

# Higher/N5 English:

## Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation

Close reading requires you to:

### 1 Understand, analyse and evaluate detailed and complex written texts by:

- 1.1 Identifying and explaining the purpose and audience, as appropriate to genre
- 1.2 Identifying and explaining the main ideas and supporting details
- 1.3 Applying knowledge and understanding of language to explain meaning and effect in depth and detail, using appropriate critical terminology

#### How to approach the questions:

- i) For questions that ask candidates to **Identify**, candidates must present in brief form/name.
- ii) For questions that ask candidates to **Explain** or ask **—in what way...!**, candidates must relate cause and effect and/or make relationships between things clear.
- iii) For questions that ask candidates to **Analyse**, candidates must identify features of language and discuss their relationship with the ideas of the passage as a whole. Features of language might include word choice, imagery, tone, sentence structure, punctuation, sound techniques, and so on.
- iv) For questions that ask candidates to **Evaluate**, candidates must make a judgement on the effect of the language and/or ideas of the passage(s).

*Source: SQA Website*

### Understanding Questions: (Identify / Explain / In what way...?)

- The most straightforward type of question.
- Tests your ability to select information from a passage and to understand it.
- Unless told otherwise, answer in your **own words!** (You will get no marks for copying or ‘lifting’ from the passage.)

### “Own Words” Questions

These questions test that a candidate has a varied enough vocabulary to use different words to convey the same meaning. Remember you do not have to translate each point word for word; you can paraphrase, but you must ensure that you convey the correct meaning. Some words can be reused if there is not an appropriate equivalent, but if you possibly can, ensure all key words are changed!

#### Example

The boys jumped across the river at its narrowest point.

**Could be translated to** The young men traversed the stream at the easiest place to cross.

**Try putting these examples in your own words:**

1. *The jockey had won several races on the same horse.*
2. *Children should be seen, but not heard.*
3. *The fire swept through the building inflicting massive damage to both life and materials.*

**Example**

*In one year, Katherine Hicks has spent £3000 to watch Westlife perform 17 times, and is such a regular concert fan that she believes the band now recognise her as an acquaintance, if not a friend.*

Write down three facts which tell us that Katherine is now a keen Westlife fan. (3)

First, identify (highlight or underline) the three facts that tell us that Katherine is a fan of the band.

- ✓ *spent £3000*
- ✓ *watch Westlife perform 17 times*
- ✓ *believes the band now recognise her as an acquaintance, if not a friend*

Now put these three points in your own words:

- ✓ *Spent a considerable sum of money*
- ✓ *Has seen the band play on numerous occasions.*
- ✓ *Believes that West life know and like her.*

**Now try these, making sure you use your own words.**

1. *Stories about haunted places are always fascinating. What goes on there, and how, and why? Some hauntings can be explained as the results of ordinary trickery. In others, some natural cause is at work, though it has not yet been traced.*

What **two explanations** does the writer suggest to account for the belief that some places are haunted? (2)

2. *Jim scarcely recognised his long hair and grey cheeks, the strange face in a strange mirror. He would stare at the ragged figure who appeared before him in all the mirrors of the Columbia Road, an urchin half his previous size and twice his previous age.*

Give **four changes** in his appearance that Jim notices when he looks at himself in the mirror. (2U)

3. *The government must crack down on reckless motorists by encouraging the spread of roadside cameras, boosting the number of traffic police and ensuring speed limits are enforced more strictly, a report from MPs urged yesterday.*

What **three things** must police do in order to crack down on reckless motorists? (2U)

4. *When we were children, Hassan and I used to climb the poplar trees in the driveway of my father's house and annoy our neighbours by reflecting sunlight into their homes with a shard of mirror. We would sit across from each other on a pair of high branches, our naked feet dangling, our trouser pockets filled with dried mulberries and walnuts. We took turns with the mirror as we ate mulberries, pelted each other with them, giggling, laughing.*

Explain **in your own words** what the boys did to annoy the neighbours. (2)

5. *Thinking of Grandpa now, I recall the clouds of pungent smoke that he puffed from his favourite briar, his small shrewd eyes, still very blue, and the gleaming dome rising from fleecy tufts of white hair.*

What **three characteristics** of "Grandpa" does the author remember? (3)

6. *The BBC is a massive patron, uniquely independent through its licence fee – and the guardian of public service broadcasting. But, as the fight for the control of communications heats up, friends of the BBC – both inside and out – are alarmed that all this is in jeopardy: the BBC has become too much of a self-seeking institution, too preoccupied with its ratings at the expense of good broadcasting, and unwisely over extended financially*

In **your own words** explain the **three reasons** for causing alarm to the friends of the BBC. (3)

7. *After his initial dalliance, Grant trained with the French originators of parkour before bringing his knowledge back to Glasgow. He trains every day, whether in the activity's more physical aspects or in its technique. More than 100 people attend his adult and female-only classes every week. He has also coached children at three local schools. All three have requested further sessions.*

**Give evidence** that parkour has become successful in Glasgow. (2)

Don't forget: to answer 'own words' questions –  
First, identify the answer;  
then **translate** it into your own words.



