Chapter 4

Analysing and evaluating 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 and comment on writers’ use of sentence structure
• explain and comment on writers’ use of structure
• explain and comment on the ways writers create meanings and effects with language
• explain and comment on the ways writers create meanings and effects with language, structure and form
• apply your skills to Language and Literature tasks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s it all about?</th>
<th>Language GCSE</th>
<th>Literature GCSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which AOs are covered?</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>AO2 Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will this be tested?</td>
<td>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’.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 over-head 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.
The next step is to explain the effects of the writer’s language choices: how they make you feel and why.

1. **Identify the point, the evidence and the explanation of the effect.** How has the student linked this effect to Orwell’s overall viewpoint?

2. **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 (what they make you think, feel or picture) in the final column.

3. **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.

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**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.

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

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

- **Identify a language feature.**
- **Examples, using direct evidence.**
- **Explanation of the effect of the language used.**

**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 writers’ viewpoint, using some relevant examples to support my explanation.
- I am aware of the writer’s viewpoint and can pick out one or two words and phrases from the text.
Chapter 4: Analyse and evaluate writers’ methods and effects

**Chapter 4: Analyse and evaluate writers’ methods and effects**

**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

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**Chapter 4. Topic 2**

**Explain and comment on writers’ use of language techniques**

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

**Getting you thinking**

Good writers use language techniques to get their viewpoints across.

1. Look at first two lines of the article and find an example of a **rhetorical technique** in action.

   A recent report has recommended that the age for probationary driving licences be raised to 18. Would you give a child a loaded gun?

   - What effect is this technique designed to have on the reader?
   - What do you think is the writer’s viewpoint?

**Key terms**

**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.

   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? **We’ve 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.**

   The writer uses direct address here. How does this help to influence her reader?

   Here the writer uses a direct question. Who is the question addressed to and what response is expected?

   The writer is using the first person here. How does this help the writer to get the reader on her side?

**Develop the skills**

Read paragraphs 3 and 4.

But now, at last, sanity is starting to prevail. A government report, by the Transport Research Laboratory, has recommended raising the age at which kids can learn to drive to 18. My 15-year-old daughter, 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! 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.

1. The writer uses direct address here. How does this help to influence her reader?
2. Here the writer uses a direct question. Who is the question addressed to and what response is expected?
3. The writer is using the first person here. How does this help the writer to get the reader on her side?

1. **sounds official** – she’s got important research to back her ideas up
2. **using personal details** makes it sound like she really cares about and understands the issue
3. **exclamation marks** emphasising the idea that you are still young at 17
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. And still we don’t twig how bonkers 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. And when it happens: wham. 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?

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.

Joanna Moorhead, ‘Let’s put the brakes on teen drivers and make them wait until they are older’ The Guardian, Friday 11 October 2013

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.

Key terms: colloquial: informal language

Apply the skills

7 Using your notes, write 200–300 words in response to this 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.

You understand the writer’s ideas and can explain in detail on how language techniques are used to communicate these to the reader.

You understand the writer’s ideas and can clearly explain how language techniques are used to communicate these to the reader.

You are aware of the writer’s ideas and can identify some language techniques.
Explain the ways writers use language to create character

Do I have to pay close attention to every single word when I’m writing about a fiction text? How do I 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 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. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn’t thaw it one degree at Christmas.

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

1. Describe what you imagine Scrooge looks like. Select one detail to support your view.
2. Now describe Scrooge’s personality. What kind of person is he? Select one detail to support your view.
3. Why did you choose these details in particular? Explain why the details you have selected support your view of Scrooge.

### Key terms

**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.

### Explore the skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Connotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>Red / blue</td>
<td>Odd choice of colour: suggests he is abnormal in some way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>Squeezing / wrenching / grasping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagery</td>
<td>Frosty rime</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrator</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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.

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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’.
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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.

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?

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.

Apply the skills

Reread the extract from Mr Pip.

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?

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 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 objective
• 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.

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

Key terms
cohesion: what glues a united, whole text together

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.

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 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?
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.

