



Tutor In A Box

Start Here

This box contains a range of reading and writing activities based on two extracts of non-fiction writing about horse racing.

Activity	Assessment Objectives
Reading	A02: Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers Use relevant subject terminology to support your views
Writing	A05: Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences.





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Aa Vocabulary

Aa Vocabulary from the text

Aa **drone** - male honey bee with no stinger

Aa **wanting in enthusiasm** - lacking enthusiasm

Aa **frigid** - stiff and not showing enthusiasm

Aa **phlegmatic** - unemotional and not easily excited

Aa **agitation** - nervous excitement

Aa **St Vitus's dance** - a disorder causing jerking movements of the limbs

Aa **gesticulating** - using hand and arm movements to express yourself

Aa **semaphores** - signals made by holding two flags in certain positions

Aa **molten** - turned to liquid by heat

Aa **downs** - areas of low grassy hills

Aa **omnibus** - bus

Aa Vocabulary for the skills covered in this box

Aa **adjective** - a word used to describe a noun

Aa **adverb** - a word used to qualify an adjective or verb

Aa **alliteration** - the close placement of several words that begin with the same letter

Aa **hyperbole** - exaggeration





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Aa Vocabulary

- Aa infer** - to work out meaning using evidence and reasoning
- Aa metaphor** - a figure of speech used to describe something as if it were something else
- Aa onomatopoeia** - a word that imitates the sound of what it is describing
- Aa oxymoron** - a figure of speech in which two contradicting ideas are used together
- Aa personification** - a technique in which non-living things are given human characteristics
- Aa similes** - the comparison of one thing to another using 'like' or 'as'
- Aa semantic field** - a group of words relating to the same subject
- Aa perspective/standpoint/viewpoint** - the view or attitude held by an individual





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Reading

How do writers use language?

Writers use language to convey their viewpoints and to achieve a certain effect. This shapes how a reader thinks when they read a text. Writers choose their words and phrases very carefully and it is your job to work out why they made these particular choices.

How is this examined?

In the exam, you will be asked to identify language techniques and analyse what effect they have on a reader. You may be asked to analyse language and structure separately or together in the same question – make sure you know what your exam board requires you to do.

What are language techniques?

You will probably be familiar with a range of language techniques (sometimes called **devices**) that writers used. This is an opportunity for you to use subject terminology (the names of the techniques) too. Here is a handy acronym to help if you are struggling to remember them, but bear in mind that this does not cover the whole range of techniques that writers may use:

S imiles

H yperbole (exaggeration)

A lliteration/adjectives/adverbs

M etaphors

P ersonification

O nomatopoeia

O xymoron (opposites/contrasts)





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Reading

How do we analyse a writer's use of language?

Here, we are considering all of the word choices a writer has made. In order to do this, we need to work out what message they wanted to get across to their reader and how they conveyed it. When analysing language, we are thinking about what effect the language has on us (what it makes us think or feel). This is the process we need to go through:

1. Identify the writer's viewpoint (their thoughts and feelings or opinion about something)
2. Find some examples of language techniques in their writing
3. Name the techniques using subject terminology
4. Identify and explain the writer's purpose (what they were trying to achieve, i.e. persuade, entertain, make readers feel guilty)
5. Explain the connotations of words/phrases and what their effect may be on a reader

What does good language analysis look like?

Let's use a section of the extract as an example. Read from 'At this distance, the crowd is an ant-heap' to 'I seem to be looking at a game of insects'. In this section, the writer is describing the crowd who have gathered to watch the Derby. Some language devices (or SHAMPOO techniques) have been annotated for you:

At this distance the crowd is an ant-heap; the horsemen and carriages which move forward and cross each other resemble beetles, May-bugs, large sombre drones on a green cloth. The jockeys in red, in blue, in yellow, in mauve, form a small group apart, like a swarm of butterflies which has alighted. Probably I am wanting in enthusiasm, but I seem to be looking at a game of insects.

metaphor

metaphor

simile

metaphor





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Reading

Here is part of an answer which analyses the language used in this extract:

The writer has used the semantic field of insects to describe the people at the derby. Initially, he describes the crowd as an 'ant-heap'. This metaphor makes it sound as though there is a high volume of people all piled up closely together. This is a somewhat grotesque image for a reader and may imply that the writer was not pleased to be in this busy, crowded situation. He could also be showing dismay that he is seated or standing so far away from the main area.