## Link Questions

Just as with the links in a chain, the link sentence must connect to the topic discussed in the previous paragraph **AND** the topic to be discussed in the paragraph to come. Without a link sentence, a piece of writing has no flow or progression. These questions are usually worth two marks.

### **For Higher:**

1st Mark Quote the section that links back to the previous paragraph and explain what it links back to

2<sup>nd</sup> Mark Quote the section that links forward to the next paragraph and explain what it links forward to.

### **For N5:**

1st Mark Quote the section that links back or forwards

2<sup>nd</sup> Mark Explain what the quote links to

### **Example:**

*William Shakespeare is easily the best known of our English writers. Virtually every man in the street can name some of his plays and his characters. However, despite our familiarity with his work, we know relatively little of the man himself. We do not know when or why he became an actor, we know nothing of his life in London and almost nothing of his personal concerns.*

Show how the third sentence acts as a link in the argument. (2U)

**How to Answer – Higher** (For N5, you need only do stages 1 and 2 or 3 and 4)

1. Quote the section that links back to the previous paragraph:

*"despite our familiarity with his work"*

2. Explain what it links back to:

*links back to the fact that almost everyone is aware of aspects of Shakespeare's writing.*

3. Quote the section that links forward to the next paragraph:

*"relatively little of the man himself"*

4. Explain what it links forward to:

*links forward to where the writer goes on to list the many things that we do not know about Shakespeare.*

**Now try these, using the rules above:**

1. *Her mother left her at the age of five. As a result, she was forced to fend for and pay for herself: ensuring she had enough to eat; clothes to wear and shelter from the elements.*

*Despite her harsh childhood, Emma's ancestry linked her to wealth and social standing. Her grandmother was Lady of the local clan, with a grand manse and estate to her family name, which was renowned throughout the country.*

Show how the first sentence in the second paragraph acts as a link in the argument. (2)

2. *The couple separated acrimoniously last year after 20 years. Friends said Yorke was mild mannered, a keen sportsman and 'the last person to do something like this', and neighbours all spoke highly of him.*

*Despite this outward appearance of calm and normality, privately he was tortured by the break-up of his family. Spiraling into depression, he became obsessed with guns and carried out target practice in his back garden, leading up to the shooting of his wife.*

Show how the first sentence in the second paragraph acts as a link in the argument. (2)

## Context Questions

Remember that the same word can mean different things in different contexts. For example:

Don't panic when you read a word you don't understand – you should be able to **work it out** from the context:

To answer, identify clues in the sentences immediately surrounding the word.

You must quote the words and phrases that provide the clues and briefly explain how they help to confirm the meaning.

These questions are normally worth 2 marks: you will be awarded 1 mark for getting the meaning right and 1 mark for quoting and explaining the evidence.

**Context = the surrounding words and phrases**

### **Example:**

*I'm nocturnal. I love the moonlight, the shadows, the dark places, the dappled murk. I'm not being poetic, I'm simply being true to my nature, my nocturnal nature. Like all tarantulas.*

Show how the context helps you understand the meaning of 'nocturnal'. (2)

1. Explain the meaning of the word.

*Nocturnal means to only go out at night.*

2. Show how the rest of the text makes this clear by **quoting** the word or phrase that provide clues.

*The writer refers to his preference for 'moonlight' and 'dark' which both suggest night-time.*

### **Now try these, using the rules above:**

1. *The rumour that Douglas was a prisoner was still unsubstantiated. There had been no witnesses to his bailing out of the plane and no solid information could be expected from beyond enemy lines for weeks, perhaps even months.*

Show how the context helped you arrive at the meaning of the word unsubstantiated. (2)

2. *Silverstein was implacable in pursuing his revenge. After years of patient searching he had finally come face to face with his father's tormentor, and he showed no mercy.*

Show how the context helped you arrive at the meaning of the word implacable. (2)

3. *For two days the general vacillated. Should he give the order to advance, or should he allow his men to cling to their sturdy line of defence? This hesitation was to prove fateful.*

Show how the context helped you arrive at the meaning of the word vacillated. (2)

4. *The position of the Stewart monarchs in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was peculiarly perilous in dynastic terms, for a number of reasons. In the first place chance had resulted in a total of seven royal minorities- there had been no adult succession since the fourteenth century -which had an inevitable effect of weakening the power of the crown and increasing that of the nobility.*

Show how the context helped you arrive at the meaning of the word minorities. (2)

## Analysis Questions

While understanding questions ask about what the writer is saying, analysis questions ask about how the writer makes his or her point.

For example, the writer may choose particularly effective word choice or images in order to help you understand the point they are making; they might use sentence structure to emphasise their point; they might use a certain tone in order to help the reader understand their emotions regarding a certain issue.

