

DistanceLearningCentre.com

LEARNING MATERIALS

Course: IGCSE English Language Specification A (4EA1)

Unit 2: Paper 1

Topic: Transactional writing (inform, explain, review)
Reading and analysing non-fiction anthology texts (1-4)
Writing skills



Recommended reading:

[Recommended reading](#) for this topic is listed in the back pages of these learning materials.



Further resources:

Further resources to deepen your learning on specific aspects of this topic are listed throughout these learning materials.

If you see this icon  you will be able to listen to how the word is pronounced



Read and make notes:

Making notes turns reading into studying. Notes should be brief, clear and helpful.

To help your understanding:

- rewrite or summarise what you have learned (avoid copying what you have read);
- note down any questions your studying has raised, either to ask your tutor, or to develop into further research.

To help you to remember:

- sum things up to improve long term memory;
- write things down to aid motor memory;
- use colour, images or patterns to help visual memory.

To help you in your assessments:



LEARNING MATERIALS

- record where you will find information (e.g. page numbers);
- keep your notes organised and easy to navigate;
- highlight where further reading and research are needed, including any recommended or further reading;
- use your notes to help you to get started when answering a question.



LEARNING MATERIALS

Contents

Press **CTRL / ⌘ + Click** in the contents list to go to the relevant page

Introduction	5
1. Writing for a purpose	8
1.1 What is transactional writing?	8
<i>The Explorer's Daughter, Kari Herbert</i>	9
Background and context	9
Understanding the text	10
Exploring the language	11
Further analysis of the text.....	12
2. Writing to: inform; explain; review	18
2.1 Inform.....	18
2.2 Explain	18
2.3 Review	19
<i>Between a Rock and a Hard Place, Aron Ralston</i>	20
Background and context	20
Understanding the text	21
Exploring the language	22
Further analysis of the text.....	23
3. Writing skills: Sentences, paragraphs and structural devices	29
3.1 Sentences.....	29
<i>The Danger of a Single Story, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie</i>	32
Background and context	32
Understanding the text	33
Exploring the language	35
Further analysis of the text.....	36
3.2 Paragraphs	44
3.3 Structure	45
3.3.1 The beginning.....	47
3.3.2 The Middle	48
3.3.3 The End.....	49
3.4 Structuring a narrative.....	50
4. Form, audience and techniques for purpose	53



LEARNING MATERIALS

4.1	Form	53
4.1.1	Physical layout	53
4.1.2	Content.....	55
4.2	Audience.....	56
4.2.1	Examining a past exam paper question using SLAP.....	57
<i>Explorers or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill, Steven Morris</i>		61
	Background and context	61
	Understanding the text	61
	Further analysis of the text	62
4.3	Techniques for informative writing.....	68
4.4	Features of explanatory writing	68
4.5	Features of reviews.....	69
5.	Putting it all together: exam question	72
5.1	Planning.....	72
5.1.1	Spider diagrams	72
5.1.2	Bullet points.....	73
5.2	The question	73
5.2.1	The Beginning	75
5.2.2	The Middle	75
5.2.3	The End.....	78
Sources and credits.....		80

LEARNING MATERIALS

Introduction



In this topic:

We will look at techniques for transactional writing, alongside reading and analysing four texts from Part 1 of the anthology.

In this topic you will learn skills and techniques for:

PAPER 1:

Reading:

Analysing and comparing/contrasting non-fiction anthology text and an unseen text

We will study 4 of the 10 non-fiction anthology texts that could be in this section of your exam.

We will learn techniques and methods to analyse non-fiction texts, which will help you to examine the unseen text on your exam.

We will continue the work on what you need to know for this section of Paper 1 throughout the course.

Writing:

Transactional writing

We will look at how to successfully write pieces of transactional writing in this topic. We will focus on writing to inform, explain and review in this topic.

PAPER 2:

Reading:

Analysing poetry and prose anthology text

Writing:

Imaginative writing

We will look at techniques for successful writing, some of which will be useful in constructing your own creative writing.

Essential reading – using the textbook:



Some small tasks and extracts from the textbook have been replicated in this unit to make completing them easier.

If larger sections of the textbook need to be studied then you'll be given the page numbers to complete at the right point in your course.

LEARNING MATERIALS



Things to do:

1. Collect and read examples of different writing styles as a perfect way to develop and improve your own writing.

You can do this by getting into the habit of reading a good quality weekend broadsheet newspaper. Choose from any of the following:

Saturday:

The Guardian (politically centre-left)

The Times (politically centre-right)

The Daily Telegraph (politically centre-right)

Sunday:

The Observer (politically centre-left)

The Sunday Times (politically centre-right)

The Sunday Telegraph (politically centre-right)

Here you will find a plethora of examples of how to write in different ways, for different purposes, and to different audiences.

The specification for the IGCSE stipulates that students should be reading challenging and wide-ranging texts during their studies for this qualification. This activity will help you to achieve this. Essentially, the more you read, the better your English skills will be.

2. Start a vocabulary list

- If you come across a word that you don't know the meaning of, write it down and look it up in a dictionary. Try looking up synonyms too (words that can mean the same) in a thesaurus.

You'll come across lots of technical words and phrases during your studies, and this list will help both your understanding and revision.

It will also widen your vocabulary so that you can write really effectively in your exams.

3. Start a spelling list

There will be words that you either don't know, or are spelling incorrectly.

- Keep a list and practice them: spelling is assessed in your exams, so try to keep on top of this.

If you are dyslexic please speak to your tutor about it during your next tutorial

LEARNING MATERIALS



Clever Cat says:

“In your English Language IGCSE folder create a section now for:

- *spelling*
- *vocabulary*
- *writing tips*
- *transactional writing*
- *each of the anthology texts that we’ll study in this topic:*

The Explorer’s Daughter by Keri Herbert

Between a Rock and a Hard Place by Aron Ralston

The Danger of a Single Story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Explorers or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill by Steven Morris

Using file or binder dividers is a really good way to organise your work. You will learn a lot, and will write a lot, and so organising your work like this is essential for your studies.

During this topic we will complete further activities about each text, and so keep updating each text’s section in your folder as you go.

At the end of the course you should revisit every non-fiction anthology text – you will have learnt more by the end than you will know at the beginning, so you will be able to add more to your analysis of each anthology text then.”

LEARNING MATERIALS

1. Writing for a purpose



Ready, steady, go!

In this section we will look at the different purposes for writing.
We will study the anthology text:

The Explorer's Daughter by Kari Herbert

Note: What you will learn in this section is applicable to Paper 1

1.1 What is transactional writing?

Transactional writing is non-fiction writing for a purpose. The purposes could be to:

INFORM:	to pass on information (this includes descriptive writing)
EXPLAIN:	to make clear how or why something is, as it is
REVIEW:	to outline a piece of work, or an event, and comment on it
ARGUE:	to produce an organised sequence of reasons to support a point of view
PERSUADE:	to convince an audience or reader to think or act in a certain way
ADVISE:	to give useful suggestions and ideas to help someone or some people

A piece of transactional writing should have a **main purpose** from the list above, but should also use the other writing purposes to add clarity, interest, and to make your writing compelling and 'un-put-down-able'.

We're going to jump straight into your first anthology text now – consider what you have just read about purpose, and don't forget to have a separate section in your folder for each anthology text that you will study (see Clever Cat advice in the Introduction).

LEARNING MATERIALS

The Explorer's Daughter, Kari Herbert



Things to do:

We will now read through *The Explorer's Daughter* – as you read this, consider the purpose(s) of the piece and how it affects you as the reader.

► Turn to page 6 of the [anthology](#) and read the text along with the recorded version. You will need to use the unit 2 (paper 1) password to access the anthology text.



[Anthology Part 1: From *The Explorer's Daughter*, Kari Herbert](#)

Background and context

Kari Herbert's father was a polar explorer. She lived as a child with her family in northwest Greenland in the Arctic. She was so fascinated by the place that she returned there later as an adult to write about it.

The book from which this extract is taken is partly a memoir (a form of autobiography) and partly a travel book. It informs the reader about this strange and beautiful place, its people and animals. She found that the traditions and cultures of the Inughuit people of Greenland were changing due to the impact of the modern world. However they still managed to retain aspects of their traditional ways of life, such as hunting for food and driving teams of dogs.

A major part of the extract is an account of a hunt for narwhal. Hunting is a very emotive issue and many conservationists agree that whales should be protected. Kari Herbert's feelings on this topic are divided. She sympathises with both the narwhal and the hunters, who face incredible danger whilst hunting, and she acknowledges that banning hunting could cause a potential loss of their culture and history.



Activity 1: *The Explorer's Daughter*

Conduct some research to deepen your understanding.

1. Learn more about the narwhal:

You can start your research at [WWF's narwhal page](#)

2. Find some more information about Herbert and her writing:

Read an article that has been written about her family and early childhood in Greenland by Juliet Rix in *The Guardian*: [My arctic childhood \(2008\)](#)

And a read a review of *The Explorer's Daughter* by Hugh Thomson in *The Independent* (this is a good way to start applying your

LEARNING MATERIALS

understanding of the writing purpose **to review**): [The Explorer's Daughter by Kari Herbert: a magnetic return to the polar people \(2004\)](#)

3. Learn more about the Inghuit (Inuit, Inugguit or Polar Eskimo) people of Greenland and their way of life:

You can start your research by watching and reading about Dr. Stephen Leonard's year long research project '[Living with the Inugguit \(2011\)](#)'

In the short film there are some images of a polar bear between 4.25 and 5.08 that you may wish to skip

Understanding the text

Kari Herbert sympathises with both hunter and hunted in this extract. The author's central purposes are to convey the tension of the subject but also its beauty. You need to examine the different ways in which the writer does these things within the same text.



SAQ 1: The Explorer's Daughter

Copy and complete the following table with answers and evidence from the extract:

QUESTION	ANSWER AND EVIDENCE
Why do the Inughuit hunt the narwhal? Find as many reasons as you can.	1. Narwhal meat provides food – 'a valuable part of the diet for both man and dogs'. 2. 3.
What details show the difficulties and dangers faced by the Inughuit in the hunt?	1. 2. 3.
What details show the writer's respect and sympathy for the narwhal?	1. 2. 3.

LEARNING MATERIALS

Exploring the language

When we explore the language, we look at the words, the imagery and the dialogue and the effects they have on the reader.

The extract has many purposes and the writer uses language in different ways to fulfil them. She uses description to convey the beauty of the setting, gives the reader information about the Inughuit people and the narwhal, dramatises the hunt and gives the reader an insight into her own thoughts and feelings.

For instance she **describes** ‘the plumes of spray from the narwhal catching the light in a spectral play of colour’ and she also **informs** the reader that the ‘mattak or blubber of the whale is rich in necessary minerals and vitamins’.

Herbert uses very descriptive language to make her writing come to life, and to give personality and character to the animals and the people she is describing. By doing so, Herbert is engaging the reader to understand and empathise with her **argument**.

We are shown both her respect for the ‘intelligent’ narwhal and the ‘brave’ hunters’, the women ‘clustered’ together with ‘binoculars pointing in every direction’ and ‘spinning round at a small gasp or jump’ as one of them spots a hunter near a narwhal. Finally the piece ends with the author **persuading** the reader that ‘Hunting is still an absolute necessity in Thule’.

 SAQ 2: <i>The Explorer’s Daughter</i> Copy and complete the following table with answers and evidence from the extract:	
LANGUAGE USE	EVIDENCE
Language to convey the effects of light	1. A ‘glittering kingdom’. 2. 3.
Language to give information: factual, scientific, other specialised language	1. Precise scientific language makes the information more authoritative – for example, ‘[Its] mattak or blubber ... is rich in necessary minerals and vitamins’. 2. 3.
Language to create tension	1. The way the women react suggests their nervousness – for example, ‘spinning round at a small gasp’. 2. 3.

LEARNING MATERIALS

Language to show the conflict in the writer's personal feelings and thoughts	1. 2. 3.
--	----------------

 **SAQ 3: *The Explorer's Daughter***

What do you think is the main purpose of Herbert's writing? Try to justify your answer.

Further analysis of the text

Paragraph 1 (lines 1-12):

Two hours after the last of the hunters had returned and eaten, narwhal were spotted again, this time very close.

This is a very strong opening line. We know very quickly that the hunters have been active already – they are back (from a previous hunt?), they are fed, and the narwhal have been spotted AGAIN. The use of the comma to separate 'this time very close' replicates the tension and expectation that we can presume the author experienced.

Within an hour even those of us on shore could with the naked eye see the plumes of spray from the narwhal catching the light in a spectral play of colour.