Then there were all the diseases one is vulnerable to in the woods – giardiasis, eastern equine encephalitis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, schistosomiasis, brucellosis, and shigellosis, to offer but a sampling. Eastern equine encephalitis, caused by the prick of a mosquito, attacks the brain and central nervous system. If you’re 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 tiny 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 include, but are not limited to, headaches, fatigue, fever, chills, shortness of breath, dizziness, shooting pains in the extremities, cardiac irregularities, facial paralysis, muscle spasms, severe mental impairment, loss of control of body functions, and – hardly surprising, really – chronic depression.

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.

Apply the skills

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.
Explain and comment on writers’ use of openings

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.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Detail</th>
<th>Annotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Eight o’clock’</td>
<td>Too early to be on a beach – suggests something is not right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘huddled together’</td>
<td>Implying the need for comfort / protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘dead nearly a year’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. a. What impact does the mood have on the reader at this point in the story? What details give you this impression?

b. What do you imagine may happen later in the story?

c. What questions does this opening raise for the reader?
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*.

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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Detail</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Inference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative start</td>
<td>‘no possibility of taking a walk’</td>
<td>First sentence negative, suggests life is hard / miserable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>‘wandering’</td>
<td>Suggests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrator</td>
<td>‘we’</td>
<td>Central character of the story</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 section and look carefully at how Brontë describes Mrs Reed.

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?

What more do we learn about the narrator here?

The said Eliza, John, and Georgiana were now clustered round their mama in the drawing-room: she lay reclined on a sofa by the fireside, 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 childlike 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

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.

‘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 bookcase: 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.

Now you can put all of your findings together.

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.
- 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

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.

3. Read the following poem by William Shakespeare.

   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, yellow’d 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.

4. a) The poet says that future generations won’t 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 prove offer proof that his love is so beautiful?

5. 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 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 try and make meaning of big abstract concepts like love.

   /If I could write/ the beauty of your eyes,/  
   /And in/ fresh numbers/ your graces,
Chapter 4 . Topic 6

Develop the skills

In this famous extract from Act 1 Scene 5 of Romeo and Juliet, the lovers have just met for the first time.

ROMEO If I profane with my unworthiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

JULIET Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmer's kiss.

ROMEO Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
JULIET Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

ROMEO O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

ROMEO Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.

Romeo describes himself as a pilgrim visiting a saint (Juliet). He wants to touch her, then to kiss her!

5 Read the extract a few times. What is this actually about? What are Romeo and Juliet saying to each other?

Look at this line from the passage:
‘Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much’.

If you mark out the syllables, it looks like this:
‘Good pil/grin, you/ do wrong /your hand /too much’.

Notice the rhyme scheme being used between Romeo and Juliet. There is a pattern: ABAB, CDCD, EFEF, GG. Altogether, this makes fourteen lines. In other words... Shakespeare is using a sonnet form in this passage.

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

6 What does Shakespeare want us to understand about the feelings between Romeo and Juliet? Think about:
- how many lines each character has
- how the lines carry on from each other
- how the lines are divided up at the start, and how this changes as the sonnet progresses
- the effect of Romeo and Juliet sharing the final rhyming couplet.

7 Why do you think Shakespeare inserts a sonnet form into his play at this moment? What might he be wanting the reader to infer about the relationship between Romeo and Juliet?

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.

Apply the skills

Now you are ready to put all your ideas together into a piece of writing.

Explore the ways Shakespeare uses structure and form to present ideas about a relationship in Act 1 Scene 5 of Romeo and Juliet.

Checklist for success

- Clear explanation of ideas.
- Relevant supporting evidence or aspects of form.
- Clear explanation of the effects of the techniques or aspects of form.

Glossary

pilgrim: a traveller going on a journey to a religious place

holy palmer: someone who is praying

Key terms

couplet: pair of lines that rhyme

Check your progress:

I can analyse particular features of structure and form in detail, linking them precisely to the overall effect being created and using 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. You make accurate use of technical vocabulary.