The main types of ANALYSIS questions are:

- **Word choice**- ask you to identify words/ phrases the writer has used and explain their effect
- **Imagery questions**- ask you to identify examples of imagery and explain their effect
- **Tone**- ask you to select words or phrases from the text –you may be ask to explain the effect of these words
- **Contrast Questions**- ask you to explain how the writer uses words or phrase which contain clearly differing ideas for effect.
- **Sentence Structure**- ask you to explain the deliberate effect the writer creates through the use of different types of sentences.

## Word Choice questions

In this type of questions you are being asked to select a key word and show how the **connotations** of this word are being exploited by the writer.

**Denotation:** The explicit or direct meaning or set of meanings of a word or expression, as distinguished from the ideas or meanings associated with it or suggested by it. *The denotation of “home” is a house, apartment, or other shelter that is the usual residence of a person, family, or household.*

**Connotation:** The associated or secondary meaning of a word or expression in addition to its explicit or primary meaning: *A possible connotation of “home” is “a place of warmth, comfort, and affection.”*

Consider the synonyms of thin. Some examples are: slim; beanpole; bony; cadaverous; delicate; gaunt; lanky; lean; scrawny; starved; slight; slender; slinky; puny; twiggy; underweight. These words have dramatically different associations, so a writer could give very different impressions depending which one they choose.

You should be able to see how writer can change the meaning of the sentence by choosing a different word.

In order to answer a word choice question, you must first identify the words that the writer has used in order to create certain effects. You must extract the word (or short phrase) from the passage, then describe the connotation of the chosen word.

NB, At Higher level, there are no marks for simply identifying a word. Whereas at N5, there are.

There are **no marks** for simply repeating the words of the question at either level.

**Example:**

*Because of the popularity of partner dancing – as opposed to the lone experience of shuffling one’s feet and randomly jerking your arms at a club/family wedding – the BBC has decided to make a celebrity version of Come Dancing, the centrepiece of its new Saturday night schedule.*

How does the writer’s word choice in these lines show that the writer thinks that dancing on one’s own as opposed to with a partner is not very satisfying? (2)

Consider which words have negative **connotations**, and can therefore be linked to the unsatisfying nature of the dancing.

‘Extract’ these words – you will now be dealing with them on their own.

Write down explicitly the connotations of the words. How do these words specifically suggest unsatisfying dancing?

Hence ...

- “shuffling” has connotations of clumsy, unskilful movements and suggests that the dancing is unenthusiastic and self-conscious. (1)
- “Randomly” or ‘jerking’ suggests the dances have no pattern and are made up of movements which are rough and uncoordinated. (1)

**Now try these, using the rules above:**

1. *The hills and the valleys around it were an eiderdown of olive-groves that shone with a fish-like gleam where the breeze touched the leaves. Half-way up a slope, guarded by a group of tall, slim cypress-trees, nestled a strawberry-pink villa, like some exotic fruit lying in the greenery.*

How does the author’s word choice contribute to the sense that the new home will be a refuge to the family? (2)

2. *It’s not just real violence which unreels itself in the imagination, fast-forward, fast-backwards and pause. I have sat in the cinema and watched with peeled-back sight and a whimpering heart, peering aghast at the claustrophobic corners of the screen. I like Bringing Up Baby and Jane Austen adaptations. I get very scared by images of violence. I get very worried by images of violence towards women. I get weepy and terrified by images of violence towards children.*

Show how the writer’s language demonstrates her strength of feeling about films containing violent scenes. In your answer you must refer to word choice. (2)

3. *One faction has cried constantly that the countryside is in mortal danger from greedy developers whose only motive is profit; another has kept on roaring that farmers are killing every wild thing in sight and threatening the very soil on which we stand through overuse of machinery and chemicals; still another has been continually heard ululating over a decline in the bird population, or the loss of hedgerows, or the disappearance of marshland, or the appearance of coniferous forest.*

Show how the word choice and sentence structure in lines 8–14 emphasise the strong feelings of those who feel the countryside is under threat. (2)

4. *The internet search engine, Google, with whom I spend more time than with my loved ones, is planning to put the contents of the world’s greatest libraries online, including the Bodleian in Oxford and those of Harvard and Stanford in America. Part of me is ecstatic, at the thought of all that information at our fingertips; another part of me is nostalgic, because I think physical libraries, book-lined and cathedral quiet, are a cherished part of civilisation we lose at our cultural peril.*

How does the writer’s word choice in these lines help to convey his view of the importance of physical libraries? Refer to two examples in your answer. (2)

## Imagery questions

### Literal and Figurative Language

**Literal** – words are being used to mean exactly what they say: their use corresponds to the definitions you would find if you looked them up in a dictionary.

**Figurative** – Where the objects of discussion are not literally present, but are brought in by way of comparison.

For example:

*“She’s only winding you up ... don’t rise to the **bait**.”*

*“Keep practising ... you’ll be a **star** one day!”*

Here, the physical subjects (‘bait’ and ‘star’ are not the real subjects for discussion, they have been brought in by way of comparison. They are being used **figuratively** or **metaphorically**.

