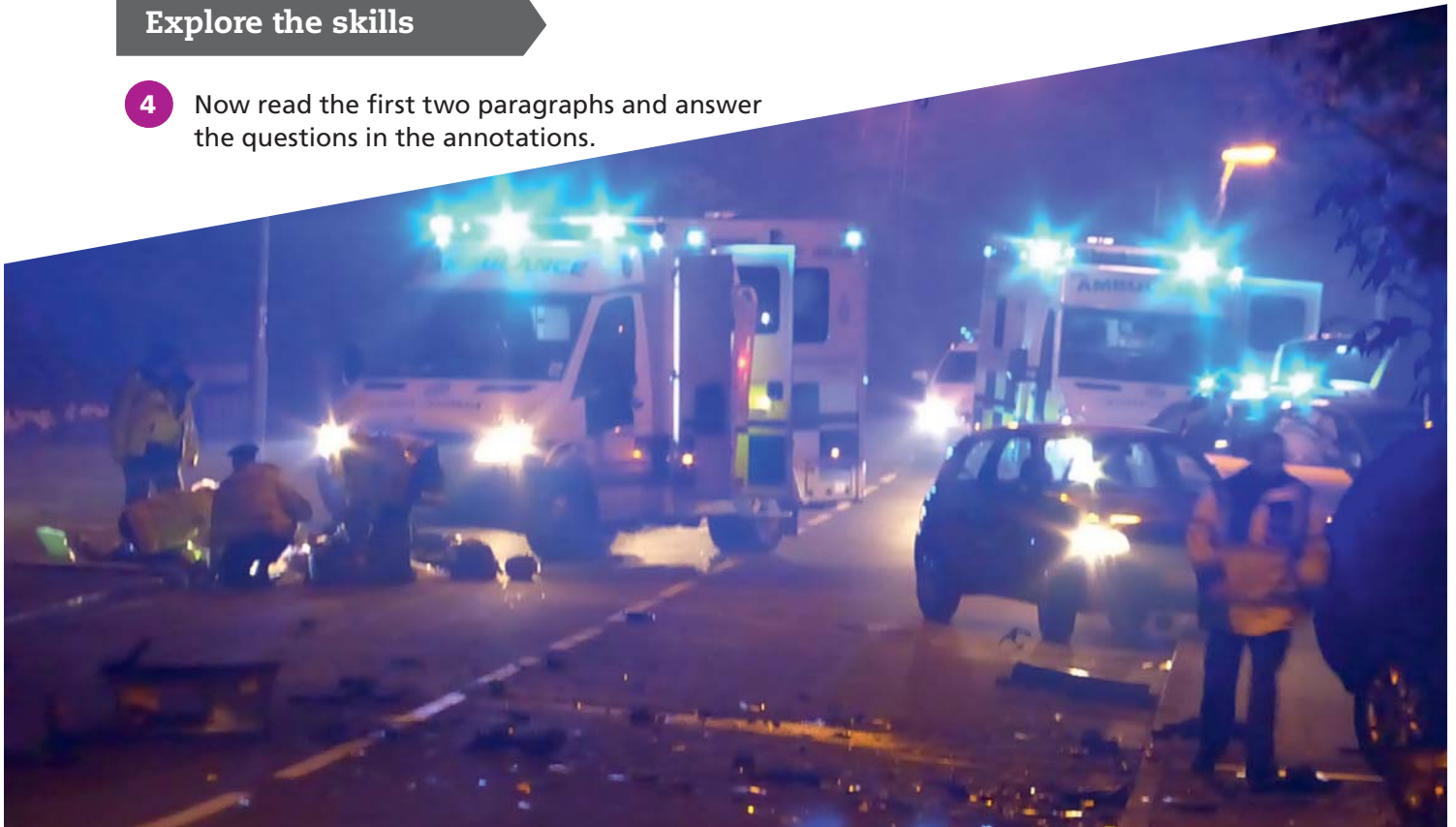
- 1 Look at the first two lines of the following article and find an example of a **rhetorical technique** in action.
- 2 What effect is this technique designed to have on the reader?
- 3 What do you think is the writer's viewpoint?

## Key term

**rhetorical technique:** a language technique used to persuade a reader to consider an idea from a different point of view

## Explore the skills

- 4 Now read the first two paragraphs and answer the questions in the annotations.



## Let's put the brakes on teen drivers and make them wait until they are older

*A recent report has recommended that the age for probationary driving licences be raised to 18.*

Would you give a child a loaded gun? Loaded guns are unbelievably dangerous, and children's brains not yet capable of properly understanding danger, or heeding warnings. Of course you wouldn't.

But would you allow a 17-year-old to drive a car? <sup>1</sup> We've <sup>2</sup> all been right behind it, for many years: or at least, no one I know has been out on the streets protesting about the threshold at which teenagers can apply for a provisional driving licence.

But now, at last, sanity is starting to prevail. A government report, by the Transport Research Laboratory, <sup>3</sup> has recommended raising the age at which kids can learn to drive to 18. My 15-year-old daughter, <sup>4</sup> who is counting the months until she's almost 17 (the application can go in three months before their birthday) will be devastated when she hears the news – and so will thousands of other teens, for whom getting a licence and learning to drive is seen as a rite of passage.

But I use the word 'kids' deliberately. Anyone who has older children – and I have two, aged 21 and 19 – knows they are really toddlers in an extraordinarily effective disguise. They look (especially if you don't currently have one) so adult! All grown-up! <sup>5</sup> But – and there's an increasing amount of research to back this up – until they're at least 21, their brains are still in formation. They don't yet 'think' like adults; in particular, they don't connect 'actions' and 'consequences'. If you're a driver, you know how bad that could be.

And yet we give them the car keys; we sit beside them as they learn the difference between the accelerator and the brake; we applaud when they pass their driving test; we pay the extortionate insurance premiums for them. <sup>6</sup> And still we don't twig how bonkers <sup>7</sup> it all is: unless your family is hit by tragedy when a teenager crashes, and suddenly it's all crystal clear. My husband's cousin crashed, fresh from her driving test. She survived for two years in a coma, but then she died. A young woman who would now be in her mid-30s, carried off way too soon, more by society's negligence than by her inexperience as a driver. <sup>8</sup>

And when it happens: wham. <sup>9</sup> Not just the impact – which is immeasurable, because road traffic deaths blight families for decades after people assume they're 'over it' – but the madness of it all. Why did that child have a loaded gun? <sup>10</sup>

### Key term

**colloquial:** informal language

- <sup>1</sup> Here the writer uses a direct question. Who is the question addressed to and what response is expected?
- <sup>2</sup> The writer is using the first person here. How does this help the writer to get the reader on her side?
- <sup>3</sup> sounds official – she's got important research to back her ideas up
- <sup>4</sup> using personal details makes it sound like she really cares about and understands the issue
- <sup>5</sup> exclamation marks emphasising the idea that you are still young at 17
- <sup>6</sup> repetition of 'we' is reinforcing the point she is making
- <sup>7</sup> use of colloquial language making the tone seem relaxed and personal
- <sup>8</sup> personal anecdote really reinforcing her point
- <sup>9</sup> the punctuation here really emphasises that 'wham' – a bit like a car crash?
- <sup>10</sup> repetition of 'loaded gun' metaphor, reminding the reader of her main argument

### Develop the skills

Now read paragraphs 3 and 4.

Look at the notes a student has made. They are quite basic.