This is highly descriptive language – the visual element is obviously very important to Herbert and she wants the reader to be able to imagine the scene easily.

Two large pods¹ of narwhal circled in the fjord², often looking as if they were going to merge, but always slowly, methodically passing each other by.

We have **technical language** here ('pods' and 'fjord'): do you think that Herbert expects her reader to have an understanding of these words? Who therefore do you think her intended audience is (in other words, is she writing for a specific type of reader)? Does this language make you view the text in a certain way?

The way that she writes shows a level of awe for the narwhal – they are clearly intelligent and communicate with each other in complex (and unfathomable) ways.

Scrambling back up to the lookout I looked across the glittering kingdom in front of me and took a sharp intake of breath. The hunters were dotted all around the fjord.

A lovely picture is painted here. Herbert can be seen in the mind's eye 'scrambling': this is offset with the hunters 'dotted'. She is out of her comfort zone, whilst they are in an

¹ pods: small groups of whales

² fjord: a long, narrow inlet of the sea with steep sides

LEARNING MATERIALS

organised, practiced, natural formation: there is **juxtaposition** between her child-like 'scramble' and their professional positioning. Notice too the use of a short sentence – this standalone sentence almost replicates the solitary hunters.

The evening light was turning butter-gold, glinting off man and whale and catching the soft billows of smoke from a lone hunter's pipe. From where we sat at the lookout it looked as though the hunters were close enough to touch the narwhal with their bare hands and yet they never moved.

The heavily descriptive language paints a picture for the reader. There is beauty in what Herbert is seeing: she uses language to engage the reader in her story, not just to give the facts.

Distances are always deceptive in the Arctic, and I fell to wondering if the narwhal existed at all or were instead mischievous tricks of the shifting light...

Here we learn that Herbert has experience in the Arctic – she has a past experience to relate her thoughts to. Her thoughts here show how this is an ethereal, or dreamlike, experience.

Paragraph 2 (lines 13-16):

The narwhal rarely stray from High Arctic waters, escaping only to the slightly more temperate waters towards the Arctic Circle in the dead of winter, but never entering the warmer southern seas. In summer the hunters of Thule are fortunate to witness the annual return of the narwhal to the Inglefield Fjord, on the side of which we now sat.

This small second paragraph is set apart. In the first paragraph we focused on the people: Herbert and the Inughuits together with the narwhals entering this human-sphere. Now Herbert's attention is shifted entirely towards the narwhals.

Later on in this topic we will look at paragraphs as a structural device – how would the text be different (and how would Herbert's allegiances or dual narrative change) if the narwhals were the focus on the first paragraph, rather than the hunters? The decision that she made to focus on the hunters in paragraph 1 and the narwhals in paragraph 2 shows her natural allegiance with the human struggle, and the animals as an 'extra' to the human-focused narrative.

Read this excerpt closely: 'witness' suggests an action that is arguably more passive than the real actions described here. Why do you think this word is used? Here, the witness to the narwhals is Herbert, who is also watching the hunters try and kill the animals. What effect does this use of language have?

Paragraph 3 (lines 17-32)

The narwhal ... is an essential contributor to the survival of the hunters in the High Arctic. The mattak or blubber³ of the whale is rich in necessary minerals and

³ *mattak* or blubber: the fatty skin of the whale

LEARNING MATERIALS

vitamins, and in a place where the climate prohibits the growth of vegetables or fruit, this rich source of vitamin C was the one reason that the Eskimos have never suffered from scurvy⁴. ...

Again, the narwhals are discussed and Herbert gives lots of information about them, but only about them as a commodity to the hunters.

For centuries the blubber of the whales was also the only source of light and heat, and the dark rich meat is still a valuable part of the diet for both man and dogs (a single narwhal can feed a team of dogs for an entire month).

Herbert uses the term 'whales' to describe the narwhals, perhaps tapping into facts that we already know (that whale blubber was used to light lamps). Again, the narwhals are a commodity, but she seeks to rationalise their use: yes they hunt them, but a single narwhal keeps a large number of dogs alive for an 'entire' (not just 'a') month. There is a good use of language here to emphasise her points.

Its single ivory tusk, which can grow up to six feet in length, was used for harpoon tips and handles for other hunting implements (although the ivory was found to be brittle and not hugely satisfactory as a weapon), for carving protective tupilaks⁵, and even as a central beam for their small ancient dwellings. Strangely, the tusk seems to have little use for the narwhal itself; they do not use the tusk to break through ice as a breathing hole, nor will they use it to catch or attack prey, but rather the primary use seems to be to disturb the top of the sea bed in order to catch Arctic halibut for which they have a particular predilection⁶. Often the ends of their tusks are worn down or even broken from such usage.

A really interesting passage here: Herbert is explaining what the Inughuits have used the narwhal's tusk for over the centuries. The language shows evolution in the people's understanding of the benefits of the tusks, and how they have utilised them through their history. This is **contrasted** with a dismissive couple of sentences about how the narwhal uses its tusk – is Herbert here trying to justify the hunting of the narwhal because the creature's evolutionary use for them is essentially quite poor?

Paragraph 4 (lines 33-44):

The women clustered on the knoll of the lookout, binoculars pointing in every direction, each woman focusing on her husband or family member, occasionally spinning round at a small gasp or jump as one of the women saw a hunter near a narwhal.

⁴ *scurvy*: a painful, weakening disease caused by a lack of vitamin C

⁵ *tupilaks*: figures with magical powers, charms

⁶ *predilection*: liking

LEARNING MATERIALS

Herbert's use of **punctuation** here is very effective: her comma use breaks up the action, replicating the nervousness felt by the women. The way that the women are formed, 'clustered' is **juxtaposed** with the space between the male hunters on the water.

... Each wife knew her husband instinctively and watched their progress intently; it was crucial to her that her husband catch a narwhal — it was part of their staple diet, and some of the mattak and meat could be sold to other hunters who hadn't been so lucky, bringing in some much-needed extra income.

Again we are being told how important hunting is for these people's survival. Using the word 'instinctively' aligns the whole process of hunting: it is part of their survival, both physically and culturally.

Every hunter was on the water. It was like watching a vast, waterborne game with the hunters spread like a net around the sound.

A short sentence followed by a complex sentence echoes the image that Herbert is describing. The short sentence is factual – it is a statement. The second sentence is her description: she uses **similes** to further her description ('the hunters spread **like** a net around the sound'). Using an abstract word like 'sound' again emphasises the instinctive way that the Inughuits hunt: how would we in the West spread around sound?

The narwhal ... are intelligent creatures, their senses are keen and they talk to one another under the water. Their hearing is particularly developed and they can hear the sound of a paddling kayak from a great distance. That ... was why the hunters had to sit so very still in the water.

Herbert has focused much of her description and time on the Inughuits – now she looks at the narwhal for who they are, rather than as a commodity for people. Now she does, she uses **personification** ('they talk to each other'), before bringing it back to the hunters sitting 'so very still in the water'. (Note the repetition of 's': this is **sibilance**.)

Paragraph 5 (lines 45-51):

One hunter was almost on top of a pair of narwhal, and they were huge.

It's the choice of words here that makes this sentence stand out: 'one', 'almost on top', 'pair', 'huge'. The hunter is the subject of the sentence, but he is still made to feel small compared to the vastness of two narwhal.

He gently picked up his harpoon and aimed — in that split second my heart leapt for both hunter and narwhal.

Note the use of the word 'gently' – how often do you hear that about a hunter or hunting? The use of the dash splits the sentence, on the one hand you have the hunter about to kill the narwhal, on the other you have Herbert's reaction. This is the first time that we have really seen her emotionally charged, and the use of **sibilance** ('split second') and personification/hyperbole ('my heart leapt') highlight this.

LEARNING MATERIALS

I urged the man on in my head; he was so close, and so brave to attempt what he was about to do — he was miles from land in a flimsy kayak, and could easily be capsized and drowned. The hunter had no rifle, only one harpoon with two heads and one bladder. It was a foolhardy exercise and one that could only inspire respect. And yet at the same time my heart also urged the narwhal to dive, to leave, to survive.

The use of punctuation here shows the thoughts in Herbert's mind. It's stuttered and heavily linked: she uses a semi-colon, commas and a dash all in the same sentence. This use of punctuation echoes her thought processes and engages the reader as it almost seems panicked. She uses description (no rifle, one harpoon, two heads, one bladder) to emphasise her points, and short sentences to really hammer home her 'respect' for the skill of the hunter and the risk he was willing to take. Beginning the final sentence in this paragraph with a connective ('And') evidences the conflict between her head (hunter) and heart (narwhal). The repetition of 'to' shows the movement that she wishes the narwhal would make.

Paragraph 6 (lines 52-63):

This dilemma stayed with me the whole time that I was in Greenland. I understand the harshness of life in the Arctic and the needs of the hunters and their families to hunt and live on animals and sea mammals that we demand to be protected because of their beauty.

In the last paragraph we saw for the first time in Herbert's writing that she found the hunting a dilemma. Essentially her empathy does sit with the people. However, continuing her emotion from the previous paragraph/sentence ('heart') shows the impact that the hunt has had on her.

And I know that one cannot afford to be sentimental in the Arctic. 'How can you possibly eat seal?' I have been asked over and over again.

Here she shows the argument that has been developing: she has given (to some extent) some balance between the argument for and against hunting. But her conclusion is to be against hunting is 'sentimental' – by using the word 'afford' we are again being persuaded to believe that hunting is an essential necessity.

Herbert also uses anecdote here – she is showing that she has experience in the Arctic, and has had to back up life in Greenland ('over and over again') to people in the (industrialised and sterilised) West.

True, the images that bombarded us several years ago of men battering seals for their fur hasn't helped the issue of polar hunting, but the Inughuit do not kill seals using this method, nor do they kill for sport. They use every part of the animals they kill, and most of the food in Thule is still brought in by the hunter-gatherers and fishermen.

She is writing in this final paragraph almost as if she is having a conversation. The purpose of the piece has moved from an explanation and description to an argument: she is moving towards her conclusion, bringing all of her final points together. 'Dear Reader,

LEARNING MATERIALS

what you understand to be hunting is not what the reality' is essentially what she is saying. She is contrasting 'men battering seals' with 'hunter-gatherers and fishermen' so that the reader will not have too much sympathy for the narwhal. After all, Herbert's purpose is to convince the reader that the Inughuit way of life is a culture that should be protected and respected, as they respect the animals they hunt.

Imported goods can only ever account for part of the food supply; there is still only one annual supply ship that makes it through the ice to Qaanaaq, and the small twice-weekly plane from West Greenland can only carry a certain amount of goods.

She is giving more information to counteract any argument the reader may have (But why can't they just order a Tesco delivery?!) – the Inughuits have no choice. They cannot viably live without hunting for narwhal.

Hunting is still an absolute necessity in Thule.

Herbert has been hitting the reader with reason after reason: she concludes and confirms all of her points using this simple, and yet hard-hitting sentence. There can be no doubt about what her own opinions and conclusions are, and her writing seeks to ensure that the reader feels the same way.



In a nutshell:

In this section we have started to look at transactional writing by focusing on a text's purpose.

We have studied *The Explorer's Daughter* from Part 1 of the anthology and have started to explore how to analyse language in a text.

LEARNING MATERIALS

2. Writing to: inform; explain; review



Ready, steady, go!

In this section we will look at three purposes for writing in more detail:

- inform
- explain
- review

We will study the anthology text:

Between a Rock and a Hard Place by Aron Ralston

Note: What you will learn in this section is applicable to Paper 1

In *The Explorer's Daughter* you have read and studied a piece of writing that informs and explains – hopefully you found it interesting and compelling to read. We're now going to take what we have learned through studying Herbert's writing, and start to put it into practice with your own. Let's look at writing to inform and explain in more detail, giving you strategies to use in your own writing for purpose.

2.1 Inform

When writing to **inform** you give your reader **information**. The main requirements for writing that **informs** is that it is clear, accurate and well-organised.

When you write to inform you get straight to the point. You are just giving information – facts. Here's a simple example of informative writing:

I broke my leg.

But let's look at how you can develop this sentence and make your writing more engaging.

2.2 Explain

Writing to **explain** is slightly different to writing to inform. Here you need to give information, but you need to be selective about it and to organise your ideas effectively.

For instance, you can inform someone that you have broken your leg by simply stating, "I broke my leg." Here you are stating a fact. Explaining is going further than informing. If you were to add this second sentence you would also be writing to explain:

I broke my leg. I was climbing and I fell badly.