**Imagery questions generally involve similes or metaphors.**

**A simple way of working out if language is being used literally or figuratively is by asking yourself if the thing is actually physically present, or whether it is brought in by way of comparison.**

**Simile** – A comparison in which one thing is said to be like something else. (A **is like** B) – *The cat was as plump as a cushion.*

**Metaphor** - The words ‘like’ or ‘as’ are missed out of the comparison. The subject is said to be the same as the figurative comparison. (A **is** B) – *Her mouth was a political megaphone.*

### So, how do you deal with this type of question?

It is essential that you show that you understand the literal ‘root’ of the image. IE, if the image you are analysing is “Juliet is the sun” you must: Firstly identify the image, then the subject and the object.

- *The subject is Juliet, and the object that she is being compared to is the sun.*

Describe what the object of comparison is like.

- *The sun is bright and beautiful, far in the sky*

Describe what the subject is like

- *Juliet is also beautiful, and appears to be far away from the speaker*

Identify how the metaphor helps you visualise / understand the subject better.

- *This helps us understand that Juliet is much brighter and more beautiful than other girls. It also suggests that she is unattainable.*

Once you get better at this, you do not have to go through so many steps. You can use “Just as (object of comparison), so too (subject)” to ensure that you include all the necessary information in your answer. .

*Juliet is being described as “the sun”. Just as the sun is the brightest object in the sky, so too is Juliet much brighter and more beautiful than other girls. It also suggests that, like the sun, Juliet is far away from the speaker, and unobtainable.*



### Example:

*“Whether the specific storms that scythed down trees in Paris last Christmas, drowned the Po Valley last month and battered Britain last week can be attributed to the warming trend is a subject of serious — and contentious — scientific debate.”*

Show how the writer uses imagery to emphasise the impact of the storms which affected Europe. (2)

*Image of the storms in Paris ‘scything’ down trees shows the storm’s destructive impact. Just as a scythe is a sharp farming implement used by the farmer to cut away crops, so too does the storm destroy with precision and force in what seems a deliberate way.*

*A whole valley was ‘drowned’. Just as a person who is drowned is totally submerged and killed by water when drowned, so too is the valley lost forever by the impact of the floods.*

### Now try these, using the rules above:

1. *It would have been a lonely night, but most of the known universe had come out to join us. The southern sky was lit up like Regent Street at Christmas.*

How does the writer’s use of imagery help us picture the scene she is describing? (2)

2. *Britain, at the moment, is a nation full of respectable citizens – people who have played by the rules all their lives – who are waking up at night in a sweat of fear over whether they will be able to pay the bills, keep up with the mortgage, and even hang on to their jobs as recession bites; and it is understandable that they should feel frightened, betrayed and angry. It is, though, neither pleasant nor smart of them to take the tabloid bait which suggests that they should focus that anger on a small minority of street kids who break the rules, rather than on those actually responsible for the state of the global economy.*

Analyse how writer’s imagery in this extract reveal her feelings about the media. (2)

3. *“My work as a rep for the package travel company was short lived. I found the monotony of the trips unbearable. The tourists were herded like cattle from attraction to attraction. They showed little interest in the finer points of Spanish culture and were more taken by the chance to buy tacky souvenirs and cheap wine.”*

Explain how imagery is used to show the writer’s feelings about tourism in Spain. (2)

4. *It seems the childcare pendulum has swung: the principal threat to children is no longer neglectful parents, but excessively protective ones, who are always worrying about germs.*

Explain how the image in the above extract helps support the writer’s point about parenting. (2)

## Tone questions

The most simplistic definition of tone is “the voice the author is using in their writing.” We must look at the purpose of the writing and ask ourselves “What voice is the author using and why?”

Writers may use emotive language, humour or sarcasm to put a point across strongly. Other writers may just present facts in an objective, formal fashion. In magazines the author may try to influence the reader by using colloquial language (chatty, friendly, slang). The purpose of the writing is key to working out which tone that the author is attempting to achieve.

**It may help to think about how the writer’s voice would *sound* if he was reading the passage aloud.**

### **Serious or Humorous?**

It would be impossible to list every nuance of tone that a writer might use, as there are as many as there are attitudes. But they can be broadly categorised. You must first consider whether the author is being serious or light-hearted about his subject.

If he is being light-hearted, the tone may be **humorous** in a straightforward way, where the author is finding his subject funny and he hopes his reader will too.

A **flippant** tone is where the author is showing an irreverent attitude to something normally taken seriously. An example is to be found in Philip Larkin's poem *Church Going*, where the poet enters a church and describes the altar thus: "*some brass and stuff, up at the holy end.*" Here the use of colloquial and informal expressions conveys his lack of respect.

A **light-hearted tone** will often include **informal** and **conversational** language, whereas a serious, respectful tone will use more formal words. The word **conversational** itself can describe a tone, particularly a **chatty**, **friendly** tone, as if the writer is confiding in a friend. An example is the narrative tone in the opening chapter of *Sunset Song* by Lewis Grassie Gibbon, where the writer is gossiping to his readers about his characters:

*"Chae ...wasn't the quarrelsome kind except when roused, so he was well-liked, though folk laughed at him. But God knows, who is it they don't laugh at?"*

An **enthusiastic** or **effusive** tone might be used in an advertisement to persuade someone to buy something. A list of gushing superlatives would be an example of this.