*Purpose: to argue a viewpoint. She thinks the driving age should be raised to 18*

*Language techniques: rhetorical techniques (questions / hyperbole), personal address and informal tone seem to be the strongest*

*Effect: wants her reader to agree with her*





- 5 Pick one of the techniques the student has identified and write a paragraph explaining what effect it has on the reader.
- 6 Now read the rest of the article and identify three things that the writer does to persuade you to share her point of view.

Sometimes it's not only themselves they kill either: they take their siblings, their friends, with them.

Once you've been hit by a road traffic death – and my family has, as well as my husband's – you know it's impossible to overestimate its toll. And the terrible reality is that road deaths are the most common tragedy in all our lives; and teenagers, the people we should be protecting, are four times as likely to die in a road accident than as a result of drink or drugs. Four times! And here's betting you've heard far more about the dangers of drink and drugs.

Today's government report urges more than just rowing back on the age threshold. It suggests a lot of hand-holding, as you would do for a young child. A night-time curfew, unless they have an over-30 with them (what a delightful idea that is – my taxi beckons, after all those years when it's been the other way round), and a learner phase when they drive under supervision.

Some people will call it the nanny state. But I bet you this: none of them are people who've ever watched a teenage driver's coffin being lowered into the earth. It's not a sight you easily forget; and nor should it be.

### Apply the skills

- 7 Using your notes, write 200–300 words in response to the following task.

How does the writer use language techniques to help persuade the reader to agree with her point of view?

### Checklist for success

- Be clear about the writer's overall viewpoint.
- Select two or three language techniques.
- For each one, make a clear point about how this technique links to the overall viewpoint and purpose of the article.

### Check your progress:

▲ I can understand the writer's ideas and can clearly explain how language techniques are used to communicate them to the reader.

▲ I can understand the writer's ideas and can explain and comment in detail on how language techniques are used to communicate these to the reader.

▲ I can identify the writer's ideas and can identify some language techniques.

# Explain the way writers use language to create character

## Learning objectives

You will learn how to

- notice particular details about the ways characters are described in novels
- look closely at how these details add to the overall effect being created.

## Assessment objectives

- English Language AO2
- English Literature AO2

Do you have to pay close attention to every single word when you're writing about a fiction text?  
How do you choose what to write about?

### Getting you thinking

As a discerning, analytical reader, one of your most useful tools is an imaginary magnifying glass. Imagine you are a detective or a forensic scientist, poring over the details in a text and inferring meaning from the choice of detail.

Charles Dickens is known for his vivid descriptions of characters. In the following extract from *A Christmas Carol*, the **omniscient narrator** is describing the character of Ebenezer Scrooge in the third person.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster.

Charles Dickens, from *A Christmas Carol*

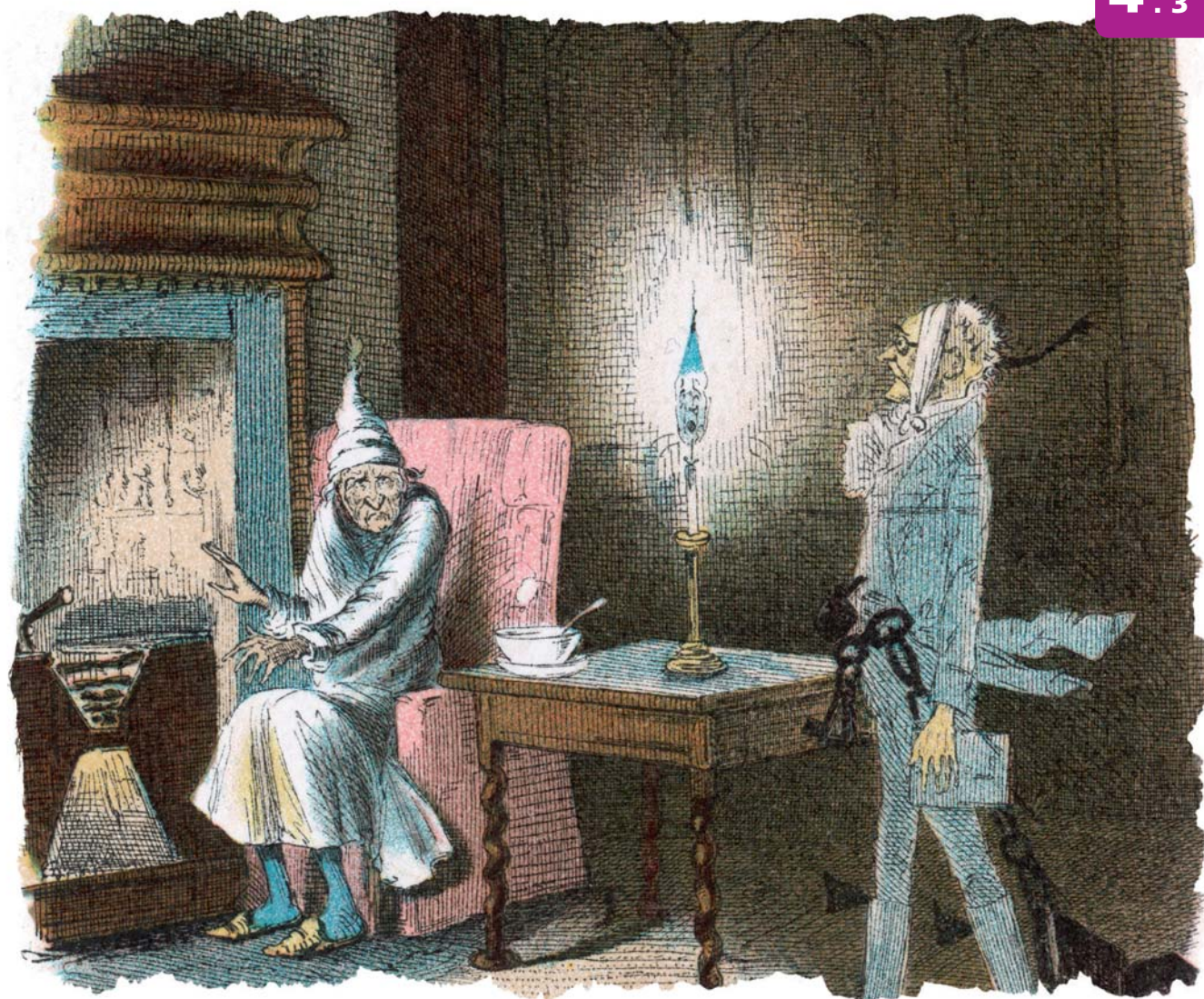


### Key term

**omniscient narrator:** a narrator who writes in the third person, is 'outside' the story, not part of it, and is 'all knowing' having access to the thoughts and feelings of the characters as well as the plot of the whole story

- 1 What kind of person do you think Scrooge is? Select two details to support your view.
- 2 Why did you choose these details in particular? Explain why the details you have selected support your view of Scrooge.

An analytical reader selects the most useful detail. You don't have to write about every detail; you need to make careful selections.



### Explore the skills

- 3 Read the extract again. Select a range of different techniques that create impressions of Scrooge, using a table like the one below.

Technique	Example	Connotation
Adjectives	grasping	<i>Suggests harshness and desperation, as if money is something that Scrooge feels very passionately about</i>
Imagery	<i>a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone</i>	
Narrator	Oh!	