LEARNING MATERIALS

You can bring the explanation to life by making the reader feel what it was like to have this experience – use language and imagery to describe what it was like:

I broke my leg. I was climbing and I fell badly. I felt a shattering blow in my knee, felt bones splitting, and screamed.

Making your writing ‘un-put-down-able’

Let’s consider the above sentences. The third sentence is more compelling than the first sentence. Compelling means that the reader wants to keep reading.

When you read blurbs on bestsellers that say, “Unputdownable!” it means that the story is compelling; you sit up all night reading it because you can’t put the book down. It is your job to make your writing compelling. If you succeed you are more likely to get a high grade.

By explaining and describing what happened, the writing becomes more compelling. The reader wants to continue reading because the writing is varied and interesting. We know what happened, where it happened and how it felt. In other words we are totally gripped!

I broke my leg. I was climbing and I fell badly. I felt a shattering blow in my knee, felt bones splitting, and screamed. I hit the slope at the base of the cliff before I saw it coming. I was facing into the slope and both knees locked as I struck it. The impact catapulted me over backwards and down the slope of the cliff-face.

Why do you think the writer chose to *start* with an explanation of what happened *followed* by the vivid description? Would it have been more powerful if he had started with the description? We’ll consider this more in the next section on **audience**.

2.3 Review

When you write to **review** you are using **inform** and **explain** to give a reasoned opinion on something, such as a product or an event.

Inform and explain can work together in a variety of different writing styles, whereas writing to review is very specific: you would be likely to be asked to specifically write a review about a film, book, event or computer game of your own choice.

A review can use other writing purposes to engage and interest the reader, and can seek to perform a number of functions, such as:

- To inform the reader about a product/event
- To engage the reader: the tone of the writing needs to be entertaining and strike a balance between being critical and being positive (being overtly critical or too positive doesn’t read like a review. Too negative and it reads like a bashing critique. Too positive and it reads like an advert. It’s striking this balance that makes a successful review)

LEARNING MATERIALS

- Making recommendations (or not) – is the product/event worth the reader bothering with? Scores on the doors – it might be appropriate to give the product/event a rating at the end of the review.

Varying the writing styles (i.e.: writing to inform, explain *and* describe) is one way to make your writing compelling. Let's look at an example from the anthology of how a writer combines writing styles in order to make the writing compelling.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place, Aron Ralston



Things to do:

We will now read through *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* – as you read this, mark where the author informs and explains.

► Turn to page 10 of the [anthology](#) and read the text along with recorded version. You will need to use the unit 2 (paper 1) password to access the anthology text.



[Anthology Part 1: From *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, Aron Ralston](#)

Background and context

Between a Rock and a Hard Place is an autobiography written by Aron Ralston, an engineer turned outdoorsman and motivational speaker. It relates his experience in 2003 of being trapped for five days and seven hours in Blue John Canyon, in the Utah desert in the southern United States,

His right arm was trapped by a boulder and, unable to free himself, he amputated his arm using a blunt pocketknife. He then had to return through the canyon and climb down a 20-metre slope before he could reach safety and receive medical care.



Activity 2: *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*

Conduct some research to deepen your understanding

1. Learn more about Aron Ralston and his experience:

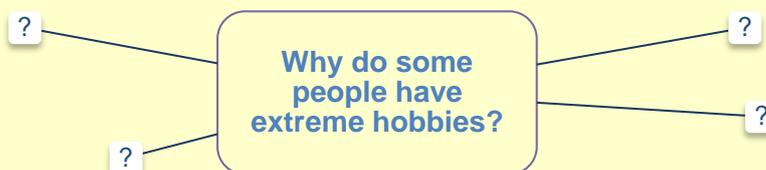
Watch the 2010 film *127 Hours*, which is based on his experience. You can see the trailer for the film here: <https://youtu.be/h5DHU-S7vXE>

Read an interview with Ralston in the run-up to the film's release by Patrick Barkham in *The Guardian*: [The extraordinary story behind Danny Boyle's 127 Hours \(2010\)](#)

2. List any accounts of survival or lucky escapes that you can think of.

LEARNING MATERIALS

3. Draw a spider diagram like the one below and answer this question with as many ideas as you can with:



Understanding the text

This extract from *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* describes the place where the accident occurred and the event itself.

Aron Ralston describes the events in great detail. He recreates the scene of the accident effectively. As he is writing to a general audience, he explains the terminology related to climbing as well as the reasons behind the different things he does. His clearheaded and analytical thinking pattern is effectively brought out as well as his ability to react quickly and to take action in the face of an unexpected problem.

As this is an autobiography, it is written in the first person and has many factual details that makes it feel authentic. Writing in the first person and the present tense also allows for lots of detail, and for the author to write with immediacy and power: both techniques make the reader feel as though they are there with the writer as the events unfold.

SAQ 4: Between a Rock and a Hard Place



Complete the following table by explaining how each quote (showing informative or descriptive detail) helps us to understand the writer's character or feelings.

INFORMATION / DESCRIPTION	ANSWER AND COMMENT
'Instead of the walls widening after the drop-off, or opening into a bowl at the bottom of the canyon, here the slot narrows to a consistent three feet across at the lip of the drop-off and continues at that width for fifty feet down the canyon.'	This information shows us that he is able to assess his surroundings in an accurate and analytical manner. He uses terms such as 'consistent three feet', which shows that he is skilled at gauging distance – a necessary skill for a climber.
'Controlling this counterpressure by switching my hands and feet on the opposing walls ...'	
'With my right foot at kick at the boulder to test how stuck it is.'	

LEARNING MATERIALS

'When I look up, the backlit chockstone falling toward my head consumes the sky. Fear shoots my hands over my head.'	
'I do know for certain that <i>right now</i> , while my body's chemicals are raging at full flood, is the best chance I'll have to free myself with brute force.'	

Exploring the language

Ralston's style is largely factual and analytical. He is very clear and precise in what he says about the events and his reactions. His use of minute details and his step-by-step narrative style are strong techniques that he uses to make his writing effective and interesting.

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p><u>SAQ 5: Between a Rock and a Hard Place</u></p> <p>Copy and complete the following table by thinking about the techniques used by the author, and their effects on the reader.</p> </div> </div>		
TECHNIQUE	EXAMPLE	EFFECT
<p>Emotive language</p> <p><i>Language that produces an emotional response</i></p>	<p>'flaring agony'</p>	<p>This phrase shows the extent of the pain that the writer feels as the initial shock wears off. The word 'flaring' shows how the pain rapidly grows and spreads, giving the reader the image of the pain as fire. The word 'agony' shows how extremely painful it is – he doesn't say it's a bit stingy!</p>
<p>Direct speech</p> <p><i>Speech that could be in quotation marks – e.g. spoken directly. Need more help?</i></p> <p>▶ See page 285 of the textbook</p>		
<p>Variety in punctuation</p> <p>▶ See Unit 1: English Skills, page 2</p>		

LEARNING MATERIALS

	'akin to climbing down from the roof of a house'	
--	--	--

Further analysis of the text

Paragraph 1 (lines 1-7):

I come to another drop-off. This one is maybe eleven or twelve feet high, a foot higher and of a different geometry than the overhang I descended ten minutes ago.

Starting the piece with a short simple sentence like this draws the reader in. We know very quickly that the writer (first person) is descending a very large rock face. The description is detailed ('eleven or twelve feet high', 'different geometry', 'ten minutes ago') and we quickly zone into his style of writing – it is detailed but technical.

Another refrigerator chockstone¹ is wedged between the walls, ten feet downstream from and at the same height as the ledge. It gives the space below the drop-off the claustrophobic feel of a short tunnel.

We are told what a chockstone is, but is a refrigerator chockstone ... in Ralston's book (from which this is an excerpt), he describes chockstones the size of refrigerators in an earlier paragraph that has been edited here. So here we can be certain that this analogy is to do with the size of the rock.

Repetition of the 'w' sound in '**w**edged **between** the **w**alls' (**consonance**) works like an echo, that is quickly lost as Ralston gives more detail about his surroundings. His description 'claustrophobic feel of a short tunnel' perhaps gives the reader more of a sense of what it feels like than the rest of his descriptions have. Do you find the amount of description a little confusing? It can take a couple of reads to fully visualise what Ralston is describing, and so this **metaphor** is helpful.

Instead of the walls widening after the drop-off, or opening into a bowl at the bottom of the canyon, here the slot narrows to a consistent three feet across at the lip of the drop-off and continues at that width for fifty feet down the canyon.

This is a very long sentence with a number of clauses. The length almost replicates the length of the slot: longer and longer and not ending, just more and more description.

¹ *chockstone*: a stone that has become wedged between rocks

LEARNING MATERIALS

Paragraph 2 (lines 8-14):

Sometimes in narrow passages like this one, it's possible for me to stem my body across the slot, with my feet and back pushing out in opposite directions against the walls.

Anecdote is used here: we're reminded that Ralston is a very capable and experienced climber. 'Stemming' is a climbing term, but is one that conjures an image in the reader's mind of filling the slot. To visualise this, watch this video <https://youtu.be/fdCsVcdytEw?t=1m6s> for a minute.

Controlling this counterpressure by switching my hands and feet on the opposing walls, I can move up or down the shoulder-width crevice fairly easily as long as the friction contact stays solid between the walls and my hands, feet, and back.

Sentence length is used here to show the complexity of what Ralston is doing.

This technique is known as stemming or chimneying; you can imagine using it to climb up the inside of a chimney.

Again, we have technical language, but now we (the reader) are being spoken to ('you'). The construction of the word is broken down – most climbing terms are based on a metaphor or a description of what the actions are.

Paragraph 3 (lines 15-19):

Just below the ledge where I'm standing is a chockstone the size of a large bus tire², stuck fast in the channel between the walls, a few feet out from the lip.

Now we have a different sized chockstone (the one in paragraph two was the size of a refrigerator). The use of commas to break up the description in this complex sentence helps the reader to follow what is happening.

If I can step onto it, then I'll have a nine-foot height to descend, less than that of the first overhang. I'll dangle off the chockstone, then take a short fall onto the rounded rocks piled on the canyon floor.

You can almost hear the thought processes of Ralston here – the voice inside his head is verbalised – he doesn't sound panicked, but rather rationalising the situation.

Paragraph 4 (lines 20-28):

Stemming across the canyon at the lip of the drop-off, with one foot and one hand on each of the walls, I traverse³ out to the chockstone.

² *tire*: American spelling of tyre

³ *traverse*: cross

LEARNING MATERIALS

Ralston has described his observations and plans to this point – now he can tell us exactly what he is doing. We are learning about this in present tense: he's not writing about something that has happened, but is telling us as if it is currently happening. As a reader, we are now expecting something bad to happen.

I press my back against the south wall and lock my left knee, which pushes my foot tight against the north wall. With my right foot, I kick at the boulder to test how stuck it is. It's jammed tightly enough to hold my weight.

Again, we are learning about his process step by step.

I lower myself from the chimneying position and step onto the chockstone. It supports me but teeters slightly.

A specific form of **alliteration** is used here: **sibilance** ('chimneying', 'position', 'step' 'chockstone', 'supports', 'teeters' 'slightly'). Sibilance is a literary device where consonants are created deliberately by producing a stream of air using the tongue towards the sharp edges of the teeth: this is usually an 's' sound, but can also be a 'ch' sound. The use of sibilance here ties the sentence together, and continues a nervous 'ssssss' through the description.

After confirming that I don't want to chimney down from the chockstone's height, I squat and grip the rear of the lodged boulder, turning to face back upcanyon. Sliding my belly over the front edge, I can lower myself and hang from my fully extended arms, akin to climbing down from the roof of a house.

We go back to a heavily descriptive narrative here, giving a good visual clues for the reader about what is happening.

Paragraph 5 (lines 29-34):

As I dangle, I feel the stone respond to my adjusting grip with a scraping quake as my body's weight applies enough torque⁴ to disturb it from its position.

This is a complicated way of saying 'as I dangled, the rock started to move'.

Tension is created in this sentence, and the imagery (sensory connotation) here is very powerful, in 'scraping quake': we can hear the almost ineffectual 'scrape' of rock against rock, but the **foreshadowing** of what is to come follows with '[earth]quake'.

Instantly, I know this is trouble, and instinctively, I let go of the rotating boulder to land on the round rocks below. When I look up, the backlit chockstone falling toward my head consumes the sky.

The repetition of the 'i' sound in the first sentence here is called **assonance** (repetition of vowel sounds), the repetition of the 'r' sound at the beginning of the words is called **consonance**.