This is what makes this a strong piece of analysis:

-  The student has used some subject terminology (semantic field and metaphor)
-  A short quotation has been used ('ant-heap')
-  The student has explained what the metaphor suggests (that there is a high volume of people all piled up closely together)
-  The effect on the reader has been analysed (grotesque image; may imply that the writer was not pleased...)
-  An alternative interpretation has also been offered ('he could also be showing...')





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Writing



Read the text ‘Grand National: 6 reasons to boycott the annual horse racing event’ – it is an excellent example of opinion writing and is rich in language techniques.

Using language techniques in your own writing

It’s absolutely essential that you read regularly to ensure that you see how writers use language techniques. The more you read, the more you will be exposed to them and become familiar with their usage. In the exam, you will be able to draw upon ideas that you have come across in other texts in order to write an effective piece.

Developing your viewpoint

Before you can start to craft your writing, you need to decide what exactly you want to say. Look carefully at the question and consider your viewpoint on the topic – remember that you will use language techniques to make your writing more convincing. They will be most effective if you have a clear vision before you start to write.

Planning your writing

It is so common to forget to write a plan! You may think you are wasting valuable writing time by planning, but in actual fact, your writing will be more organised and powerful if it is carefully planned. Here are two suggested methods of planning for writing about your opinion on horse racing:





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Writing

Bullet points

Using this method, you can simply list all your ideas as they come to you, then number them once you decide what the best order will be. A list like this is also useful for ticking off as you write up the ideas into paragraphs. This will ensure you don't forget to include any of your points.

Horse Racing

-  dangerous for horses – very high jumps, high speed, deaths on racecourse, injuries on racecourse
-  cruelty to horses - horses not treated with respect, whipping
-  dangerous for jockeys
-  encourages gambling – may cause gambling addiction

Mind map/spider diagram

This method is also useful as you can spread out all your ideas, then work out which ones are most useful and put them into order of priority. Don't forget to tick them off as you include them so you don't miss any out.

cruelty to horses -
horses not treated
with respect,
whipping

Horse
Racing

dangerous for horses
– very high jumps,
high speed, deaths on
racecourse, injuries
on racecourse

dangerous for jockeys

encourages gambling
– may cause gambling
addiction





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Writing

Adding language techniques to your plan

Once you have decided on the main points you'd like to make in your answer, you can then begin to consider which language techniques you can add in to enhance your ideas. For example, for the point about the danger to horses, you could include statistics about the height of the jumps, number of deaths, details about injuries to the horses and statistics about the speed of the races. The use of statistics would shock the reader and also make your writing appear more believable and reliable.

REMEMBER:

You can make up all of your information - you are being marked on the quality of your writing, not the accuracy of your facts!

Writing up your answer

Once you have a detailed plan in place, then - and only then - can you begin to write your answer! Remember to check carefully what type of text you are being asked to write (letter, speech etc) and include the correct layout features, too. Don't forget that you also gain marks for accurate paragraphing and punctuation, as well as ambitious vocabulary.





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Questions



Reading

Read the extract from the text 'Derby Day' by Hippolyte Taine.

1. Summarise the whole extract in your own words to show that you have understood it. Write about 5 lines.

2. How many policemen clear the course?

3. What colours do the jockeys wear?

4. What food items are thrown around?





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Questions

5. Why does the writer think that the crowd's behaviour is 'allowable'? Try to use your own words if possible.

6. Find the simile used to describe the jockeys. Can you explain why the writer has chosen to describe them this way and what the effect is?

7. The writer uses the metaphor 'green cloth' to describe the meadow in the first paragraph. What does this suggest about the course?





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Questions

8. Can you find a contrasting description of the ground after the race day? What is the effect of giving contrasting descriptions like this?