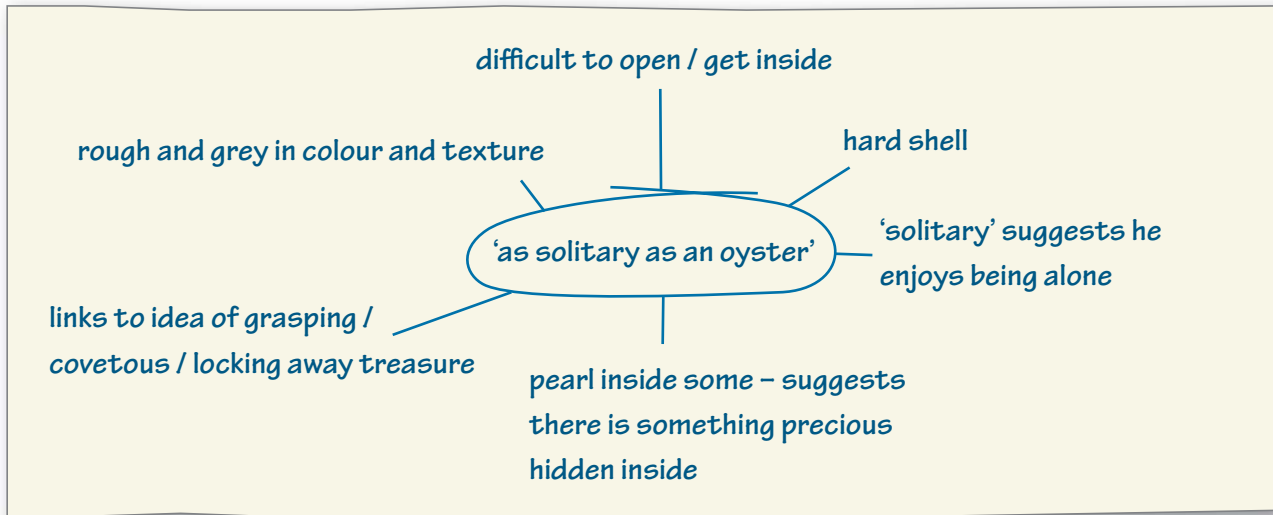
#### Key term

**Connotation:** an idea or association suggested by a word in addition to its literal meaning



## Chapter 4 . Topic 3

- 4 Choose one piece of description to look at more closely. This example shows you how to put your 'magnifying glass' onto one detail, in this case, a simile. Think about the connotations of the words in this phrase.



Now choose a detail and create your own spider diagram.

As the passage continues, Dickens uses a **semantic field** in order to describe Scrooge.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often came down handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

### Key terms

**semantic field:** a collection of words that have a similar meaning or create a similar idea in the mind of the reader

- 5 What is the semantic field here? How many words in this semantic field can you spot? What are they?
- 6 What is the effect of grouping all these words together in one paragraph?

## Develop the skills

When you read a text for the first time, pay attention to the narrative perspective. Is it **first person** or **third person**? The writer will have deliberately selected a particular perspective – what effect does it have?

### Key terms

**first person:** using 'I'  
**third person:** using 'he/she'

Read this extract from *Mr Pip* by Lloyd Jones. Matilda, the narrator, does not have a good relationship with her mother, Dolores. Dolores has been invited to talk to Matilda's class.

I stood up and announced what everyone else already knew.

'This is my mum'.

'And does Mum have a name?'

'Dolores,' I said, and slid lower into my desk.

'Dolores Laimo'.

My mum smiled back at me. She was wearing the green scarf my dad had sent in the very last package we received. She wore it tied tight at the back of her head which was the same way the rebels wore their bandanas. Her hair was pulled back in a tight bun. It gave her an air of defiance. Her mouth clamped down, her nostrils flared. My father used to say she had the blood of righteousness running in her veins. She should have been a church woman, he'd

say, because persuasiveness for my mum was not an intellectual exercise. Quality of argument was neither here nor there. It was all about the intensity of belief. And every part of her – from the whites of her eyes to her muscular calves – rallied on her behalf.

My mum didn't smile enough. When she did it was nearly always in victory. Or else it was at night-time when she thought she was all alone. When she was thinking she tended to look angry, as if the act of thinking was potentially ruinous, even ending in her humiliation. Even when she concentrated she looked angry. In fact, she appeared to be angry much of the time. I used to think it was because she was thinking about my dad. But she couldn't have been thinking about him all the time.

Lloyd Jones, from *Mr Pip*

- 7** a Why do you think the author has chosen to write from Matilda's perspective?
- b Can you see anything to admire in Dolores that Matilda doesn't appreciate?

## Apply the skills

- 8** Complete the following task.

Reread the extract from *Mr Pip*.

- a Select two powerful details and explain how these details suggest that Matilda, the narrator, does not have a good relationship with her mother.
- b Later in the novel, Matilda learns to admire and respect her mother. In this extract, how is the writer suggesting that there are aspects of Dolores that the reader should notice and admire?

### Checklist for success

- Identify what you think the writer wants the reader to infer.
- Select a strong example and think about all the different connotations of that detail.
- Explain how this example works on the reader.

### Check your progress:

▲ I can select and analyse particular methods in detail, linking them precisely to the overall effect being created.

▲ I can choose clear supporting evidence to explain how one or more methods help to communicate the writer's ideas.

▲ I can identify a method and I am aware of the effect the writer is trying to create.

# Explain and comment on writers' use of structural features

## Learning objectives

You will learn how to

- identify some ways writers use structural features and organise their writing
- explain the effects of structural features on the reader.

## Assessment objectives

- English Language AO2
- English Literature AO2

What does 'structure' mean and why is it important?

### Getting you thinking

When we are thinking about the range of ways a writer communicates meaning to the reader, it is important to look at the organisation, order and sequence of the words, phrases and sentences as they appear in the text.

You probably already know more about structure and **cohesion** than you think.

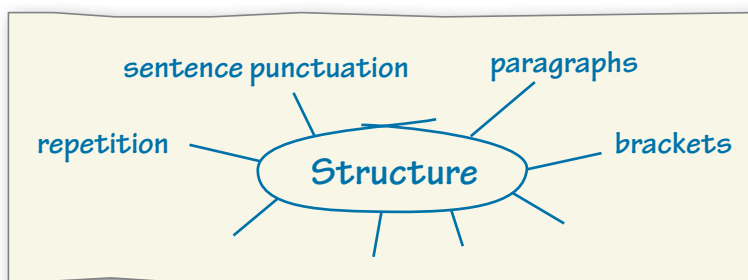
### Key term

**cohesion:** connected together to form a united whole





- 1 Complete the spider diagram to show other features that create meaning apart from word choice.



### Explore the skills

The way the writer structures their text can shape our understanding of characters or setting and set up a mood or tone.

Read scene 1 of *DNA* by Dennis Kelly on the right.

- 2 Read the scene out loud with a partner, first quickly, with interruptions, then slowly with pauses.
- Are there moments in this scene where it is more effective to slow down, or to speed up? Why is this?
- 3 Notice Kelly's use of question and answer in this scene. Which character knows something and which character (like the reader) is in the dark?
- 4 a Describe the relationship between Jan and Mark. How well do they know each other? Notice the minimal responses and how they finish each other's lines.
- b Notice the use of repetition. What effect does it have? Do they sound relaxed or anxious?
- 5 How does Kelly use structure to suggest ideas about Jan and Mark to the audience?
- 6 This is the first scene in the play, so it is important in the mood of the whole play. How does it engage our interest? What questions does it open up for us? How does it make us feel?