⁴ *torque*: rotating force

LEARNING MATERIALS

'Consumes the sky' is a powerful image: it gives the reader the impression that the narrator is doomed. The fact this the piece is in the present tense, rather than the past tense, adds to this: if we didn't know that it's an autobiography, we would believe the narrator could die.

Fear shoots my hands over my head. I can't move backward or I'll fall over a small ledge. My only hope is to push off the falling rock and get my head out of its way.

Two short sentences illustrate the speed of what is happening. The final sentence seems impossible.

Notice the change in language in this second half of the text: 'fear' and 'hope' – such emotive word choices would not have featured in the first half.

Paragraph 6 (lines 35-41):

The next three seconds play out at a tenth of their normal speed. Time dilates, as if I'm dreaming, and my reactions decelerate.

We will look at this sentence in more detail later on in the topic. For now, consider how the use of language, punctuation and sentence construction emulates time slowing down ('dilates ... dreaming ... decelerate').

In slow motion: the rock smashes my left hand against the south wall; my eyes register the collision, and I yank my left arm back as the rock ricochets⁵; the boulder then crushes my right hand and ensnares my right arm at the wrist, palm in, thumb up, fingers extended; the rock slides another foot down the wall with my arm in tow, tearing the skin off the lateral side of my forearm. Then silence.

There is a huge amount of information given here. 'In slow motion:' is the introduction of a list of what happens, each action separated with a semi-colon. Note the use of language 'smashes', 'yank', 'ricochets', 'crushes', 'ensnares', 'tearing' ... 'Then silence.' The violence of the verb and adjective choices is reflective of what is happening as the rock falls.

Paragraph 6 (lines 42-47):

My disbelief paralyzes me temporarily as I stare at the sight of my arm vanishing into an implausibly small gap between the fallen boulder and the canyon wall.

This is the first time that the narrator has stopped: his writing, his descriptions, and inevitably his actions, have been very fast paced. The 'silence' from the previous sentence is echoed in the paralysis that the narrator now feels.

Within moments, my nervous system's pain response overcomes the initial shock. Good God, my hand. The flaring agony throws me into a panic. I grimace and growl ... My mind commands my body, 'Get your hand out of there!'

⁵ *ricochets*: bounces off

LEARNING MATERIALS

There are two instances of internal dialogue here: Good God, my hand and 'Get your hand out of there!'. Both could be in speech marks, but they aren't. The first (Good God, my hand.) is clearly internal, but the second ('Get your hand out of there!') could be spoken. The silence of the canyon would have been broken.

I yank my arm three times in a naive attempt to pull it out. But I'm stuck.

Repetition of 'yank' from the previous paragraph: this change in language is at odds with the controlled explanations that we read earlier on in this text. The first section of the writing is Ralston in control. The second section is Ralston desperate, illustrated by the connective use and definitive nature of 'But I'm stuck.'

Paragraph 7 (lines 48-56):

Anxiety has my brain tweaking; searing-hot pain shoots from my wrist up my arm. I'm frantic, and I cry out ...

To echo the despair and panic there are pauses and short clauses – the emotive use of language is in contrast to the calm and collected personae that we met in the first half of the piece.

My desperate brain conjures up a probably apocryphal⁶ story in which an adrenaline-stoked mom lifts an overturned car to free her baby. I'd give it even odds that it's made up, but I do know for certain that *right now*, while my body's chemicals are raging at full flood, is the best chance I'll have to free myself with brute force.

Does the use of challenging vocabulary (apocryphal) help or hinder the reader? How does the use of italics (*right now*) illustrate Ralston's meaning?

I shove against the large boulder, heaving against it, pushing with my left hand, lifting with my knees pressed under the rock. I get good leverage with the aid of a twelve-inch shelf in front of my feet.

We go back to a heavily descriptive and informative approach that we saw in the first part of the text. However now, it feels desperate.

Standing on that, I brace my thighs under the boulder and thrust upward repeatedly, grunting, 'Come on...move!' Nothing.

The use of language such as 'thrust' and 'grunting' is almost animalistic: we are given a very primal view of somebody working to save their life – pushing, willing... 'Nothing' – a cliff-hanger of an ending, and one which makes us want to read on. We know that this is an autobiographical piece. We want to find out how he gets out of a very tight spot.

⁶ *apocryphal*: doubtful, untrue

LEARNING MATERIALS



Activity 3: *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*

The following extract is a candidate's response to the question:

'In your own words, explain what the writer's thoughts and feelings are in paragraph 5'.

The annotations show some of the strengths in their answer:

In this paragraph the writer feels worried as he is unsure whether the stone that he is balancing on will hold. The movement of the stone alerts him to danger and he reacts quickly. He is very frightened as he watches the stone falling towards him, but he is also able to make the quick decision and react. He doesn't give up and wait for death, but thinks of what action he can take and picks the only option available to him, which is to push the stone away.

In this paragraph - the candidate addresses the question directly

unsure - the candidate focuses on specific feeling

he is also able to make the quick decision and react - the writer's thoughts are put into the candidate's own words. This shows good understanding of the text.

Using this answer as a guide, write your own answer to the following question:

1. In your own words, explain the writer's feelings and reactions in paragraph 7.



In a nutshell:

In this section we have looked at three purposes: inform, explain and review.

We have studied *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* from Part 1 of the anthology and have continued to explore how to analyse a text.

LEARNING MATERIALS

3. Writing skills: Sentences, paragraphs and structural devices



Ready, steady, go!

In this section we will look at what makes your (and other's) writing effective by focusing on the structural part of writing:

- sentences
- paragraphs
- devices and techniques that bring it all together to create a 'flow'

We will study the anthology text:

The Danger of a Single Story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Note: What you will learn in this section is applicable to Paper 1 (transactional writing) and Paper 2 (imaginative writing).

Looking at these structural elements in writing will also help your analysis of texts in Paper 1 (reading).

When examiners mark your work you are judged on the effectiveness of your writing: this is a combination of purpose, form, audience, language and structure.

In this second half of the topic, we will look at the structure of your writing first. This includes how you have constructed and varied your sentences, how you have used paragraphs, and how your piece reads as a whole.

In the following section we will look at form, audience and come back to the purposes inform, explain and review.

3.1 Sentences



Clever Cat says:

"This section on sentences is applicable to both writing questions (transactional writing on Paper 1 and imaginative writing on Paper 2). Being able to analyse sentence structure is also important for your reading questions on Paper 1."

LEARNING MATERIALS

Let's start with sentence structure. It's important to use a range of sentence types so that your writing is lively and engaging.



Essential reading: sentences

- ▶ Look again at Unit 1: English Skills, pages 10-12 ✓
- ▶ Turn to pages 34-35 of the textbook: read and make notes ✓
- ▶ Turn to pages 198-199 of the textbook: read and make notes ✓



Activity 4: sentences

Complete:

Activity 1 (p.198)

Note: Opening sentences are important, as they set the tone of the writing. They are mainly used to introduce, but they can be used to explain, attract attention, or pose a question the writing seeks to answer.

Activity 2 (p.199)



SAQ 6: *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*

Copy and complete the following table by thinking about the types of sentences used by the author, and their effects on the reader.

TYPE OF SENTENCE	EXAMPLE	EFFECT
Long complex sentences	None	
Short sentences	See answer sheet	
Incomplete sentences		



SAQ 7: *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*

Read the following extract from *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*:

LEARNING MATERIALS

The next three seconds play out at a tenth of their normal speed. Time dilates, as if I'm dreaming, and my reactions decelerate. In slow motion: the rock smashes my left hand against the south wall; my eyes register the collision, and I yank my left arm back as the rock ricochets*; the boulder then crushes my right hand and ensnares my right arm at the wrist, palm in, thumb up, fingers extended; the rock slides another foot down the wall with my arm in tow, tearing the skin off the lateral side of my forearm. Then silence.

* *ricochets*: bounces off

1. Mark where the author uses different sentence types to make the writing compelling.

Look again and the first two sentences in the extract above:

The next three seconds play out at a tenth of their normal speed. Time dilates, as if I'm dreaming, and my reactions decelerate.

In the first sentence the writer **informs** the reader. Although what he is saying is complex, the sentence structure is of a simple construction: more information than this could mean that the reader doesn't grasp what the writer is saying.

The second sentence illustrates that time has slowed down. Read the sentence out loud: 'Time dilates, as if I'm dreaming, and my reactions decelerate': here we have the use of commas to break up the clauses and to slow the reader down. The writer is using sentence structure and punctuation to make the reader pause (if only for a millisecond), by emphasising how the writer felt time was slooooooowwwing down. This is an excellent way of **explaining** not only what happened, but by using punctuation to control how the reader experiences the explanation, the writer is doubly sure that their meaning is communicated effectively.

When you are writing, think about what is going to engage your reader the most and use a simple sentence to communicate this point. For instance, in the above extract it is the quick-fire explanation of how Ralston becomes trapped, followed the short sentence: 'Then silence' that is the most compelling part of the extract. The short direct sentence is in stark contrast to the frantic explanations early on in the paragraph.

Without this final sentence the writing would be less compelling – it's the juxtaposition of the two sentence constructions that makes the writing interesting for the reader. When you're writing, always have your audience in the forefront of your mind and ask yourself, 'How will I keep them reading?'

Activity 5: sentences

► Turn to pages 140-41 of the textbook

LEARNING MATERIALS



Read the two pages: they may help to aid your understanding of what we have just looked at.

Complete the Activity 1 if you would like the practice.

***The Danger of a Single Story*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**



Things to do:

We will now read through *The Danger of a Single Story* – as you read this consider how Adichie is persuading you (throughout the speech) to agree with her final point.

► Turn to page 2 of the [anthology](#) and read the text along with the recorded version. You will need to use the unit 2 (paper 1) password to access the anthology text.



[Anthology Part 1: From *The Danger of a Single Story*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie](#)

Background and context

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian poet, novelist and social commentator. She has received a number of prestigious awards for her work, including the MacArthur Genius Grant (MacArthur Fellowship) in 2008. She left Nigeria to study, and now divides her time between living and working in both the USA and Nigeria. Adichie has been described as 'the most prominent' of a 'procession of critically acclaimed young anglophone authors [that] is succeeding in attracting a new generation of readers to African literature' (Copnall, 2011).

She is also an advocate for equality: speaking and writing about feminism, gay rights in Nigeria, as well as politics and issues of race in America. In 2017 she came under heavy criticism for her comments about transgender women¹ – highlighting how language can cause problems for those who don't necessarily mean to offend.

The Danger of a Single Story was delivered as a TED talk in 2009. TED is a not-for-profit organisation 'devoted to spreading ideas': they are renowned for their free online talks and global conferences. TED describe Adichie as:

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/mar/21/chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-nothing-to-apologise-for-transgender-women>

LEARNING MATERIALS

Inspired by Nigerian history and tragedies all but forgotten by recent generations of westerners, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels and stories are jewels in the crown of diasporan² literature ([TED](#)).

Understanding the text

In this TED talk Adichie talks about the limitations and dangers of a 'single story' view of cultures and people.

A single story is one interpretation or view of a group of people: in her talk Adichie is explaining about and discussing the construction of a stereotype or a generalisation about people – be that people's view of the poor, people from Africa, people who are stereotyped by another culture. Her message is that we can all fall into the trap of a single story, but that we must break out of that cycle for the good of all.



Activity 6: *The Danger of a Single Story*

Conduct some research to deepen your understanding

1. Watch the whole TED talk

Watching and listening to ['The danger of a single story'](#) (TED conference, 2009) will be interesting, but be aware that much of the speech has been cut (and therefore edited) for the anthology.

Consider if any of Adichie's meaning has been diluted or edited through this.

The **form** of the text is also important – what would you add in to show the reader that it is a speech and not an article?

2. Learn more about Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie:

Read an interview with her about feminism by Emma Brockes in *The Guardian*: [Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: 'Can people please stop telling me feminism is hot?' \(2017\)](#)

3. Find out about African fiction:

Read an excellent article by Ainehi Edoro in *The Guardian* on how African literature is viewed in the West (this is a must read): [How not to talk about African fiction \(2016\)](#)

4. Adichie mentions Chinua Achebe, Camara Laye and Alice Walker. Find out about these authors:

² Diaspora = people moving from their homeland. In Adichie's case, she is an African living in America and her literature reflects this.