**Irony** is the name given to the figure of speech where an author says the opposite of what he really means. This could be purely for humorous effect, but there is often a serious purpose behind irony. An author's feelings can be expressed more forcefully for being inverted in this way.

A **tongue-in-cheek** tone is a form of irony: the writer will sound serious, but there will be a sense of ridicule behind this. **Euphemism** is a common feature of this tone. An example might be the expression "*tired and emotional*" to mean "drunk" which the satirical magazine *Private Eye* uses to avoid lawsuits from the prominent people whom it exposes.

A **satirical** tone is an extreme form of irony. Here a writer is funny in a more savage way: he holds a subject up to ridicule in order to attack it. This is the tone adopted by George Orwell in *Animal Farm*, for example, where he satirised Russian Communists by comparing them to pigs. The satirist's purpose is deeply serious although on the surface he may appear light-hearted.

A **serious** tone is obviously used for serious purposes, on solemn occasions: a funeral speech, for example. Words such as formal, ponderous or even pompous might be applied.

For serious purposes, an **emotive** tone is often used. As the name implies, this aims to stir up emotions in the reader, by shocking or disturbing him. This is done by using words or expressions expressing extreme emotions. This was written by a sports journalist criticising the tension at a Rangers/Celtic football match:

*Nowhere else on the planet do footballers perform in front of vast crowds so full of bile, hatred and bigotry. I have yet to find another place on the planet where a sporting occasion includes a ritual singing of some ditty celebrating a distant battle which took place 307 years ago.*

Here the writer uses repetition, and hyperbole: "on the planet"; he uses words expressing extremes: "vast", and strong emotions: "bile, hatred, bigotry". He uses so called "loaded" words: for example, "some ditty" implies a sense of contempt.

Rhetorical questions and exclamations are frequently used in emotive writing, as are vivid similes and metaphors.

### **So, how do you answer a question on tone?**

When you deal with tone questions, you must always consider how other techniques help to create the tone. Once you have identified the tone, you can almost treat them like a 'writer's use of language' question.

1. Firstly, identify and write down the tone.
2. Quote the words & technique which helped you identify the writer's tone. This could be word choice, sentence structure, hyperbole, imagery, etc, so follow the rules for analysing your chosen technique.
3. Give a full explanation of **how** this technique conveys this tone – check the number of marks!

**Remember –  
Lonely Old Tone –  
can't be left alone!  
It always has to be  
associated with  
another technique!**

### **Example**

*Yet Ireland has managed to attract its young entrepreneurs back to help drive a burgeoning economy. We must try to do likewise. We need immigrants. We cannot grow the necessary skills fast enough to fill the gap sites. We need people with energy and commitment and motivation, three characteristics commonly found among those whose circumstances prompt them to make huge sacrifices to find a new life.*

Identify the writer's tone in these lines and show how this is demonstrated.

(2)

First identify the writer's tone.

*The writer uses a uplifting and encouraging tone.*

Now, identify the techniques which create this tone, and answer accordingly.

*The writer uses sentence structure to create the tone. She uses a repeated pattern in 'we must ... we need' suggesting passion and encouragement. Her repetition of 'we' suggests there is a collective responsibility. Her expanding sentence length suggests increasing passion. Repetition of 'and' suggests a build up of enthusiasm and commitment*

**Now try these, using the rules above:**

*1. A few years ago, spivs working in the development sector hit on a cracking new wheeze. They bought fields outside towns and villages where plans to develop had been denied by the local council. Then they sold small housing plots, assuring would-be buyers that, sooner or later, planning restrictions would be relaxed, earning the investor a fat profit. It was certainly a nice little earner for the developer. Councils responded to these schemes with outrage but buyers poured in.*

*Now thanks to the government, the land-sharks who worked the deal will soon be in the money.*

Show how the writer creates a tone of contempt for the developers. (2)

*2. At the same time, the fetish with league tables has forced teachers to turn schools into fact-cramming, rote-learning factories in which narrowly focussed lessons are reinforced by stacks of homework. Our education system is now as blinkered, as grindingly utilitarian, as in the era mocked by Dickens in *Hard Times*. Is it any wonder that so many school-leavers have no pastimes except shopping, watching telly and binge drinking?*

Identify the writer's tone and show how it is conveyed. (2)

*3. I am fed up listening to scaremongers about the E-coli virus, telling me my child should never visit a farm or come into contact with animals. I am weary of organisations that are dedicated to promulgating the idea that threats and dangers to children lurk everywhere. I am sick of charities who on the one hand attack overprotective parents and at the same time say children should never be left unsupervised in public places.*

Identify the writer's tone and show how it is conveyed. (2)

*4. There is no doubt that obesity is the world's biggest public-health issue today- the main cause of heart disease, which kills more people these days than AIDS, malaria, war; the principal risk factor in diabetes; heavily implicated in cancer and other diseases. Since the World Health Organisation labelled obesity an epidemic in 2000, reports on its fearful consequences have come thick and fast.*

Show how the writer's conveys a melodramatic tone. (2)

## Sentence Structure questions

Sentence structure questions ask you to examine and comment on how sentences are shaped or structured and how the shape affects the author's message.