Jan: Dead?  
 Mark: Yeah.  
 Jan: What, dead?  
 Mark: Yeah  
 Jan: Like dead, dead  
 Mark: Yes  
 Jan: proper dead, not living dead?  
 Mark: Not living dead, yes.  
 Jan: Are you sure?  
 Mark: Yes.  
 Jan: I mean there's no  
 Mark: No.  
 Jan: mistake or  
 Mark: No mistake.  
 Jan: it's not a joke  
 Mark: It's not a joke.  
 Jan: coz it's not funny.  
 Mark: it's not funny because it's not a joke, if it was a joke it would be funny.  
 Jan: Not hiding?  
 Mark: Not hiding, dead.  
 Jan: not  
 Mark: Dead.  
 Jan: Oh.  
 Mark: Yes.  
 Jan: God.  
 Mark: Yes.  
 Jan: God.  
 Mark: Exactly.  
 Pause.  
 Jan: What are we going to do?  
 Dennis Kelly, from *DNA*

## Develop the skills

The following text has a very different form, but the writer has also used **structural features** to influence the reader's response.

In this extract from *A Walk in the Woods*, Bill Bryson describes the potential dangers involved in a hike he's planning through the Appalachian Trail in America.

### Key term

#### structural features:

features of a text such as listing; use of short / long sentences; questions and answers; punctuation; order and sequence of ideas; the function of the start and end

Then there were all the diseases lurking in the woods – Giardia lamblia, Eastern equine encephalitis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease, Helicobacter pylori, Ehrlichia chafeenis, schistosomiasis, brucellosis, and shigella, to offer but a sampling. Eastern equine encephalitis, caused by the prick of a mosquito, attacks the brain and central nervous system. If you are very lucky you can hope to spend the rest of your life propped in a chair with a bib around your neck, but generally it will kill you. There is no known cure. No less arresting is Lyme disease, which comes from the bite of a deer tick. If undetected, it can lie dormant in the human body for years before erupting in a positive fiesta of maladies. This is a disease for the person who wants to experience it all. The symptoms begin with headaches, fatigue, fever, chills, shortness of breath, dizziness and shooting pains in the extremities, then march onto cardiac irregularities, facial paralysis, muscle spasms, severe mental impairment, loss of control of body functions, and – not surprising in the circumstances – chronic depression.

Bill Bryson, from *A Walk in the Woods*

- 7 Use the table to describe the effects of the structural features.

Structural feature	Example	Effect on reader
List of possible diseases	Ehrlichia chafeenis, schistosomiasis, brucellosis, and shigella	So many technical terms – means he has read up on the diseases. Might suggest he is fixated with what he might catch and suggests he is afraid. However, it could also suggest he is determined to find out everything he can so he is prepared.
The use of short simple sentences that contain one idea		
The list of symptoms of Lyme disease		
The use of dashes		

### Key term

**dashes:** punctuation marks used to add an aside or interjection

Structural features, just like language choices, are used to communicate meanings to the reader.

- 8 Look at the final phrase, 'chronic depression'. How does Bryson build up to this phrase through the paragraph?
- 9
  - a What is the **tone** of this extract? Does it appear to be serious, humorous, or somewhere in the middle? Remember that the trip is Bryson's idea – does it sound as if he wants to go?
  - b How do the structural features help to create the tone of the extract?

Read the following response.

Notice how the student is commenting on particular structural features.

### Key term

**tone:** the mood, voice or feeling created by the writer's language choices: for example, humorous or sarcastic

- Bill Bryson seems to be creating a humorous tone with the use of sentence structure in this extract. He starts off by giving a long list of diseases. This not only suggests that there are loads and loads of illnesses that you could catch from these woods, but also, because he has used their technical names, it implies that he has done lots of research and come up with a massive list of the things he could catch. This is amusing because it suggests that he is frightened and doesn't want to go on the trip, which is ironic because the trip is his idea in the first place.
- identifies writer's purpose
  - identifies a structural technique
  - explains one effect
  - explains another effect of the same technique
  - links back to the purpose of the text

## Apply the skills

- 10 Using your notes and the student response as a model, answer the following question.

How does Bryson use structural features to create a humorous tone in the extract from *A Walk in the Woods*?

### Checklist for success

- Explain the overall tone Bryson is creating in the extract.
- Identify at least two different structural features.
- Explain how these features add to the overall effect.

### Check your progress:

- ▲ I can comment in detail on the writer's use of structural features, linking these precisely to the overall effect being created.
- ▲ I can clearly explain the effects created by the writer through the use of particular structural features.
- ▲ I can identify one or more deliberate structural features and begin to explain what the effects of these might be.



# Explain and comment on writers' use of openings

## Learning objective

You will learn how to

- identify the ways writers introduce important ideas at the start of their texts.

## Assessment objectives

- English Language AO2
- English Literature AO2

Why is the opening of a story important?

### Getting you thinking

- 1 Think about your favourite story, novel or film. What is it about the start that got you hooked? What made you want to carry on reading or watching?

The way a writer structures their writing is vital. In a story opening, you might be given some clues about

- mood
- characters
- settings
- plot or story to come.

In the opening paragraph to the short story 'The Way the Pit Works', the writer gives clues about the story to follow.

We went on holiday to the seaside every year, the three of us. Mum and me would wake up before it got light. Once we were in the car, I'd watch for the dawn through the gaps in the houses. I'd tell myself that the sky only looked grey because it was really still night-time, not because it was cloudy. Some years I was right, but the year I'm thinking of, the year I was nine, the sun didn't appear at all.

Gaye Jee, from 'The Way the Pit Works'

- 2 a Look at one detail:

'I'd tell myself that the sky only looked grey because it was really still night-time'

seems to be trying to convince herself

mention of grey, sounds gloomy and dark

mention of night-time also adds to the feeling of darkness

- b Pick another detail and annotate it.

- 3 The second paragraph develops the mood. As you read, carry on collecting clues. The table below suggests some ideas you could use:

By eight o'clock we were on the beach, Mum and me sitting on our macs huddled together under a blanket which still smelt of our dog, even though he'd been dead nearly a year. A thin, bad-tempered breeze blew sand into our faces and whipped up under my skirt. Dad was pacing up and down the beach looking for destroyers. I could picture them wading through the sea to smash the houses and caravans and people with their enormous sandalled feet.

'Eight o'clock'	Too early to be on a beach – suggests something is not right
'huddled together'	Implying the need for comfort / protection
'dead nearly a year'	

- 4
- What impact does the mood have on the reader at this point in the story? What details give you this impression?
  - What do you imagine may happen later in the story?
  - What questions does this opening raise for the reader?

## Explore the skills

In the first few sentences of the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, the reader is being invited to ask some questions and to **infer** some meanings.

Read the first paragraph of *Jane Eyre*.

- 5 What kind of mood or tone is being created? Which details chosen, language used and structural features suggest this?

There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (Mrs. Reed, when there was no company, dined early) the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating, that further out-door exercise was now out of the question.

Charlotte Brontë, from *Jane Eyre*

### Key term

**infer:** to work out meanings from clues given in the text; to 'read between the lines'

- 6 The table below gives some examples of **inferences**. See what you can add.

Detail	Quotation	Inference
Negative start	'no possibility of taking a walk'	First sentence negative, suggests life is hard / miserable?
Verbs	'wandering'	Suggests ...
Narrator	'we'	

### Key terms

**inferences:** conclusions formed from evidence

**Narrator:** the speaker in a text; usually (although not always) the central character of the story

- 7 What inferences can we make about the narrator's life and circumstances? Is she happy? How old do you think she is? Does she like where she lives?

## Develop the skills

Read the next extract and look carefully at how Brontë describes Mrs Reed.