LEARNING MATERIALS

Chinua Achebe: ‘There was a writer named Chinua Achebe,’ Nelson Mandela wrote, ‘in whose company the prison walls fell down.’
 Here you can read his obituary in [The Guardian \(2013\)](#)
 Here you can read about his most famous novel, [Things Fall Apart \(1958\)](#)
 Importantly, Achebe questioned how Western literature represented Africa through a ‘single story’. Here you can read his piece [‘An image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s ‘The Heart of Darkness’’ \(1977\)](#)
Camara Laye: Was an African Francophone (French speaking) writer from Guinea, which had been a French colony. It declared its independence from France in 1958.
 You can read about Laye on his [Wikipedia page](#).
Alice Walker: Is an African-American author, poet and activist. She wrote the critically acclaimed novel *The Color Purple*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1983. She was the first woman of colour to win the Prize in a text that ‘infuses the black experience into the Southern novel’ ([The Nation, 2015](#)).
 You can read about the novel, and Walker, in a review by Aida Edemariam in *The Guardian*: [Free Spirit \(2007\)](#)



Activity 7: The Danger of a Single Story

Complete the theme of ignorance, adding in examples and comments of your own.

THEME	QUOTATION	COMMENT
The power of stories	‘all my characters were white and blue-eyed, they played in the snow’ ‘because of writers like Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye ... It saved me from having a single story of what books are.’ ‘Many stories matter ... Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.’	These quotes highlight the importance and power of literature. It can make the reader conform to the expectations of the literature (quote 1). It can empower the reader to engage with a variety of texts, and for a writer to question what role literature has – the work of Achebe sparked a re-reading of Conrad, who was seen as a canon of literature. Perhaps to the point where Conrad has not been read in the same way again (quote 2). The power of stereotyping seeping into a collective consciousness can be caused by stories, but those stories can be rewritten.



LEARNING MATERIALS

Prejudice	'I realized that I had been so immersed in the media coverage of Mexicans that they had become one thing in my mind, the abject immigrant.'	Consider how the intrinsic racism and anti-Mexican feeling that seems to be perpetrating through American culture (thousands of people chanting 'build the wall, build the wall' during Trump's Presidency campaign for example) – to the point where Adichie (who is well aware of stereotyping) has started to believe it herself.
Ignorance		

Exploring the language

The language of this extract is **anecdotal** and **persuasive** – Adichie is using her past experiences to awaken a realisation for the audience about their own prejudices and held stereotypes. To some extent, Adichie is opening herself up here: we are seeing her weaknesses and some of her mistakes, and she is allowing us to view this so that we can see this in ourselves. She uses **narrative, detail, emotive language**, manipulates **sentence structure** and **pauses** for effect, and **comments** on her thoughts and feelings. In this way, it is a very open and self-aware speech.

LEARNING MATERIALS



SAQ 8: The Danger of a Single Story

Complete

Answer the following questions:

1. What is the effect of the gentle humour evident in paragraph 1 on the audience?
2. What effect does the repeated use of 'they' and 'we' have (lines 9-12)?
3. Adichie draws us into her childhood reading experience. In what way might being 'impressionable' make someone 'vulnerable'? What is the effect of the verb 'convinced' to describe her understanding of books at this age? (Lines 14-19)
4.
 - a. Why is it effective that she shares a personal anecdote about Fide?
 - b. How does the single story she created about Fide compare to the single story that Adichie's roommate created about her?
5. How does she use sentence structures between lines 54 and 60 to summarise the stereotypical view of Africans? What is this stereotype?
6. Explain in your own words what Adichie means by: 'show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become' (lines 73-74).
7. To what effect does Adichie use anaphora (when you repeat the same word or words when you begin a new sentence or clause) in this speech?
8. Why does Adichie use a quote by Alice Walker? What does it mean and what effect does it have on Adichie's conclusion?
9. What effect does Adichie create through her use of short sentences in her speech?

Further analysis of the text

Paragraph 1 (lines 1-5):

I'm a storyteller. And I would like to tell you a few personal stories about what I like to call "the danger of the single story."

Sets the scene straight away: the language is straightforward, informal ('I'm' rather than 'I am') and conversational. We know that this will be a 'personal story', and we are intrigued



LEARNING MATERIALS

by the potential 'danger of the single story'. Note the first person and connective used to start the second sentence.

I grew up on a university campus in eastern Nigeria.

A theme of the speech is cultural identity and stereotyping: this information given in this sentence throws up some images for the audience. Does the audience have a preconceived stereotype of Nigeria and Nigerians? Adichie's father was a lecturer at the university and her mother was the university's first female registrar.

My mother says that I started reading at the age of two, although I think four is probably close to the truth. So I was an early reader, and what I read were British and American children's books.

We get a good idea of her type of upbringing, and of the learning opportunities that she was given. She uses anecdote for humorous effect (mothers will always exaggerate about things like this).

Paragraph 2 (lines 6-10):

I was also an early writer, and when I began to write, at about the age of seven, stories in pencil with crayon illustrations that my poor mother was obligated to read, I wrote exactly the kinds of stories I was reading: all my characters were white and blue-eyed, they played in the snow, they ate apples, and they talked a lot about the weather, how lovely it was that the sun had come out.

We can relate to what she is saying, but the contrast is perhaps our experiences relating more closely with the literature we have read.

She describes that it was what she read that influenced her own early writing and illustrations, as opposed to her direct experiences.

This highlights the power of the text: a writer, particularly a child, emulates what they read. This influences their own writing and their own creations. Nobody was writing about a girl of colour with brown eyes who played in the sun, so Adichie didn't either. Without literature that is about a girl in Nigeria, a girl in Nigeria won't write about her world – she will write about somebody else's.

This isn't to say that we can only write about something that we know: what Adichie is saying is that the only story that was written about childhood was by a European. And she emulated this without understanding that she had a different story to tell.

Paragraph 3 (lines 11-13):

Now, this despite the fact that I lived in Nigeria. I had never been outside Nigeria. We didn't have snow, we ate mangoes, and we never talked about the weather, because there was no need to. ...

This paragraph contrasts neatly with the image of the white British child from paragraph two.

LEARNING MATERIALS

Paragraph 4 (lines 14-19):

What this demonstrates, I think, is how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a story, particularly as children.

The power of the story in forming cultural identity. Note the use of language 'impressionable', 'vulnerable': a story has a duty to protect.

Because all I had read were books in which characters were foreign, I had become convinced that books by their very nature had to have foreigners in them and had to be about things with which I could not personally identify.

Note the repetition of 'had' - what effect does this have on the audience?

Now, things changed when I discovered African books. There weren't many of them available, and they weren't quite as easy to find as the foreign books.

'Now,' – she is moving the story on. 'Discovered' – what a lovely choice of syntax. Like they were hidden away, she had to work to 'find' them.

Paragraph 5 (lines 20-23):

But because of writers like Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye, I went through a mental shift in my perception of literature. I realized that people like me, girls with skin the colour of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature. I started to write about things I recognized.

We are being taken on a chronological journey through Adichie finding herself in literature – a kind of awakening for her as a reader and a writer.

The reference to an Achebe and Laye here is important: for the audience this is going to have two potential effects: 1. 'A yes, Achebe and Laye – what a wonderful way to read African literature for the first time' or 2. 'O, I don't know who they are. I feel awful. I don't know enough about African literature. I must do something about that.' Whatever the internal reaction of the audience, Adichie's intention was to remind or educate about these authors: as she didn't mention the names of any Western authors when she was talking about the early books she read.

Paragraph 6 (lines 24-27):

Now, I loved those American and British books I read. They stirred my imagination. They opened up new worlds for me. But the unintended consequence was that I did not know that people like me could exist in literature. So what the discovery of African writers did for me was this: It saved me from having a single story of what books are.

LEARNING MATERIALS

The main theme of the speech is now laid out – we have been given an example of what a single story is (and the possible consequence of Adichie having a single story of herself, is that she wouldn't have become the author that she is today).

Paragraph 7 (lines 28-35):

I come from a conventional, middle-class Nigerian family. My father was a professor. My mother was an administrator. And so we had, as was the norm, live-in domestic help, who would often come from nearby rural villages. So, the year I turned eight, we got a new house boy. His name was Fide. The only thing my mother told us about him was that his family was very poor. My mother sent yams and rice, and our old clothes, to his family. And when I didn't finish my dinner, my mother would say, "Finish your food! Don't you know? People like Fide's family have nothing." So I felt enormous pity for Fide's family.

Here we are introduced to the Nigerian class system – what effect does this have on the reader?

Paragraph 8 (lines 36-41):

Then one Saturday, we went to his village to visit, and his mother showed us a beautifully patterned basket made of dyed raffia that his brother had made. I was startled. It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something. All I had heard about them was how poor they were, so that it had become impossible for me to see them as anything else but poor. Their poverty was my single story of them.

This is a very honest story, and one that many people would be ashamed to share – Adichie had a stereotype set in her mind that being poor makes somebody one dimensional.

Paragraph 9 (lines 42-47):

Years later, I thought about this when I left Nigeria to go to university in the United States. I was 19. My American roommate was shocked by me. She asked where I had learned to speak English so well, and was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She asked if she could listen to what she called my "tribal music", and was consequently very disappointed when I produced my tape of Mariah Carey.

A hilarious story that is in effect echoing Adichie's single story of Fide. The theme has changed from cultural identity, to ignorance. And ignorance is what creates a stereotype, or a 'single story'. The audience should start to question when they have assumed something like this.

Paragraph 10 (line 48):

LEARNING MATERIALS

She assumed that I did not know how to use a stove.

This is quite shocking. As a statement, and as a paragraph on its own. This contrasts with the previous paragraph lengths: this pause really emphasises what she is saying. It's not funny now. It's offensive.

Paragraph 11 (lines 49-53):

What struck me was this: She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa: a single story of catastrophe. In this single story, there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in any way, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity, no possibility of a connection as human equals. ...

'Patronizing, well-meaning pity': a very strong image is created here. Almost reminiscent of the attitude Western missionaries showed to the Africans they went to 'save' from their culture, history and identity.

Repetition of negative language here too 'no possibility' – this is very final. Like a single story can't be rewritten.

Note the ... here: you could read this as a pause, or as the editing from the original speech.

Paragraph 12 (lines 54-60):

So, after I had spent some years in the U.S. as an African, I began to understand my roommate's response to me. If I had not grown up in Nigeria, and if all I knew about Africa were from popular images, I too would think that Africa was a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner. I would see Africans in the same way that I, as a child, had seen Fide's family. ...

To understand the construction of a single story, do you need to step away from it?

A powerful use of **contrast** here (Africa as beautiful, the people as incomprehensible).

Paragraph 13 (lines 61-66):

But I must quickly add that I too am just as guilty in the question of the single story. A few years ago, I visited Mexico from the U.S. The political climate in the U.S. at the time was tense, and there were debates going on about immigration. And, as often happens in America, immigration became synonymous with Mexicans. There were endless stories of Mexicans as people who were fleeing the healthcare

LEARNING MATERIALS

system, sneaking across the border, being arrested at the border, that sort of thing.

Again her honesty is shining through: this speech is not to make a white Western audience feel shame, it is to highlight that everybody is susceptible to falling into believing a stereotype. For a reader now, rather than an audience member in 2009, this is a poignant point. Donald Trump's Presidency campaign was built on perpetuating this 'otherness' – Americans are the good guys, Mexicans are the baddies trying to take what isn't theirs. So let's build a wall. Let's isolate and protect ourselves. If so many American voters had not subscribed to the single story of Mexico and Mexicans, then perhaps the outcome of the election campaign for the 45th President of the United States could have been different.

Paragraph 14 (lines 67-72):

I remember walking around on my first day in Guadalajara, watching the people going to work, rolling up tortillas in the marketplace, smoking, laughing. I remember first feeling slight surprise. And then, I was overwhelmed with shame. I realized that I had been so immersed in the media coverage of Mexicans that they had become one thing in my mind, the abject immigrant. I had bought into the single story of Mexicans and I could not have been more ashamed of myself.

What is the effect of this list contrasted with the list in the previous paragraph?

Paragraph 15 (lines 73-74):

So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become. ...

A very strong single sentence paragraph. This is the beginning of her conclusion: she has taken us on a chronological journey through her life, showing how people create single stories (and that if there aren't many stories then children/people are isolated from their own identity). She has narrated and reflected throughout, and this one sentence paragraph is used to excellent effect: she uses repetition and patterning as a strong device to emphasise her point.

Paragraph 16 (lines 75-77):

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

'Stories', repeated six times: the repetition of 'stories' at the beginning of each clause is called **anaphora**. The **syntax** (words chosen) here is very strong: 'dispossess', 'malign', 'empower', 'humanize', 'dignity'. These word choices emphasise the power of the text. The power of the story.