9. Can you find a contrasting description of the ground after the race day? What is the effect of giving contrasting descriptions like this?

10. What happens to the atmosphere in the part-way through the first paragraph? How does the writer show this shift in mood?





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Questions

Writing

Read the 'Grand National' text from the Independent.

Using information from the text, as well as language ideas from the Derby Day text, your task is to write your own first-person account of watching the Grand National in the style of Hippolyte Taine. You should aim to make your views about horse racing clear to the reader by using a wide range of language techniques.

Don't forget to:

-  Decide on your viewpoint
-  Write a plan
-  Add a wide range of language techniques to your plan
-  Use the source texts for inspiration

Note: the Independent text clearly presents horse racing in a negative light, so if you wish to show an alternative view, you will need to select and adapt the information carefully to convey this.





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Game

Language Techniques Name Game

In pairs or a small group, you are going to become more familiar with the names of language techniques by playing this fun word game.

Starting with the letter A, the first player must say the name of a language technique beginning with that letter, such as alliteration, anaphora etc.

The next player to their left must then try to name one with the letter B, the next with C and so on (you can skip some letters if necessary!).

To make things more tricky/fun/pressurised, all players must create a rhythm: pat twice on your lap and then clap. After each of these, the player whose turn it is must be ready to name a technique.





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Answers



Reading

1. Your summary should be along these lines:

The writer describes the atmosphere as the horse race is about to begin and tells the reader about the setting (a meadow) and the crowd. They appear tiny to the writer so he likens them to insects and the jockeys to butterflies. He describes the race, which does not appear fast from where he is situated, and also tells the reader about the people's behaviour after the race has ended. Finally, he describes the state of the ground once Derby Day is over.

2. Three or four hundred policemen clear the course.
3. The jockeys wear red, blue, yellow and mauve.
4. Chicken bones and lobster shells are thrown around.
5. The writer thinks the crowd's behaviour is allowable because people have been repressed for a year and this is a way for them to relax a little.
6. The jockeys are likened to 'a swarm of butterflies'. The writer has chosen to describe them in this way as it shows that they are delicate and light upon their horses, which creates the impression that they are skilful and captivating to watch. Butterflies are colourful and beautiful and this is a way for the writer to convey his opinion – he seems to admire them as butterflies have positive connotations.





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Answers

7. Describing the meadow using the metaphor 'green cloth' suggests that it is smooth, flat, pristine and untouched. It almost looks like fabric as it is so well tended. The reader imagines a bright, vibrant green colour produced by dyes.
8. The writer tells us that after the race day, 'the fields...are reddened by feet' which is a complete contrast to the clean, almost untouched 'cloth' it is referred to earlier on. This highlights the somewhat wild and carefree behaviour of the crowd; they have been revelling all day without any concern for the course. The fact that 'everybody returns frightfully dirty' implies that they may have even been rolling on the ground as they have been enjoying themselves so much. This description could suggest that the writer is somewhat taken aback by the behaviour of the English crowd.
9. The moving horses are described as a 'brown patch'. Here, the writer could be implying that the race is very tense and close as the crowd are unable to distinguish the individual horses.
10. The writer conveys that there is a change in the atmosphere of the crowd by using contrasts. He details that their 'frigid faces are on fire', showing that while they were not showing much emotion in the earlier part of the race, they are now alight with enthusiasm. The metaphor 'on fire' is hyperbolic to emphasise just how much emotion the crowd are experiencing. Also, by likening the crowd to 'puppets receiving an electric shock' he shows that they initially appeared lifeless, then become extremely animated. This suggests to the reader that the race is highly entertaining to watch.





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Answers



Writing

Please use the self-assessment grid below once you have completed your article:

Skill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed	 Target
I decided on my viewpoint before I started to plan or write		
I completed a detailed plan before starting to write		
I added a range of language techniques to my plan		
I used the language techniques to convey my viewpoint clearly		
I used a wide range of language techniques (remember SHAMPOO!)		
I referred to both texts to find information and ideas		