- 8 What can we infer about Mrs Reed from how she is described? What clues is Brontë giving us? Are we meant to like or dislike this character?
- 9 What more do we learn about the narrator in the following section of text?





The said Eliza, John, and Georgiana were now clustered round their mama in the drawing-room: she lay reclined on a sofa by the fire-side, and with her darlings about her (for the time neither quarrelling nor crying) looked perfectly happy. Me, she had dispensed from joining the group; saying, ‘She regretted to be under the necessity of keeping me at a distance; but that until she heard from Bessie, and could discover by her own observation, that I was endeavouring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and child-like disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner – something lighter, franker, more natural, as it were – she really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children.’

## Apply the skills

- 10** In the novel, we will learn that Jane is sensitive, imaginative, independent and strong-willed. We will also learn that Mrs Reed is an unpleasant woman. Find clues about each character in the next section of text and add them to your evidence table.

### Glossary

**cavillers:** people who raises trivial or annoying objections or questions

‘What does Bessie say I have done?’ I asked.

‘Jane, I don’t like **cavillers** or questioners: besides, there is something truly forbidding in a child taking up her elders in that manner. Be seated somewhere; and until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent.’ A breakfast-room adjoined the drawing-room: I slipped in there. It contained a book-case: I soon possessed myself of a volume, taking care that it should be one stored with pictures. I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged, like a Turk; and, having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement.

- 11** Now you can put all of your findings together to complete the following task.

How does Brontë use details in the first few paragraphs of *Jane Eyre* to introduce the characters of Jane and Mrs Reed to the reader?

### Checklist for success

- Make clear statements about both characters.
- Select useful quotations to support your statements.
- Make clear inferences about what that evidence might suggest about either Jane or Mrs Reed.
- Comment on what is revealed about Jane and Mrs Reed from the opening section.

- 12** Look back at your notes and responses. Write another paragraph explaining what elements of this opening might be successful in engaging a reader’s interest and why.

### Check your progress:

▲ I can interpret the subtle inferences a writer is making in the introduction to a text and use precise references to support my interpretations.

▲ I can infer some meaning from details in the opening to a text and use some relevant examples to support my interpretations.

▲ I can identify some ideas from the opening of a text and refer to one or more direct examples.

# Explain and comment on the ways writers create meanings and effects with structure and form

## Learning objective

You will learn how to

- identify and explain some of the ways that writers use structural techniques to create meanings.

## Assessment objective

- English Literature AO2

What is the difference between structure and form, and why do they matter?

### Getting you thinking

'Structure' refers to the ways in which ideas are organised and sequenced, and to how ideas link together in order to create **cohesion**.

'Form' refers to the overall shape and conventions of a text. It is particularly useful to think about when you are looking at how ideas are communicated in poetry.

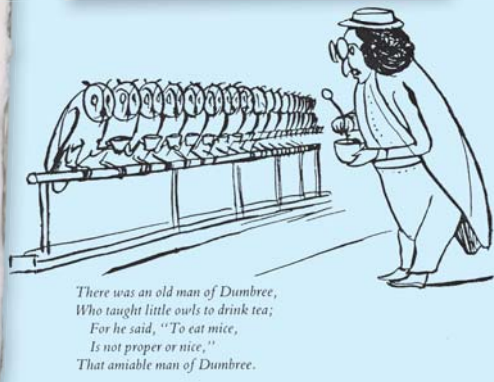
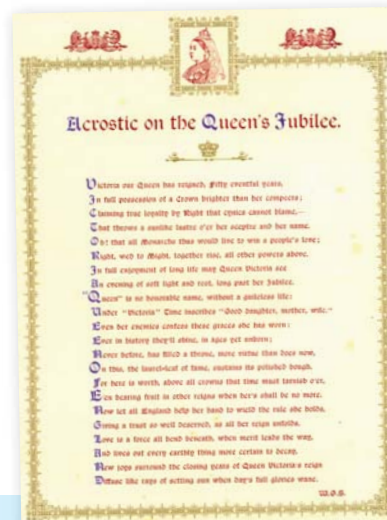
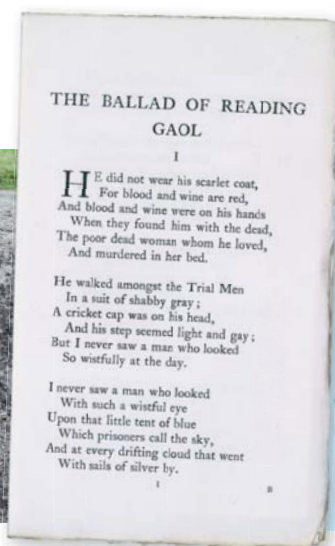
- 1 What is the difference between these forms? Imagine you had to describe each of them to someone who didn't know the difference: what would you say?

A newspaper article      A short story      A novel  
A play      A poem

These forms tend to have lots of 'mini-forms' as well! For example, there are lots of different poetic 'forms'.

- 2 How many different forms of poetry do you already know? Describe:

a limerick      an acrostic  
a haiku      a ballad.



## Explore the skills

Read the following poem by William Shakespeare.

### Sonnet 17

Who will believe my verse in time to come,  
 If it were fill'd with your most high deserts?  
 Though yet, heaven knows, it is but as a tomb  
 Which hides your life, and shows not half your parts.  
 If I could write the beauty of your eyes  
 And in fresh numbers number all your graces,  
 The age to come would say 'This poet lies;  
 Such heavenly touches ne'er touch'd earthly faces'.  
 So should my papers, yellowed with their age,  
 Be scorn'd, like old men of less truth than tongue;  
 And your true rights be term'd a poet's rage,  
 And stretched metre of an antique song.  
 But were some child of yours alive that time,  
 You should live twice – in it, and in my rhyme.

William Shakespeare

- 3 a The poet says that future generations will not believe his poem's description of how amazing his true love is. Pick out all the ways he says his readers will respond.
- b Now look at the last two lines of the poem. How does the poet think he could offer proof that his love is so beautiful?
- 4 Now look at the form of this poem.
  - a How many lines does it have?
  - b How many beats and how many syllables can you count in each line?
  - c Does it rhyme? Can you describe the pattern of the rhyme?
  - d What do you notice about the last two lines? How are they different to the rest of the poem?

This poem is a sonnet. A Shakespearean sonnet is made up of 14 lines of **iambic pentameter** with a strict rhyme scheme ABAB, CDCD, EFEF, GG. The sonnet form is very tight and organised. It is used to explore big abstract concepts like love.

/Who **will** /believe /my **verse** /in **time** /to **come**,  
 /If it /were **fill'd** /with **your** /most **high** /deserts?

### Key term

**iambic pentameter:** line of poetry with ten syllables, five stressed and five unstressed, creating five 'di dums' or heartbeats (iambes)



## Develop the skills

In the following modern poem, Carol Ann Duffy takes the voice of Shakespeare's wife, Anne Hathaway.

### Anne Hathaway

*'Item I gyve unto my wife my **second best bed**...'*  
(from Shakespeare's will)

The bed we loved in was a spinning world  
of forests, castles, torchlight, clifftops, seas  
where we would dive for pearls. My lover's words  
were shooting stars which fell to earth as kisses  
on these lips; my body now a softer rhyme  
to his, now echo, assonance; his touch  
a verb dancing in the centre of a noun.  
Some nights, I dreamed he'd written me, the bed  
a page beneath his writer's hands. Romance  
and drama played by touch, by scent, by taste.  
In the other bed, the best, our guests dozed on,  
dribbling their prose. My living laughing love –  
I hold him in the casket of my widow's head  
as he held me upon that next best bed.