Sentence Type	Example Sentence	Typical use / Effect created
Statement	<i>Michael is playing tennis</i>	Most common sentence type. Used in factual writing.
Question	<i>Was it my fault?</i>	Used in reflective / emotive writing. See below
Rhetorical Question	<i>Do I look stupid?</i>	No answer expected. Makes a strong statement, such as anger.
Command	<i>Vote for a candidate by putting a cross in the box.</i>	Used in instructions and persuasive writing.
Explanation	<i>It can't be true!</i>	Convey volume and strong emotion such as amazement, shock.
Minor Sentence	<i>She crouched down, listening for a sound. <u>Complete silence.</u></i>	Words make complete sense in <u>context</u> . More concise.
Non-sentence	<i>She crouched down, listening for a sound. <u>Nothing.</u></i>	Creates impact, sense of urgency, tension. Found in informal writing.

A **Rhetorical Question** is a question that does not require an answer.

Writers may use them for a number of reasons –

- To involve the reader in the article, making them think about the issue
- If they are then going to go on to answer their own question.

Remember: you must say **why** the question is being asked.

What is the purpose of the rhetorical questions in the following examples?

1. *But what made Titanic the worldwide hit that it eventually became? It wasn't the boat because, lets face it, everyone knows what happened there. No, it was the love story between Jack and Rose ...*

2. *Deluges, droughts, fires, landslides, avalanches, gales, tornadoes: is it just our imagination, or is Europe's weather getting worse?*

3. *Personally, despite everything I was told and everything I was taught, I couldn't walk away and leave them, so I went back. What would you do?*

**Sentence structure questions are not asking WHAT the sentence means. They are asking HOW the sentence is put together and the EFFECT it achieves.**

## Patterns in sentences

**Repetition:** Repeated word patterns in order to focus emphasis and/or to elicit a specific response from the reader. This can be a specific word or phrase, but can also be a certain pattern, for example: “*We must try to do likewise. We need immigrants. We cannot grow the necessary skills...*” Repetition of ‘we’ here is notable!

**Inversion:** The normal order for a sentence is for the subject to come first, followed by the predicate:  
*A stranger stood in the doorway.*

However, occasionally the subject is delayed and placed after part of or the whole predicate, a technique known as **inversion**:



*In the doorway stood a stranger.*

When you think of inversion, think of the character Yoda from Star Wars who inverts almost everything he says: ‘*Your father, he is.*’

If you notice an inverted sentence, consider *why* the writer has chosen to adapt the normal word order. In the above case, the writer has attempted to create tension by leaving the revelation of who was in the doorway to the stranger to the end of the sentence.

**List:** fairly self-explanatory. A writer can use a list of words or of short phrases. This will almost always be used to stress the number or the variety of things she is talking about.

**Climax:** Items are placed in a specific order in a sentence, most important last: “*We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.*” This traces the progress of the troops, building up to a final emphatic sentence.

**Anti-climax:** Building up to an event that does not happen.

**Antithesis:** Placing opposites together in order to create a contrast, therefore making a point memorable.

**Long/short:** Different sentence lengths in order to change the speed, movement and/or tension of a passage.

**While the mnemonic ‘Rippls?’ is not exhaustive, it will remind you of some of the most common things you should look for when you are tackling a sentence structure question.**

Remember:	
R	epetition
I	nversion
P	unctuation
P	atterns
L	ong sentences (lists)
S	hort Sentences
?	Questions

**Now try these, using the rules above:**

1. *We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.*

How does the writer's sentence structure help put forward his point? (2)

2. *How many of us were aware during 1985 – the year of the Ethiopian famine and of “Live Aid” – that the hungriest countries in Africa gave twice as much money to us in the West as we gave to them: billions of dollars to our banks and finance houses just in interest payments on national debt?*

How does the writer's sentence structure help put forward his point? (2)

3. *Of course the whisky and woollen industries matter. Of course we have a rich musical heritage. Of course it's much more entertaining if young men celebrate their degree or their nuptials in highland dress (however dubious its provenance) than monochromed monkey suits. But there has to be a way of marrying these rich traditions to a modern message.*

How does the writer's sentence structure help put forward her point? (2)

4. *The day that Ali refused the draft, I cried in my room. I cried for him and for myself, for my future and for his, for all our possibilities.*

How does the writer's sentence structure help put forward his point? (2)

5. *What overwhelms you about this man [Muhammed Ali] from such a violent trade are the goodness, sincerity and generosity that have survived a lifetime of controversy, racial hatred, fundamental religious conversion, criminal financial exploitation, marital upheavals, revilement by many of his own nation and, eventually, the collapse of his own body.*

How does the writer's sentence structure help put forward his point? (2)

### A Quick note about Commas!

They are not that exciting. They create a short pause in your reading. That's all they do. They do not create a list. They do not create tension. They are highly unlikely ever to emphasise anything.