LEARNING MATERIALS

Read this paragraph out loud. The meter (the beats of syllable and words) are echoed in the clauses. This is called **parallelism**, and is a way for a patterned sound to add symmetry and balance.

Paragraph 17 (lines 78-81):

The American writer Alice Walker wrote this about her Southern relatives who had moved to the North. She introduced them to a book about the Southern life that they had left behind. “They sat around, reading the book themselves, listening to me read the book, and a kind of paradise was regained.”

You first need to know who Alice Walker is, and what she wrote about to understand this final paragraph. The audience would be expected to (she is a well-known and famous author), and so the poignancy of this image would shine through. Walker is an African-American author who wrote a novel called *The Color Purple*. This novel is written about African-American girls and women living in the American South in the 1930s. It’s a violent, shocking and emotional novel about oppression, but it is a book by an African-American woman about African-American women.

The quote from Walker is from her autobiography – she is writing about when she needed to research voodoo practice amongst rural black communities in the American South in the 1930s: all of the stories about this was written by white, racist anthropologists, and this wasn’t a story she could trust. Until she found out about Zora Neale Hurston’s *Mules and Men*: a text written by somebody who knew, understood, and was immersed in the community she was writing about. She gave *Mules and Men* to her relatives to read (to test if this was a story to trust). Her relatives were:

Very regular people from the South, rapidly forgetting their Southern cultural inheritance in the suburbs and ghettos of Boston and New York, they sat around reading the book themselves, listening to me read the book, listening to each other read the book, and a kind of paradise was regained. For what Zora’s book did was this: it gave them back all the stories they had forgotten or of which they had grown ashamed ... and showed how marvelous, and, indeed, priceless, they are.

So for Walker to write this about her relatives from the South, leaving the South, and reading a book about the life they had left behind is very moving. They read the book, she read the book, they listened: they were owning their single story.

Paragraph 18 (lines 82-83):

I would like to end with this thought: That when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.

The **alliteration** of sounds and repetition of ‘paradise’ is very effective: what image does this conjure for you as a reader?

LEARNING MATERIALS



Important point:

A number of the anthology texts are American, and use American spellings (e.g. realize (US) rather than realise (UK)).

You can use either American or UK spellings in your exams but you **MUST be consistent. You won't get marked down for US spelling if always used, but you will get marked down if you swap around between the two.**

Good practice would be to use UK spellings in your writing, but to quote the US spellings correctly in your responses.

But consistency is best practice: choose an approach and stick to it.

LEARNING MATERIALS

3.2 Paragraphs



Clever Cat says:

“This section on sentences on paragraphs, PEE and structure will help you to write successful answers on all areas of your IGCSE exams.”

In your IGCSE English Language responses, each paragraph should deal with one well-developed point – this means that every paragraph should be self contained and make sense on its own.

The anagram to help you remember this is **PEE**:

P = the **Point** that you’re making

E = **Evidence** or **Example** to prove your point

E = **Explanation** or **Evaluation** to support and develop your point

This anagram will help you to ensure that your writing is always well developed, and that each paragraph has one PEE. Focusing on always doing this will mean that you will not have ‘floating’ ideas, but rather every point (Pee) will be supported (pEe) and developed (peE).



Essential reading: PEE

► Turn to pages 8-9 of the textbook: read and make notes



Activity 8: summarising using PEE

Complete:

Activity 1 (p.9)

Importantly, your paragraphs should follow on from one another – each paragraph should move your writing along, flowing effectively so that your reader can follow (and enjoy) your writing.

LEARNING MATERIALS



SAQ 9: *The Danger of a Single Story*

Complete

Read the following extract from *The Danger of a Single Story*:

Now, I loved those American and British books I read. They stirred my imagination. They opened up new worlds for me. But the unintended consequence was that I did not know that people like me could exist in literature. So what the discovery of African writers did for me was this: It saved me from having a single story of what books are. I come from a conventional, middle-class Nigerian family. My father was a professor. My mother was an administrator. And so we had, as was the norm, live-in domestic help, 30 who would often come from nearby rural villages. So, the year I turned eight, we got a new house boy. His name was Fide. The only thing my mother told us about him was that his family was very poor. My mother sent yams and rice, and our old clothes, to his family. And when I didn't finish my dinner, my mother would say, "Finish your food! Don't you know? People like Fide's family have nothing." So I felt enormous pity for Fide's family. Then one Saturday, we went to his village to visit, and his mother showed us a beautifully patterned basket made of dyed raffia that his brother had made. I was startled. It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something. All I had heard about them was how poor they were, so that it had become impossible for me to see them as anything else but poor. Their poverty was my single story of them.

1. Mark where you would start a new paragraph.
2. When you have finished, compare your version to Adichie's. Are they the same or different? Where it is the same, what is the reason for this? Where it is different, does your version still allow the writing to flow? Does that paragraph still have PEE?

Note: There are different ways to construct paragraphs and you may have a different response to Adichie. As long as there's a developed point contained within it, and there's a natural flow and link from paragraph to paragraph, then where you add the breaks (how you structure your writing) is up to you. You may find from your work on this SAQ that some paragraphing choices you agreed with, and some you didn't. As long as you can justify your choices (PEE and flow!) then this is fine.

3.3 Structure

Let's bring together what we have learned so far about sentence and paragraphing, so that we can begin to formulate a well-structured piece of writing – every piece of writing needs a beginning, middle and an end.

LEARNING MATERIALS



SAQ 10: The Danger of a Single Story

Copy and complete this table analysing the structure of *The Danger of a Single Story*.

SECTION	CONTENT	COMMENT ON RELEVANCE TO ARGUMENT
Beginning: paragraphs 1-3	Her childhood reading and writing	This introduces the key theme of stories, and shows the impact of stories on her from being very young.
Middle: paragraphs 4-6		
Middle: paragraphs 7-8		
Middle: paragraphs 9-10		
Middle: paragraphs 11-12		
Middle: paragraphs 13-15		
End: paragraphs 16-18		



Clever Cat says:

“Good structure is just as important in a piece of transactional writing, as it is in an essay response to a text, or in your imaginative writing task on Paper 2.”

LEARNING MATERIALS

3.3.1 The beginning

First, you need an introductory paragraph.



Clever Cat says:

“Remember, this is the first thing that the examiner will read. And from the very beginning, they will start to formulate an idea of what grading your writing will deserve. So a strong start is very important!”

Adichie uses strong introductory paragraph in her speech *The Danger of a Single Story*:

I’m a storyteller.¹ And I would like to tell you a few personal stories about what I like to call “the danger of the single story.”² I grew up on a university campus in eastern Nigeria.³ My mother says that I started reading at the age of two, although I think four is probably close to the truth.⁴ So I was an early reader, and what I read were British and American children’s books.⁵

Notice how it starts with a simple sentence that **informs**. This simple sentence is dramatic and engaging.

The second compound sentence begins with a connective ‘And’: using a connective to start a sentence is usually to be discouraged, but remember that Adichie has performed a speech – the form can be looser and more conversational and informal. As long as it is suited to the form and the audience it is acceptable.

Would the first sentence be as dramatic if it had just been a coordinate clause at the beginning of a complex sentence? Do you think this was a decision by the author, or by the transcript writer?

So the paragraph has followed the pattern: simple sentence; compound sentence; simple sentence: all of which inform. Then Adichie adds in a complex sentence, followed by compound sentence: both of which explain. The sentence types are varied so this makes it more interesting to read.

¹ simple sentence

² compound sentence

³ simple sentence

⁴ complex sentence

⁵ compound sentence



3.3.2 The Middle

Use **paragraphs** to develop the story or the argument.

Think of paragraphs as building blocks: each paragraph should lead smoothly into the next one and, read all together, should tell a story.

For example, imagine you are asked to write a piece informing people what to do in the event of a fire at your place of work. This is how one paragraph might lead into another:

When the fire alarm sounds, leave your belongings at your desk and make your way to the fire exit on your floor. Once you are at the fire exit, make your way down the stairs. Do not use the lifts. At the bottom of the stairs will be another fire exit that leads outside.

Once outside, make your way to the designated assembly point in the car park. The Health and Safety Officer will then take a register of names. This will be handed to the fire crew when they arrive.



SAQ 11: *The Danger of a Single Story*

1. What is the theme of the first paragraph?
2. How does it develop so that it moves smoothly into the second paragraph?



SAQ 12: *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*

Complete the following table by identifying the theme in each paragraph and the linking devices used to make the paragraphs flow.

PARA-GRAPH	THEME	DEVICE USED AND COMMENT
1	The narrator is continuing his climb down: the canyon has narrowed so that he is now in a slot.	This doesn't feel like the beginning of the story: 'I come to another drop-off.' The narrator is already descending the canyon and the reader needs to catch up. He gives lots of explanation so that a picture is created of the very tight slot he has now descended into.
2	The narrator tells us that he is accustomed to tackling challenges like this: he tells us with authority that he can	This paragraph continues the imagery associated with a slot. He tells the reader how he has successfully approached similar narrow passages. He is explaining how he has done it

LEARNING MATERIALS

	stem his body through tight spaces like this one.	in the past – he has not yet started chimneying.
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

3.3.3 The End

We have looked at the introduction and the middle of a piece of writing. You will also need a concluding paragraph. Pertinent to both your reading and writing exam questions, this section should draw all your points together.

By reading and assessing other writers' approaches, you will get lots of ideas that you could consider using in your own writing.



SAQ 13: *The Explorer's Daughter*

► Turn to the final paragraph of *The Explorer's Daughter*

1. How does her concluding paragraph tie everything together?
2. What works well about this approach?

LEARNING MATERIALS



SAQ 14: *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*

► Turn to the final paragraph of *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*

1. How does he conclude his account?
2. In what ways is this ending a cliff-hanger?
3. What works well about this approach?



SAQ 15: *The Danger of a Single Story*

► Turn to the last three paragraphs of *The Danger of a Single Story*

1. What is the point Adichie is making here?
2. What effect does the repetition of 'paradise' have on the reader?
3. Explain why this approach is effective.

As we have discussed throughout this topic, a key part to successful writing is successful reading. By looking at three different approaches to writing a conclusion you have hopefully been given lots of ideas that you can take into your own writing.

3.4 Structuring a narrative



Clever Cat says:

“Developing a good narrative structure is important for your transactional and imaginative writing tasks. Discussing it is good for your reading questions when you analyse the texts.”

When we talk about the narrative structure of a text, we need to examine how the plot as a whole works, and the effects it creates for the reader. Have a look at the way *The Explorer's Daughter* develops and consider these questions:

1. How does Herbert use paragraphs to tell the story, and why do you think she has ordered them in the way that she has?
2. What information has she given earlier on in the text so that her story develops in a certain way?
3. What emotion does she create because of the structure of her narrative?

When we talk about the narrative structure of a piece, using the correct terminology makes it easier for us to explain our ideas, it also shows the examiner that you know what you're talking about (which means you move up the marking scale). Have a look at this diagram from BBC Bitesize:

LEARNING MATERIALS

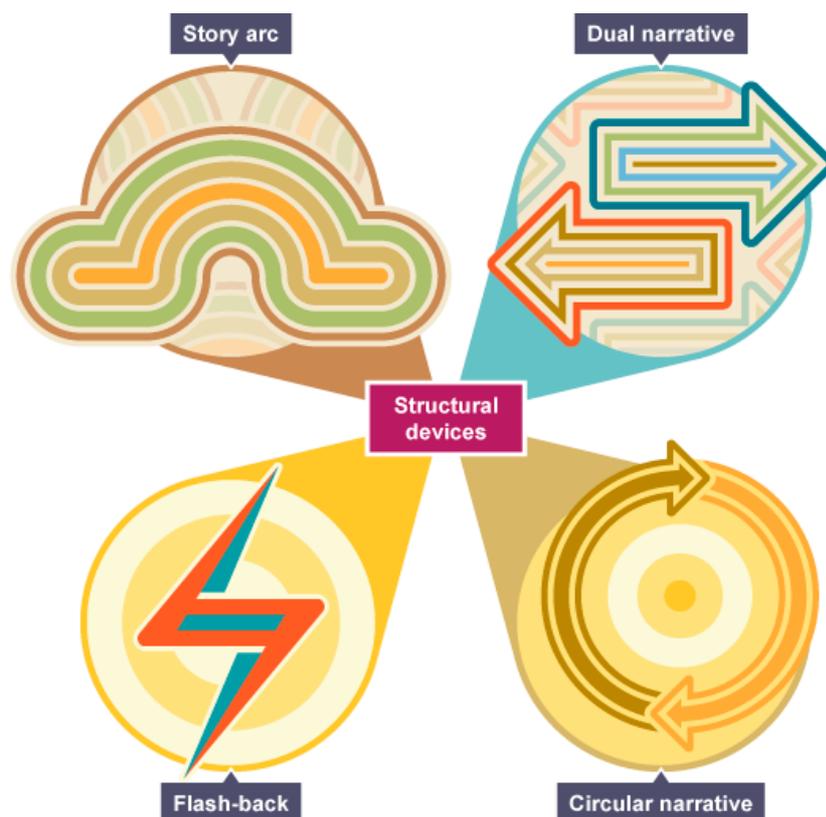


Figure 1: (Some) narrative devices

Source: Language and structure [online]. Available at:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/z2psfg8/revision/3>

STORY ARC:	this is the most common structural device, it has a beginning, middle and an end. There is usually some form of resolution at the end.
FLASH BACK:	the main story takes place at one time, but there are episodes from the past during the story. The flash-backs could be used to explain or elaborate a point that allows the main story to develop.
CIRCULAR NARRATIVE:	the last line of the text takes you back to its beginning.
DUAL NARRATIVE:	two sides of a story are given, and the text alternates between the two viewpoints. The author needs to consider the effect on the reader here: is the purpose of this structural device to persuade the reader to agree with one narrative over the other?