Carol Ann Duffy

### Glossary

**second best bed:** in Elizabethan England, the 'best bed' in the house was the one reserved for guests; the 'second best bed' would be the marital bed, shared by the husband and wife



- 5 Read the poem a few times. What is this actually about?  
Who is Anne Hathaway talking about in this poem?

Look at this line from the poem:

'Some nights, I dreamed he'd written me, the bed'

If you mark out the syllables, it looks like this:

'Some **nights**/, I **dreamed** / he'd **wri**/tten **me**/, the **bed**'

Look back at the definition of a sonnet. Does 'Anne Hathaway' conform to all the rules of a sonnet? Which of the following does it have?

- fourteen lines
- a rhythm of iambic pentameter in each line
- an ABAB, CDCE, EDEF, GG rhyme scheme
- a clear structure of three four-line stanzas and one final rhyming **couplet**

### Key term

**couplet:** pair of lines that rhyme

So, why is this interesting? Well, the answer is that once you have noticed *what* Duffy is doing with the structure in this poem, you can start to think about *why* she has done it... or what you can make it *mean*.

- 6 Why do you think Duffy uses a sonnet form? What might she want the reader to infer about the relationship between Anne Hathaway and her husband?

When you are writing about structure / form, it is really important to focus on the effect being created by a technique rather than just to identify what the technique is.

- 7 What does Duffy want us to understand about Anne Hathaway's feelings in this poem? How might this be connected to her choices of form and structure? Make notes about:
- why Shakespeare's wife might choose to write a sonnet about her marriage to William Shakespeare
  - why sometimes the rhyme scheme is very strong and sometimes it is weaker, and what that might suggest about Anne Hathaway, or about her feelings towards her husband
  - the effect of the strong final rhyming **couplet**.

### Apply the skills

- 8 Now you are ready to put all your ideas together into a piece of writing. Complete the following task.

Explore the ways Duffy uses structure and form to present ideas about a relationship in 'Anne Hathaway'.

#### Checklist for success

- Give a clear explanation of the poet's ideas.
- Use relevant supporting evidence about Duffy's choices of structure and form.
- Give a clear explanation of the effects of Duffy's choice of structural techniques or form.

#### Check your progress:

▲ I can analyse particular features of structure and form in detail, linking them precisely to the overall effect being created and use technical vocabulary as a precise shorthand to explain effects.

▲ I can explain some features of structure and form, and make clear links to the effects being created. I can make accurate use of technical vocabulary.

▲ I can identify at least one structural feature and comment on the effect it creates.

# Apply your skills to English Language and English Literature tasks

## Learning objectives

You will learn to

- apply the key skills from this chapter to two unseen English Language tasks
- apply the key skills from this chapter to one English Literature task
- reflect on your progress through looking at different responses to all three tasks.

## Assessment objectives

- English Language AO2
- English Literature AO2

## Responding to an English Language task about language

**1** This extract is the prologue (introductory chapter) of a novel. As you read it, think about the following questions.

- What is this extract about?
- What are we learning about the boy?
- How has the writer used language and structure to communicate ideas to the reader?

The wide avenue with its big white-washed houses set well back in their own lush gardens was an insult. The plush white Lexus was an insult. Shadow knelt by the car's fuel tank, the perspiration glistening on his brow and arms. Like rain on dark glass, a drop of sweat ran down his left cheek, over his short muscular neck and into the cotton of his worn T-shirt. For a fifteen-year-old boy, Shadow was built big and solid. At his side were the tools of his trade: a rag, a can of gasoline. In his pocket was the means to a magical end: a box of matches.

[...]



Shadow drank the smell from the gas tank. Sheer bliss. The smell alone could transport him to paradise. Quickly, he stuffed the rag into the wound in the side of the car, letting a few inches hang out like a wick. To make sure there was enough food for the fire, Shadow splashed gasoline over the cloth and down the side of the car. Slowly, working his way backwards, away from the Lexus, he laid a trail of gasoline. In the warmth of the night, the fuel evaporated and filled the air with its sweet hungry smell. Twenty metres from the car, the shiny liquid fuse leading to the Lexus, Shadow stopped.

He was eager to see the greedy flames and yet he wanted to linger, to savour the moment that was about to make him important once more. He called it Shadowtime. His fingers gripped that little box, slowly extracted a match. Such a tiny thing, like an exclamation mark. One simple strike, a quick twist of the wrist, and the cleansing began with a graceful yellow plume like a candle in a church. Shadow's spine tingled, his heartbeat raced. He was about to see the most beautiful show on Earth. He dropped the lighted match and the eager fuel reached up and embraced Shadow's gift of life.

The seductive flame danced silently, slickly down the road towards the white car. The itchy yellow fingers clawed up the side of the Lexus, blistering the paint, and loitered for a few seconds on the wick before worming their way into the interior.

[...]

Fluttering yellow birds flew out into the darkness and sucked the oxygen from the night air. Some of the flames flashed beneath the Lexus and baked the car as if it were on a gas cooker. After a delicious delay, the windows blew out and the vehicle leapt a metre off the road in an exquisite explosion, engulfed by a fiery yellow sheath as if it were being carried to heaven by a host of shining angels. The flame shot upwards into the night, pushing aside the darkness, illuminating the sky.

The shock wave rushed past Shadow, pushing him backwards and roaring in his ears. A split-second later, Shadow felt an extra ripple of unnatural heat wafting over him, sensing it most on his bare skin. He did not even blink. This is what he lived for. Forget school. This was what life was all about.

Only when he detected movement in the street was it time to retreat. At first, Shadow jogged backwards so that he could keep an eye on the still burning wreck, so he could keep the image on his retina for as long as possible. In the coming days he would replay it many times – until he ached for a different image. But the next one would also be that magnificent combination of yellow and black. Street-lamps at night, gold on skin, flame scavenging among charred ruins. For now, he could see it whenever he looked. The flickering flower was reflected in every window of every house and every parked car. It was like a dream that the whole world was on fire. Paradise.

Malcolm Rose, from *Bloodline*

### Your task

Look in detail at this part of the extract.

He was eager to see the greedy flames and yet he wanted to linger, to savour the moment that was about to make him important once more. He called it Shadowtime. His fingers gripped that little box, slowly extracted a match. Such a tiny thing, like an exclamation mark. One simple strike, a quick twist of the wrist, and the cleansing began with a graceful yellow plume like a candle in a church. Shadow's spine tingled, his heartbeat raced. He was about to see the most beautiful show on Earth. He dropped the lighted match and the eager fuel reached up and embraced Shadow's gift of life.

The seductive flame danced silently, slickly down the road towards the white car. The itchy yellow fingers clawed up the side of the Lexus, blistering the paint, and loitered for a few seconds on the wick before worming their way into the interior.

How does the writer's use of language create a picture of the boy's excitement?

### Checklist for success

A successful response should include:

- reference to particular words and phrases
- comments on the effects of language features and techniques
- comments on the effects of sentences and punctuation.

## Reflecting on your progress

- 2 Read the following response to this task. As you read, think about what the student has done well and what advice they might need in order to make more progress.

### Response 1

The writer uses language to show that the boy is excited in this extract. It is clear that the boy is excited because it says that he was 'eager'. This suggests that he is excited to see the fire starting. It also uses the word 'savour'. This suggests that he is really looking forward to this moment and wants to take his time over it, as if it is something he has been building up to.