**There is little chance of a sentence structure question ever requiring you to talk about commas.**

Just remember that.

## Some Important Types of Punctuation

### **Inverted commas (“**

- To highlight the spoken word.  
*“Did you intend for this to happen?” asked the Prime Minister.*
- To identify quotations.  
*The cabinet minister responded by saying, “It was not my intention and I am extremely sorry”*
- To emphasise or pick out a word or phrase within a sentence, for example in instances where foreign words are used or when the author does not necessarily agree with the text.  
*The cabinet minister gave an “immediate” response.*

### **Colon (:)**

- To introduce a quotation.
- To introduce a list.
- To introduce an explanation on a point.
- To expand the detail on a previous statement.

### **Semi-colon (;)**

- Used to separate items within a list.
- Used to separate two linked statements.
- Used to separate two opposing statements.

### **Single dash (-)**

- Highlight the untimely break-off to a sentence, usually spoken.  
*“But I –.” The girl stood shocked as the teacher shouted at her.  
“I don’t want to hear your excuses!”*
- To add an extra piece of information on a point.  
*In walked Jamie Millar – the new boy in the year.*

### **Parenthesis (two dashes, two brackets, two commas)**

- To separate a piece of information from within a sentence, which is not vital to the understanding of that sentence.
- The sentence will continue to make sense if the parenthesis is removed.  
*Jamie Millar walked in – the new boy in the year – and sat next to Jason.*



As well as helping you to identify the sentence types present within a passage, you will be asked to comment on the use of punctuation with regards to how these sentences are structured. Be specific and answer in your own words – do not repeat what it says in the passage.

**Example:** Name the different forms of punctuation used within the below paragraph and comment on the purpose/effect of each.

*Jamie Millar walked in – the new boy in the year – and sat next to Jason Black. He was really fit. This was a disaster – Jason was the biggest geek in the whole school. He looked a sight: his orange curly hair; his big thick glasses; his snotty, crusty nose. They were never going to get on.*

*“Miss, should I loan Jamie a –”*

*“I’ve got one.” Jamie glared at Jason as he pulled a pen out of his denim jacket pocket.*

**Analyse the punctuation in this extract.**

- ✓ *Parenthesis (dashes) adds extra information about Jamie Millar, informing the reader that he has only just joined the school.*
- ✓ *Single dash used to explain to the reader that this pairing would not work because Jason was not popular in the school. He was a completely opposite character to Jamie.*
- ✓ *Colon introduces a list of all the negative aspects of Jason’s appearance.*
- ✓ *Semi-colon used to separate all the terrible elements of Jason’s appearance, such as his chunky spectacles and his dirty, runny nose.*
- ✓ *Dash used to show that Jamie’s question to the teacher was rudely cut off by Jason’s remark, showing that Jason didn’t want Jamie’s help.*

1. Read the following extracts.
2. Name the various forms of punctuation used.
3. Comment on their effect/purpose.

**Remember to be specific.**

1. *Why are children (odious creatures) so self-absorbed?*
2. *The book – the physical paper book – is being circled by a shoal of sharks, with sales down by 9 percent this year alone: it is being chewed by the e-book; it is being gored by the death of the bookshop and the library.*
3. *We crawled inside; the rising wind howled through the cracks between the stones. What must it have been like for the lighthouse keepers, cooped up in a brick tube for months, battered by wind and waves?*

**Unfortunately, there are few hard and fast rules when it comes to sentence structure. Keep an eye open for anything notable – repetition, omissions, interesting patterns or punctuation, and ask yourself why the writer has included this in their writing. With practise, you will become better at recognising these things, and identifying why they are being used. Here are some notable aspects of sentence structure – your teacher will help you identify many more!**

## The Writer's Use of Language

Rather than specifying a particular technique, you may be asked to comment on **the writer's language**. This is an analysis question, so consider how, not what.

You can answer with reference to:

- Word Choice
- Imagery
- Tone
- Sentence Structure

Choose one (or more than one) of the above, then answer as you normally would that type of question.