SAQ 16: *The Explorer's Daughter*

Which narrative devices can you find evidenced in *The Explorer's Daughter*?

Copy and complete the following table with evidence from the extract and your own analysis:

LEARNING MATERIALS

STRUCTURAL DEVICE	EVIDENCE, PURPOSE AND EFFECT ON THE READER



In a nutshell:

In this section we have looked at helping your writing come together and flow. We have done this by focusing on sentences, paragraphs (PEE) and structural techniques.

We have studied *The Danger of a Single Story* from Part 1 of the anthology and have continued to explore how to analyse a text.

LEARNING MATERIALS

4. Form, audience and techniques for purpose



Ready, steady, go!

In this section we will look at what makes your (and other's) writing effective.

We will study the anthology text:

Explorers or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill by **Steven Morris**

Note: What you will learn in this section is applicable to Paper 1 (transactional writing).

Looking at these elements will also help your analysis of texts in Paper 1 (reading).

We have looked at the **structural** elements that make writing successful. Now we will move onto form and audience. Finally, we will put everything that we have learned together as techniques for writing to inform, explain and review.

4.1 Form



Essential reading: form / genre conventions

► Look again at Unit 1: English Skills, pages 13-24

A writing's form are the layout and content conventions that make one type of writing different to another.

4.1.1 Physical layout

NEWSPAPER / MAGAZINE ARTICLES:

- Short paragraphs
- Conventional lengths (short articles = 600-800 words, full length features = approx ... 1500 words)
- Headlines and subheadings are used
- Short introductory summaries put the content into context

REVIEWS:

- On average around 300-700 words

LEARNING MATERIALS

LETTERS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses punchy or clever headlines, and sometimes subheadings <p>Formal letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writer's address in the top right corner with date underneath • Receiver's address on the left, with 'Dear ...' underneath it • If you know the name use it after 'Dear ...' and end the letter with 'Yours sincerely' • If you don't know the name use 'Dear Sirs', 'Dear Sir / Madam', 'Dear Editor' and end the letter with 'Yours faithfully' <p>Informal letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may still use the sender's address and date, but probably wouldn't use the addressee's • Start the letter using 'Dear ...', as this is a clear indication that you are writing a letter • End the letter with a casual sign off such as 'With best wishes', 'Lots of love' <p>All letters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short paragraphs • Each paragraph should use PEE • The language should be consistent and appropriate. For example in a formal letter, formal language would be used. In an informal letter, a freer use of language would be expected
SPEECHES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with a statement that shows it's a speech. For example, 'Good evening ladies and gentlemen ...' • End with a formal note of thanks, that you wouldn't get in a written piece. For example, 'Thank you all for taking the time to attend this evening: we are grateful for both your attendance and your attention ...'



Essential reading – form:

► Turn to pages 190-193 of the textbook: read and make notes on the forms discussed:

- **Writing an article**
- **Writing a review**
- **Writing letters**
- **Writing reports**
- **Writing blogs**
- **Writing information guides**

Note: if you are unsure of any of these forms, then make sure that you add them to a further reading list.

Note: 'transient' texts such as adverts and instant news feeds are not part of your syllabus and so you don't need to look at them.

LEARNING MATERIALS

4.1.2 Content

You may not always be able to give the visual clue of a piece’s physical layout in your exams, but the content will always make it clear.

For example, if a piece of writing starts with ‘Dear Sirs’ we presume it will be a formal letter. If a piece starts with ‘New Bond is licensed to bore – it’s back to the drawing board for the 007 franchise’ then it will be a review.



SAQ 17: Form

Look at the following examples of opening sections and then copy and complete the table:

Example A **Forget money – sleep is the real key to happiness**

A new study has found that getting regular good quality sleep is what leads to a person’s emotional wellbeing, finally dispelling the myth that money buys you happiness.

Example B **Dearest Rose**

I was so sorry to hear the news about your father’s accident last week. He was such a passionate and dedicated man, to whom so many of us owe so much, including our lives.

Example C **Like every good film it’s fast, furious and facetious in its detail**

And yet it left this movie lover cold – what went wrong?

Example D **Sirs,**

It is with deep regret that I tender my resignation.

	TYPE OF FORM	FEATURES OF THE FORM
A		
B		
C		
D		

In your exams you will need to make the form clear to the examiner, but you are not expected to copy the layout (such as writing headings in large letters, or drawing a picture if you’re piece is a newspaper article). What really matters is the content and it’s focus on the audience through the use of language. We’ll look at this now.

LEARNING MATERIALS

4.2 Audience



Essential reading – audience:

► Look again at Unit 1: English Skills, page 28

How you structure your writing is something for **you** to decide: you are in control! But always have your audience in mind. Who are they? And how will you make them want to continue reading?

Mixing your writing styles is one way to keep your reader engaged, but remember it is not always appropriate. Mixing information, explanation and description is appropriate in *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* because it is a first-person account of what happened to a climber in Utah. Furthermore, the purpose is to not only explain to us what happened, but to enable us to understand something that we have never experienced. This is where the description comes in.

However, if you had broken your leg at work and were filling in an accident report form, it would not be appropriate to include a vivid account of how you felt when you broke your leg! You would need to write informatively: 'I broke my leg.' And you would have to explain how it happened: 'I slipped on a floor where water had been spilled.'

In other words, you have to consider the **audience** when you are writing, and use this to decide which writing style is appropriate. The audience *must* have an impact on the language you use. For instance, writers may include technical or specific vocabulary in their writing. But it depends on their audience and whether or not they explain the vocabulary.

For example, if you are using complicated medical terms in a newspaper article you will have to explain them, because people other than doctors will read the article. However, if you were writing for a specialist medical journal there would be no need to explain the terms, because your audience – of doctors and medical experts – would be familiar with them. Fundamentally, you need to *show* the examiner that you are thinking of your audience when you write.



SAQ 18: *The Explorer's Daughter*

► Turn to *The Explorer's Daughter*.

Use the skimming and scanning techniques to find where Herbert shows that she is aware of her audience.



Essential reading: skimming and scanning

Need a bit of help with skimming and scanning?

► Look at Unit 1: English Skills (p.30)

► Turn to pages 4-5 of the textbook: read and make notes

LEARNING MATERIALS



Activity 9: skimming and scanning

Complete:

Activity 3 (p.5)

In the transactional writing section of your exam, you will need to use the question to ascertain who your audience should be. You will then need to decide how you will use language to effectively evidence that you are writing for that audience. Keep this in the forefront of your mind when you're writing.



Important point:

You need to make sure that you are *clearly* adapting your language to suit your audience.



SAQ 19: audience

Below is the type of transactional writing question you will find on your exam. Read it carefully:

'Extra curricular activities are an essential part of a young person's school experience, for which the financial funding must be maintained.'

Write an article for a school magazine giving your views on this statement.

Your article may include:

- whether the benefit of extra curricular activities outweighs the cost
- the advantages and disadvantages of funding extra curricular activities
- any other points you wish to make

Your response will be marked for the accurate and appropriate use of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and grammar.

(Total for Question = 45 marks)

- 1. If you were answering this question, who would your intended audience be, and how would you show this in your language?**

4.2.1 Examining a past exam paper question using SLAP

We will look at how to show the examiner our awareness of the audience by answering a transactional writing question from Paper 1 together. You may wish to consider *The Explorer's Daughter* when you are reading this question.

LEARNING MATERIALS



Activity 10: audience

Read the question carefully.

A newspaper has recently run a headline stating that: 'All forms of hunting are immoral and should be banned'.

Write a letter to the newspaper giving your views.

Your letter may include:

- the advantages and disadvantages of banning all forms of hunting
- whether or not all hunting is immoral and should be banned because of this
- any other points you wish to make

Your response will be marked for the accurate and appropriate use of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and grammar.

(Total for Question = 45 marks)

We will work on this together, but before we do, consider how you would make sure that the examiner knew you were adapting your writing to suit your audience.

From now on when you write, you need to have **SLAP** in the forefront of your mind:

S = Subject	"What is the subject of my writing, and how will I get that across?"
L = Language	"What language will suit and fit the form ? How will I use it? To what effect?"
A = Audience	"Who is the intended audience ?"
P = Purpose	"What is the main purpose of the writing?"

In your exams, most of this information will be given in the exam question (as we can see above):

S = Subject	your views on the morality of hunting.
L = Language	the piece's form is that is a formal letter, so should be set out accordingly, using suitable language. When you write to a newspaper, you would address it to the editor, and would use language and style that could be published in the newspaper itself.
A = Audience	the audience is both the editor, and the reader of the newspaper (if it is published).

LEARNING MATERIALS

P = Purpose to **explain** (by explaining your views).

Now, let's give our opening paragraph a go:

**Dear Editor,
You've said that you're against hunting. As a farmer, I think this is a really bad idea. Hunting helps keep pests like foxes under control. It's more immoral to let the sheep we farm die than it is to shoot a fox.**

The writing starts well with 'Dear Editor'. This shows that we are aware of our audience. But we need to sustain this awareness all the way through our piece of writing.

We'll do this by making the writing more formal. This will show the examiner that we are aware that we are writing to a newspaper and, not to a friend, and we are changing the way we write because of this:

**Dear Editor,
You have said that you are against hunting. As a farmer, I think this is a really bad idea. Hunting helps keep pests like foxes under control. It is more immoral to let the sheep we farm die than it is to shoot a fox.**

This is better.



Clever Cat says:

"Remember, with formal writing we never use abbreviations. This would be words like: you're; you've; haven't; hasn't; aren't; isn't etc."

Next we need to use a more sophisticated vocabulary:

**Dear Editor,
You have stated that you are opposed to hunting. As a farmer, I think this a terrible stance to take. Pests such as foxes are kept at bay due to hunting. It's more immoral to let our agricultural heritage die, than it is to cull vermin.**

To make absolutely sure that the examiner knows we are aware of our audience, we could mention the newspaper and its readers too:

**Dear Editor,
Your newspaper has stated that it is opposed to hunting. As a farmer, I think this a terrible stance to take. Pests such as foxes are kept at bay due to hunting, and I feel strongly that your readers need to know this. What is immoral is to see our agricultural heritage fade away whilst vermin dominate.**

Can you make it punchier? It needs to be formal enough for a newspaper, but it also needs to be compelling. In this instance, the reader would be faced with a page of 'Letters to the Editor', and you need to make sure that they keep reading yours:

LEARNING MATERIALS

**Dear Editor,
Your newspaper has stated its opposition to hunting. What a terrible stance to take! I say this as a farmer who has seen the damage pests such as foxes can cause. Your readers must be made aware of the other side of the story: the consequence of letting vermin dominate is the loss of our agricultural heritage. Surely that fulfils the definition of 'immoral' that you use so flippantly!**

Notice the short, exclamatory sentences that contrast with the longer sentences around it. Furthermore, a colon has been used to emphasise the point. By varying your sentence types you can also make your writing compelling.

Have you noticed too that the word 'immoral' has been picked from the question? Doing this gives your writing focus, and also shows the reader what you will cover in your subsequent paragraphs. Make sure that you pick out key words from the question so that your writing maintains focus on the subject and purpose.