The writer describes him as being excited because it says that 'his spine tingled and his heartbeat raced'. This also suggests that he is excited.

The writer uses lots of imagery to suggest that the boy is excited. The fire is described as if it is alive. This creates the idea that the boy thinks it is beautiful. He describes it as 'graceful' and that it 'danced' as if the flame is a living thing. He also says it is 'the most beautiful show on earth' which also suggests that it is something he has been really looking forward to and is excited to see.

The writer uses short sentences and commas to create the effect of the boy being excited – 'Shadow's spine tingled, his heartbeat raced'. This creates the effect of the boy being excited because it is as if there isn't time to say any more, he keeps it short and simple.

an example and simple comment on the effect of a language choice

clear explanation of the effect on the reader of the choice of language

another example and simple comment on effect

simple comment on the effect of a language technique

clear examples to support the comment

a better explanation of the effects of the language, but not really linked to the technique

simple, clear comment on the effect of short sentences

#### Comments on Response 1

This response focuses on the task and gives several clear examples of language being used for effect. The explanations are clear but rather undeveloped. The student has identified a technique by saying 'the flame is described as a living thing' but not said what the technique is or really explained what the effect of this technique is.



- 3 How could this sample response be improved? Using the middle rung of the Check your progress ladder at the end of this chapter, think about what advice you might give to this student in order to improve their work.
- 4 Now read Response 2. As you read, think about what the student has done that is an improvement on Response 1, and what advice this student might need in order to make even more progress.

### Response 2

The boy's excitement to set the car on fire is shown at the start of the extract with the contrast between 'eager' and 'linger' – as if the boy is desperate to start the fire but also wants to slow down and take his time. This is intensified with the word 'savour', which reinforces the idea that he has looked forward to this moment and wants to take his time over it in order to get the maximum amount of excitement from it. This creates a sense of anticipation. His physical excitement is shown in 'his spine tingled and his heartbeat raced', as if his body is reacting to the anticipation as well as his mind.

The writer uses personification throughout the extract to compare the flames to a living thing; 'itchy yellow fingers', 'danced' and 'eager'. Perhaps this suggests that the idea of the fire is a companion to the boy – it is something alive, something he can relate to. The comparison to 'a candle in a church' creates the idea of worship, as if the flame is something that the boy values so highly that it should be in a holy place like a church. The reference to 'the most beautiful show on earth' reminds the reader that the central character is only young – this phrase is used to describe a circus, so this creates the impression that for the boy, setting fire to things gives him the same feeling of excitement that a young child would have if they were going to the circus.

Sentencing and punctuation are also used to increase the pace and suggest the boy is excited. 'Shadow's spine tingled, his heartbeat raced', is short and purposeful, as if the description of the boy is not as important as the description of the flames, which are described in longer more complex sentences.

really clear explanation of how language has been used to create the sense of excitement

developing the explanation with another example

very clear comment on the effect of the language choices

understanding of the effect of the language technique, clearly explained

thoughtful idea about the use of imagery

really interesting interpretation of the effect of this image, clearly linked to a detailed understanding of the ideas in the extract

another very interesting interpretation of the effect of sentence structure on meanings and ideas

**Comments on Response 2**

This is a really thoughtful and detailed response to the task, with lots of relevant examples used to examine the ways language has been used to create a picture of the boy's excitement. Several of the points have been developed in detail and it is clear that the student has a sound understanding of the ideas in the extract and is linking them to the ways in which the writer has used language to communicate them.

- 5 How might this response be improved even further? Using the top rung of the Check your progress ladder at the end of this chapter, decide what feedback and advice you might give to this student.

### Responding to an English Language task about structure

- 6 Now look at this practice task and think about how you would approach it.

**Your task**

You now need to think about the whole extract and the ways the writer has shaped and structured their writing.

This extract is from the opening to a novel. How has the writer used structure within the extract to interest the reader?

**Checklist for success**

You could write about:

- what the writer focuses your attention on at the very start
- what else the writer draws your attention to as the extract develops
- any other structural features that interest you as a reader.

## Reflecting on your progress

- 7 Read the following response to this task. As you read, think about what the student has done well and what advice they might need in order to make more progress.

### Response 1

The first paragraph of the extract sets the scene for the reader, and shows us where the story is set. The writer does this so that the reader can picture where we are. The first paragraph also describes the boy and what he is doing. This adds the effect of drawing the reader in and making us wonder what the boy is doing and why he is there.

As the extract develops, the writer describes the boy and what he is doing in more detail, rather than the place. This shows the reader that the boy is the focus of the story and he is the one we should be interested in. He 'stuffed the rag' and 'splashed gasoline'. The writer focuses the attention of the reader on what the boy is doing to suggest that setting the car on fire is going to be very important later on in the story.

The writer ends the extract with the boy moving away from the fire and thinking about it. It also shows that this is going to be important later because it says that 'in the coming days' which suggests that this is the start of the story rather than the end. It also says 'the next one' which gives a hint that this is going to happen again.

clear focus on the task and appropriate comment on the start of the extract

clear explanation of how the structure is communicating meaning to the reader

relevant use of embedded evidence

explanation of effects of the use of structure on the reader

moving towards the end of the extract; good focus on the task still

another purposeful use of embedded evidence with a clear explanation of effect on meaning

#### Comments on Response 1

This is a clear and well-explained response to the task, with a good focus on the ways the extract starts, develops and ends. Examples are relevant and are used to clearly illustrate the points being made. There is a definite focus on the effect of structure on the reader, and on the meanings.

- 8 How could this sample response be improved? Using the middle rung of the Check your progress ladder at the end of this chapter, think about what advice you might give to this student in order to improve their work.



- 9 Now read Response 2. As you read, think about what the student has done that is an improvement on Response 1, and what advice this student might need in order to make even more progress.

## Response 2

The first paragraph of the extract sets the scene for the reader, describing 'big' houses and 'lush' gardens, as if the story is set in an expensive, rich environment. However, the writer says that these things were an 'insult', which makes the reader wonder straight away who they are insulting and why. The writer then introduces the boy by describing where he is and what he is doing, but not explaining why; he has 'gasoline' and 'matches' which creates tension straight way, but without any more information to go on. Again, this sets up questions in the mind of the reader.

a clear focus on the start of the extract, using detail to support the explanation of the effect

another clear explanation with well-chosen evidence

As the extract develops, the writer focuses more on the boy and the act of setting the car on fire. There are lots of descriptions of his actions and reactions; he 'drank the smell' and 'was eager to see', suggests that he is the central character of the story and his reactions are going to be important to the rest of the story.

good explanation of how the structure guides the reader and suggests ideas

The short sentences are used to add even more emphasis to the boy's reactions; 'He did not even blink. This is what he lived for. Forget school. This was what life was all about.' The effect of these four simple sentences together reinforces the idea that the fire is the most important thing in the boy's life.

this is a lovely comment on internal structure, explaining the effect of the sentences on the reader

The writer indicates, towards the end of the extract, that this is just the beginning of the story, and that the boy and lighting fires are going to be central to the plot.

It refers to the 'coming days' and 'the next one', suggesting that this is just an introduction, giving some kind of close explanation of the effect of lighting fires on this boy. Perhaps the writer wants to introduce the feelings of the boy straight away, showing his perspective and reactions, either because the reader needs to understand this from his point of view or perhaps because he is going to be the central character. The

close focus on how structure links to overall purpose and ideas

starting to really examine and consider writer's use of structure here

*writer makes the reader look forward into the future with 'until he ached for a different image', suggesting that there are more situations like this to come in the rest of the book. The single word sentence 'Paradise.' reinforces the idea that this is what the boy lives for.*

— develops the focus on writer's purpose and intention

### Comments on Response 2

This is a very confident response with a clear focus on the ways the writer has used structure to have a deliberate effect on how the extract will be read. There are lots of relevant examples used to illustrate the points being made, and the student has started to consider the effects of structure with some lovely thoughtful comments on possible meanings.