I can identify one or more structural feature and comment on the effect it creates.
Apply Your Skills
Prepping to answer questions on writer’s effects

Learning objectives
You will learn how 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 objective
• English Language AO2
• English Literature AO2

Responding to English Language tasks

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.

Your task: language
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

Response 1

The writer uses language to show that the boy is excited in this extract. It is clear that the boy is ‘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...
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.

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.
Chapter 4: Analyse and evaluate writers’ methods and effects

Your task: structure

You now need to think about the whole extract and the ways the writer has shaped and structured his 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

A successful response should include:

- 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

5 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

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.

6 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.

7 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 away, but without any more information to go on. Again, this sets up questions in the mind of the reader.

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. The short sentences are used to add even more emphasis to the
Chapter 4. Topic 7

Letters from Yorkshire

In February, digging his garden, planting tomatoes, he saw the first lapwings return and came indoors to write to me, his knuckles singing as they reddened in the warmth.

It’s not romance, simply how things are. You out there, in the cold, seeing the seasons turning, me with my heartful of headlines feeding words onto a blank screen.

Is your life more real because you dig and sow? You wouldn’t say so, breaking ice on a waterbutt, clearing a path through snow. Still, it’s you who sends me word of that other world pouring air and light into an envelope. So that at night, watching the same news in different houses, our souls tap out messages across the icy miles.

Maura Dooley

Your task

How does the writer present ideas about home and family in ‘Letters from Yorkshire’?

Checklist for success

A successful response should:

• Demonstrate your understanding of ideas and feelings
• Include some well-selected evidence
• Analyse the effects of particular words, literary techniques and structural features, linked to the ideas and feelings in the poem.

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.

8 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.
Chapter 4: Analyse and evaluate writers’ methods and effects

2 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 letter from the parent to the writer. I think that the writer has grown up and has left home and lives in a city for work.

The writer uses imagery of ice and snow to make it seem that their relationship is cold at first, like ‘ice’ and ‘snow’. The writer uses a semantic field of cold to create the effect. She uses ‘cold’, ‘snow’ and ‘icy’. This makes the poem feel cold as if their relationship is cold. It starts in the third person with the speaker talking about her father as if she is describing him but then it changes half way through and she starts to use ‘you’ as if she is talking directly to her father.

At the end of the poem it says that they are talking to each other; ‘our souls tap out messages’. This suggests that they are communicating or still the same and have a strong bond. The poet seems to be saying that the father and daughter are still close in some ways but not in others. They are not together anymore but there is still a relationship and they still feel things for each other. We know this because of words like ‘heartful’.

Comments on Response 1

The examples are well-chosen and explained, although they could have been more developed. The comments on the ‘semantic field’ are relevant, with appropriate examples from the poem. These comments could have been more developed, linking 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 ‘strong bond’ between the parent and the writer, but again, this interpretation isn’t particularly developed or clearly explained.

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.

Response 2

In this poem the writer is exploring feelings about leaving home and living a different life, and how she is still connected with her home and her family. The writer uses semantic field of ‘ice’ and ‘snow’ to make it seem that their relationship is cold at first, but the technique is also used to show that the parent wants to keep in contact with the speaker. ‘Breaking ice on a waterbutt’ is like the father trying to break the distance between them. Also, the writer says ‘clearing a path’ which is also like the parent is trying to get closer to their child.

The poem then becomes more personal and direct, as if the father and daughter are speaking directly to each other. In the second stanza she begins to use ‘you’ rather than ‘he’, as if the letter has brought them closer to each other. She also shows the father’s attempts to keep the communication between them with the metaphorical use of ‘breaking ice’ and ‘clearing a path’. This suggests that there has been some coldness between them, but that it is the father that is attempting to break through and repair the damage.

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 goes beyond the literal from the start, with a good explanation of the metaphorical use of ‘lapwings’. There are some clear explanations of the effect of particular language choices and imagery, and the evidence has been quite skillfully embedded into the response. Overall this candidate seems to be clear and confident about their understanding of the poem.

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
Check your progress

- I can interpret writer’s 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 the writer’s 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.