**For each example, identify what techniques the writer is using, then follow the rules for that type of question.**

*1. The most cherished credo of the English middle classes is that the verdant hills and dales of the Home Counties should remain forever sacrosanct, and that the Government's "Stalinist" decision to impose a million extra houses on southeast England is the most hideous threat to our way of life since the Luftwaffe made its energetic contribution to British town and country planning in 1940. Thousands of green acres will be choked by concrete, as rapacious housebuilders devour whole landscapes. England's cherished green belts—the 14 great rings of protected fields that have stopped our major cities from sprawling outward for more than half a century—will be swept away.*

Show how the writer's use of language in lines 11–19 emphasises the extreme nature of the English middle classes' view of the threat to the countryside. (4)

*2. Is your journey really necessary? Who would have thought that, in the absence of world war and in the midst of unprecedented prosperity, politicians would be telling us not to travel? Just as working people have begun to enjoy the freedoms that the better-off have known for generations—the experience of other cultures, other cuisines, other climates—they are threatened with having those liberating possibilities priced out of their reach.*

*And when I hear politicians—most of them comfortably off—trying to deny enlightenment and pleasure to "working class" people, I reach for my megaphone.*

*Maybe Tommy Tattoo and his mates do use cheap flights to the sunshine as an extension of their binge-drinking opportunities, but for thousands of people whose parents would never have ventured beyond Blackpool or Rothesay, air travel has been a social revelation.*

Show how the writer's use of language in lines 1–12 conveys the strength of her commitment to air travel for all. (4)

*3. Warnings of catastrophe come and go. Whatever their validity, we cannot and should not ask people to go back to a more restricted way of life. The restrictions would not work anyway, because they are impracticable. If they were enforced, they would be grotesquely unfair and socially divisive. If we really are facing an environmental crisis, then we are going to have to innovate and engineer our way out of it.*

How effective do you find the writer's use of language in the final paragraph (lines 69–74) in emphasising her opposition to placing restrictions on people's way of life? (2)

## Evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions can be teamed up with understanding or analysis questions throughout the passage. However, when standing alone they are often categorised in the following ways:

### Effective Conclusion to the passage

This type of question is basically asking you how well you think a particular section (usually the last line/paragraph) **summarises** the points made in the passage.

Look out for dramatic changes in tone/structure/language/style and whether **it is a conclusion** or **prompts further thought** by questioning or adding new points/information.

You should use the following approach in your answer:

1. State whether you think it is effective or not.
2. Explain your reasoning by commenting on the aspects of the conclusion which are/are not effective.
3. Back up your points with evidence from the passage.

### Appropriate/effective title

This type of question asks you to consider **how the title relates to the passage** in more than one way. Often the title will be some kind of word play such as a pun or ambiguous word choice.

You should use the following approach in your answer:

1. State how appropriate/effective you think the title is.
2. Explain any word play and the effect this has.
3. Relate this to evidence from the rest of the passage (i.e. points made by the writer)

### Effectiveness of an example/anecdote

This type of question asks you to think about examples used to **heighten an argument /point**.

You should use the following approach in your answer:

1. State how effective you think the example/anecdote is.
2. Explain how effectively it supports the writer's point at this stage in the article.
3. Explain the effect on the reader (shock, evoke sympathy, create disgust etc.)

## Writer achieving purpose

This type of question requires you to look at the passage as a whole. You need to have a clear idea of **what point** the writer is trying to make and the **techniques he/she uses to achieve this**.

You should use the following approach in your answer:

1. State what you think the writer's purpose is and whether you think they have achieved it.
2. Selects some aspects of the writer's use of language (word choice, imagery, tone, sentence structure) and explain how these serve the writer's purpose. You can use examples already dealt with in other questions!

Don't forget: to answer 'evaluation' questions –  
First, make a judgement about how successful the writer has been in summarising, illustrating and introducing points or in achieving their purpose.  
Second, explain by referring to the passage as a whole how they achieved this.



## The Final Comparison Question

The final question in the Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation exam is a **comparison** question.

This question requires you to **identify the main ideas** of both passages and **explain in detail** what the main points of **agreement/disagreement** are between the two texts and authors.

Use the following approach in your answer:

1. **Identify an idea** on which both passages **agree/disagree** and write this down **in your own words**.
2. **Quote from passage 1** to evidence where the author makes this point.
3. **Explain in your own words** what the quotation reveals about the author's attitude towards this point/the point they are making.
4. **Quote from passage 2** to evidence where the author makes this point.
5. **Explain in your own words** what the quotation reveals about the author's attitude towards this point/the point they are making.
6. **Repeat this process two more times (3 point in total)**.

**Alternatively you can do it this way:**

1. **Identify the three areas of agreement/ disagreement**
2. **Then give supporting evidence for each**  
(see above)

You will be given one mark per correct point (up to a maximum of 3), plus up to two points depending on the quality of your explanation and comment. So it is essential that you comment fully on the points you have made.



**Now that you have completed this programme of learning you should:**

- ✓ **practise with past papers**
- ✓ **read quality non-fiction**
- ✓ **try making up your own questions for a non-fiction passage**
- ✓ **revise language techniques**
- ✓ **revise question types**

**Above all, remember: close reading is not designed to ‘catch you out’ or to trick you. The examiners will have designed a paper that allows you to demonstrate your knowledge.**

**DO NOT PANIC.**

**Read the passage carefully, and skim read all the questions before you begin. Ensure you read the question carefully so you know what it is asking of you. Be aware of how many marks a question is worth: If a question is worth 4 marks, always try to write 4 points, to guarantee the maximum number of marks.**