- 10** How might this response be improved even further? Using the top rung of the Check your progress ladder at the end of this chapter, decide what feedback and advice you might give to this student.

### Responding to an English Literature task

- 1** Read the poem, 'First Love'. As you read, think about the following questions:
  - What is this poem about?
  - What ideas and feelings do you think the writer is communicating?
  - What do you notice about the ways language and structure have been used to communicate these ideas and feelings to the reader?
- 2** Now look at this practice task and think about how you would approach it.

### Your task

How does the writer present ideas about love in 'First Love'?

**First Love**

I ne'er was struck before that hour  
 With love so sudden and so sweet,  
 Her face it bloomed like a sweet flower  
 And stole my heart away complete.  
 My face turned pale as deadly pale,  
 My legs refused to walk away,  
 And when she looked, what could I ail?  
 My life and all seemed turned to clay.

And then my blood rushed to my face  
 And took my eyesight quite away,  
 The trees and bushes round the place  
 Seemed midnight at noonday.  
 I could not see a single thing,  
 Words from my eyes did start—  
 They spoke as chords do from the string,  
 And blood burnt round my heart.

Are flowers the winter's choice?  
 Is love's bed always snow?  
 She seemed to hear my silent voice,  
 Not love's appeals to know.  
 I never saw so sweet a face  
 As that I stood before.  
 My heart has left its dwelling-place  
 And can return no more.

John Clare

**Checklist for success**

A successful response should:

- demonstrate your understanding of the ideas and feelings in the poem
- include some well-selected evidence to support your points
- analyse the effects of particular words, techniques and structural features, linking them to the ideas and feelings in the poem.

**Reflecting on your progress**

- 3** Read the following section of a response to this task. As you read, think about what the student has done well and what advice they might need in order to make more progress.

**Response 1**

This poem is written about a falling in love with someone for the first time. The speaker in the poem seems to be completely in love with the girl he is describing.

shows awareness of the ideas in the poem

The writer uses nature imagery to make it seem that this is the first time he has fallen in love because it makes it sound innocent. He uses words like 'sweet' and 'flower' to make it seem like it is a natural thing to fall in love.

use of relevant quotation with simple explanation of the effect being created



The repetition of 'sweet' and the alliteration of 'sudden and so sweet' emphasise the idea that this is a shock for him. He also links these words with alliteration with the word 'struck' in the first line.

correct use of a literary terms with example and simple comment on effect created

correct identification of a conscious decision made by the writer

As the poem goes on, it starts to sound darker and more dangerous.

In the second verse, he uses the word 'blood' which is associated with danger. It is as if he is aware that falling in love can be hurtful if the other person doesn't feel the same. He then talks about his 'heart' which is linked with the word 'blood' at the end of the poem. He says that his 'heart has left its dwelling place' as if nothing can ever be the same again. The last line also shows that his life has changed for ever now he has fallen in love, 'can return no more'.

use of relevant quotation with simple explanation of what it might mean

clear focus on the meanings and ideas in the poem with a further clear use of direct quotation to support the point being made

### Comments on Response 1

The examples are well chosen and explained, although the explanations could have been more developed. The comments on the 'nature imagery' are relevant, with appropriate examples from the poem. These comments could have been more developed, by linking them to the ideas and feelings in the poem. By the end of the response, there is a sense that the student is aware of the main ideas in the poem, but again, they don't offer an interpretation that is particularly developed or clearly explained.

- 4 How could this sample response be improved? Using the middle rung of the Check your progress ladder at the end of this chapter, think about what advice you might give to this student in order to improve their work.
- 5 Now read Response 2. As you read, think about what the student has done that is an improvement on Response 1, and what advice this student might need in order to make even more progress.

### Response 2

The speaker in this poem seems to be very deeply affected by falling in love for the first time. The use of first person makes the poem seem very personal and honest, as if the speaker is

clear explanation of ideas and feelings with a clear response to the effects of a technique

pouring his heart out on the page. The first verse uses a mixture of positive and dangerous language to suggest how confused and overwhelmed the speaker is: the repetition of 'sweet' and the imagery of 'bloomed like a sweet flower' contrast with images of danger suggested by 'struck', 'sudden' and 'deadly'.

correct use of literary term with relevant references to the poem

'My life and all seemed turned to clay' could suggest that the speaker feels unformed, as if he could be moulded into a new person by this experience. However, it could also suggest ideas about death, as the idea of 'clay' links to the idea of being dead and buried.

use of relevant quotation with some developed explanation of the possible effects being created

This idea of danger is developed with references to 'blood', 'burnt' and 'heart' in the second stanza. On the one hand, it is as if the speaker has come alive for the first time and the blood is rushing around his body. However, there are also clear connotations of danger with the alliteration and repetition of 'blood' and 'burnt', reinforcing the idea that this situation is potentially dangerous for him.

develops the explanation of the effect of imagery with another relevant example clearly linked to ideas

The use of questions in the third stanza could imply that the speaker feels unsure of everything, as if his experience has made him question everything he thought he knew about the world.

However, they could also suggest him demanding to know

focus on the effect of a particular technique with good interpretation of effect

the answers, as if he is interrogating life. 'Is love's bed always snow?' suggests that he feels that love can be cold, perhaps linked to the idea of death or just fear that his love will not be returned to him.

details used to support the explanation of the metaphor

### Comments on Response 2

There is a very clear understanding of the point of the poem, with well-chosen evidence throughout. There is a clear focus on the ideas and feelings and how these have been communicated to the reader in a range of ways.

The response focuses on the ways the poem has been written from the start, with a good explanation of the use of address. There are some clear explanations of the effect of particular language choices and imagery, and the evidence has been quite skilfully embedded into the response. Overall, this candidate seems to be clear and confident about their understanding of the poem, and is also trying out ways of offering alternative interpretations and meanings.

# Check your progress



- I can interpret writers' viewpoints and ideas.
- I can make careful, precise selections of words and phrases to support my interpretations of viewpoints and ideas.
- I can interpret subtle implications writers are making through their use of particular details.
- I can explain and comment in detail on how language techniques are used to communicate ideas to the reader.
- I can comment in detail on writers' use of structural features, linking these precisely to the overall effect being created.
- I can use technical vocabulary as a precise shorthand to explain effects.



- I can clearly explain writers' viewpoints and ideas.
- I can choose useful and appropriate examples from the text to support my explanations of viewpoints and ideas.
- I can infer meanings from details in texts and use some relevant examples to support my interpretations.
- I can clearly explain how language techniques are used to communicate ideas to the reader.
- I can clearly explain the effects created by the writer through the use of particular structural features.
- I can use appropriate technical vocabulary to describe language techniques or structure to support my explanations.



- I can identify writers' viewpoints and ideas.
- I can make clear references to some relevant details from the text to support the points I make.
- I can comment on the effects of particular words and phrases and how they have been used to present a particular idea or viewpoint.
- I can identify some of the language techniques that writers use and begin to explain what the effects of these might be.
- I can identify some of the structural features writers use and begin to explain what the effects of these might be.
- I can make relevant reference to some techniques used by writers.