Key points:

- **If possible, immediately show the examiner who the intended audience is through your writing's form.**
E.g. 'Dear Editor'.
- **Decide whether a formal or informal style is more appropriate, and maintain this style throughout.**
- **Show a sustained awareness of audience by adding certain lines or words that are applicable to the piece's audience.**
E.g. A letter to a newspaper: 'It is essential that your readers see the other sides of the argument too ...'
E.g. A letter to a friend: 'I remember the last time I saw you and you said ...'
- **Remember that sustaining an awareness of your audience and adapting your style accordingly, is a way of making your writing compelling. If your audience's requirements are not being met they will switch off.**



Activity 11: audience

► Turn to pages 184-187 of the textbook

Complete:

Activity 1 (p.184)

Activity 2 (pp.185-186)

Activity 3 (pp.186-187)

Activity 4 (p.187)

LEARNING MATERIALS

Explorers or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill, Steven Morris



Things to do:

We will now read through *Explorers or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill* – whilst you are reading consider the tone of the newspaper article and the opinions of the writer.

► Turn to page 8 of the [anthology](#) and read the text along with the recorded version. You will need to use the unit 2 (paper 1) password to access the anthology text.



[Anthology Part 1: From *Explorers or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill*, Steven Morris](#)

Background and context

This is an article that was originally published in *The Guardian* newspaper in 2003. It tells the story of two men rescued by the Chilean Navy when their helicopter crashed in the sea in the Antarctic.

Understanding the text

As this article was published in a newspaper it could be easy to see it purely as an informative piece – however, the author’s view is smattered throughout this piece. The key to understanding the article is to be able to find and understand how and why Morris writes in a critical and opinionated way.



SAQ 20: *Explorers or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill*

Complete the following table by finding explanations and evidence of the writer’s opinions.

THE WRITER’S OPINIONS	DEVICE USED AND COMMENT
The two explorers are presented as childish	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Smith has a nickname, which suggests a juvenile nature. When they get in trouble they phone home, like running home to their mother. Ms Vestey dismisses them as ‘boys’ and describes their behaviour as ‘messing about’. The writer highlights this in the article’s headline – the image of ‘boys messing about’ is already in the reader’s mind before they start.



LEARNING MATERIALS

<p>The writer uses irony to express his opinions.</p> <p><i>Irony is the expression of meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect.</i></p> <p><i>E.g. the world's largest dog is called Tiny.</i> <i>"Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the War Room."</i> <i>(Dr. Strangelove, 1964)</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr Smith's nickname is ironic as Q is the character from James Bond who is a technical genius. 2. 3.
<p>The two explorers are not really as expert as they claim to be.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.
<p>The Royal Navy is used to criticise the two men.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.
<p>The writer uses experts to voice his criticisms of him.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.
<p>The writer uses emotive language.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.

Further analysis of the text

Paragraph 1 (lines 1-3):

Their last expedition ended in farce when the Russians threatened to send in military planes to intercept them as they tried to cross into Siberia via the icebound Bering Strait.

Consider the purpose of this opening paragraph – it puts the article into context (they have done this before, they're not novices, but they are stupid).

The word 'farce' clearly highlights the writer's contempt, and you can almost hear the scoffing tone in Morris' voice as you read this. It is ridiculous that Russia had to threaten to send in military planes – this opening paragraph tells the reader that 'they' have made these sort of mistakes before (whatever these mistakes may be...)

Notice that we haven't been introduced to the unnamed 'explorers' yet – our view of them is being constructed through the title 'explorers or boys'. If we thought they might be

LEARNING MATERIALS

explorers in the beginning, this opening paragraph shows that we're going to be viewing them as silly boys before long.

This opening paragraph is here to get across Morris's contempt for them: it doesn't tell us about the content of the article, but it puts their stupidity into context. If this were purely an informative article, this information would not have been given.

Paragraph 2 (lines 4-5):

Yesterday a new adventure undertaken by British explorers Steve Brooks and Quentin Smith almost led to tragedy when their helicopter plunged into the sea off Antarctica.

They are named, and words like 'tragedy' and 'plunged' are used. Should we now feel sympathy for them?

Paragraph 3 (lines 6-9):

The men were plucked from the icy water by a Chilean naval ship after a nine-hour rescue which began when Mr Brooks contacted his wife, Jo Vestey, on his satellite phone asking for assistance. The rescue involved the Royal Navy, the RAF and British coastguards.

Lots more information given now:

- 9 hour rescue
- Chilean Navy
- Royal Navy
- RAF (Royal Air Force)
- British coastguards
- Brooks' wife

All involved in the rescue. Although Morris has given facts, he has piled in who was involved for comedic effect. All of this adds to the idea of a 'farce' mentioned in paragraph one.

Paragraph 4 (lines 10-11):

Last night there was resentment in some quarters that the men's adventure had cost the taxpayers of Britain and Chile tens of thousands of pounds.

Cause and effect – Morris has told us who was involved (snigger snigger), but now the reality of this is emphasised. This cost 'tens of thousands of pounds'.

Paragraph 5 (lines 12-13):

Experts questioned the wisdom of taking a small helicopter — the four-seater Robinson R44 has a single engine — into such a hostile environment.

LEARNING MATERIALS

Condescending tone here: 'experts questioned the wisdom'. 'Experts' also contrasts neatly with the 'boys'.

Paragraph 6 (lines 14-16):

There was also confusion about what exactly the men were trying to achieve. A website set up to promote the Bering Strait expedition claims the team were planning to fly from the north to south pole in their "trusty helicopter".

Condescending and indignant tone here again. Quote used for effect and emphasis of stupidity: "trusty helicopter" makes it sound like it was planned by guffawing public school lads with more money than sense.

Paragraph 7 (lines 17-18):

But Ms Vestey claimed she did not know what the pair were up to, describing them as 'boys messing about with a helicopter'.

It's Brooks' wife who has called them 'boys messing about'! What a joke.

Paragraph 8 (lines 19-21):

The drama began at around 1am British time when Mr Brooks, 42, and 40-year-old Mr Smith, also known as Q, ditched into the sea 100 miles off Antarctica, about 36 miles north of Smith Island, and scrambled into their liferaft.

In the last paragraph the wife of one of them called them 'boys', so the introduction of their ages is used to good effect here.

Bringing in Smith's nickname when describing their failure highlights the pathetic irony of it.

Paragraph 9 (lines 22-23):

Mr Brooks called his wife in London on his satellite phone. She said: 'He said they were both in the liferaft but were okay and could I call the emergency people?'

The use of the full quote here is effective: they are so useless they call a wife at 1am, in London, and ask her to contact the 'emergency people'. Consider Morris' purpose here. The quote isn't necessary to tell the factual story, but it is important to cement the view that Morris wants the reader to have of the men.

Paragraph 10 (lines 24-25):

Meanwhile, distress signals were being beamed from the ditched helicopter and from Mr Brooks' Breitling emergency watch, a wedding present.

LEARNING MATERIALS

An interesting level of information here: a Breitling emergency watch is nearly £13000 and we are being told that this was bought as a wedding present. We can ascertain then that Brooks is 1. Very well off, 2. Whoever bought him the watch (Ms Vestey?) thought he would probably need it.

Paragraph 11 (lines 26-27):

The signals from the aircraft were deciphered by Falmouth¹ coastguard and passed on to the rescue coordination centre at RAF Kinloss in Scotland.

From Cornwall to the north of Scotland – giving this information gives the image to the reader that the length of Britain is involved in this rescue.

Paragraph 12 (lines 28-30):

The Royal Navy's ice patrol ship, HMS Endurance, which was 180 miles away surveying uncharted waters, began steaming towards the scene and dispatched its two Lynx 30 helicopters.

Details are important here: the Royal Navy is now involved, it has 180 miles to cover, and launches its two Lynx helicopters.

Sibilance – 'steaming towards the scene'

Paragraph 13 (lines 31-32):

One was driven back because of poor visibility but the second was on its way when the men were picked up by a Chilean naval vessel at about 10.20am British time.

This detail about the helicopters shows the danger that the Navy had to put its crew in: this farcical story of two men 'messing about' could have ended with tragedy and real loss of life.

When they were rescued 9 hours later, an ice patrol ship, two helicopters and a Chilean navy vessel were all either there, or on their way. The ridiculousness of what has had to happen to rescue Smith and Brooks has certainly been emphasised by the writer.

Paragraph 14 (lines 33-35):

Though the pair wore survival suits and the weather at the spot where they ditched was clear, one Antarctic explorer told Mr Brooks' wife it was 'nothing short of a miracle' that they had survived.

An 'arctic explorer' – in other words, an expert, unlike her husband. The use of 'miracle' highlighting how lucky they were, and how grateful they should all be.

¹ *Falmouth*: a coastal town in Cornwall, England

LEARNING MATERIALS

Paragraph 15 (lines 36-40):

Both men are experienced adventurers. Mr Brooks, a property developer from London, has taken part in expeditions to 70 countries in 15 years. He has trekked solo to Everest base camp and walked barefoot for three days in the Himalayas. He has negotiated the white water rapids of the Zambezi river by kayak and survived a charge by a silver back gorilla in the Congo. He is also a qualified mechanical engineer and pilot.

Lots more detail, but nothing that makes us sympathise with Brooks. He clearly has lots of money, and has spent it on himself. There's no indication that he trekked solo to Everest base camp to raise money for charity, or that he went to the Congo to help protect the silverbacks in Virunga National Park, this information highlights how self-serving he is.

Paragraph 16 (lines 41-42):

He and his wife spent their honeymoon flying the helicopter from Alaska to Chile. The 16,000-mile trip took three months.

And this paragraph rounds this point off, and includes his wife in the selfishness.

Paragraph 17 (lines 43-45):

Mr Smith, also from London, claims to have been flying since the age of five. He has twice flown a helicopter around the globe and won the world freestyle helicopter flying championship.

Doubt about Smith's expertise brought into question here: 'claims'.

Paragraph 18 (lines 46-47):

Despite their experience, it is not the first time they have hit the headlines for the wrong reasons.

Circular narrative – bringing the first paragraph back into the story.

Paragraph 19 (lines 48-51):

In April, Mr Brooks and another explorer, Graham Stratford, were poised to become the first to complete a crossing of the 56-mile wide frozen Bering Strait between the US and Russia in an amphibious vehicle, Snowbird VI, which could carve its way through ice floes and float in the water in between.

Great, sounds like this was a more professional expedition then ...

LEARNING MATERIALS

Paragraph 20 (lines 52-53):

But they were forced to call a halt after the Russian authorities told them they would scramble military helicopters to lift them off the ice if they crossed the border.

... o no, perhaps not ...

Paragraph 21 (lines 54-55):

Ironically, one of the aims of the expedition, for which Mr Smith provided air back-up, was to demonstrate how good relations between east and west had become.

Irony indeed (and look, Smith and his helicopter skills were used here too!) – the tone has become particularly condescending.

Paragraph 22 (lines 56-59):

The wisdom of the team's latest adventure was questioned by, among others, Günter Endres, editor of Jane's Helicopter Markets and Systems, said: 'I'm surprised they used the R44. I wouldn't use a helicopter like that to go so far over the sea. It sounds as if they were pushing it to the maximum'.

Expert quote used here to further the point that they were stupid, naïve, more money and time than sense.

Paragraph 23 (lines 60-61):

A spokesman for the pair said it was not known what had gone wrong. The flying conditions had been 'excellent'.

This contrasts with the quote from their 'spokesman' – Smith and Brooks have no clue what happened. 'Experts indeed!' the reader says to themselves...

Paragraph 24 (lines 62-64):

The Ministry of Defence said the taxpayer would pick up the bill, as was normal in rescues in the UK and abroad. The spokesperson said it was 'highly unlikely' it would recover any of the money.

Now the crux of the story – the taxpayer has to pay for it. These men are clearly rich beyond comprehension, but we/us/everyday good people have to pay for their folly. The lack of social responsibility that these men seem to feel is highlighted, and there's nothing we can do about it.

LEARNING MATERIALS

Paragraph 25 (lines 65-69):

Last night the men were on their way to the Chilean naval base Eduardo Frei, where *HMS Endurance* was to pick them up. Ms Vestey said: ‘They have been checked and appear to be well. I don’t know what will happen to them once they have been picked up by *HMS Endurance* — they’ll probably have their bottoms kicked and be sent home the long way’.

‘bottoms kicked’ – a similar image is created for the reader as it was when they called Ms. Vestey for help (like running home to their mummy). The image of the hapless boys is the one that pervades at the end of the article.



Activity 12: Explorers or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill

Write one paragraph expressing how Morris really feels (rather than using the indirect criticisms that the writer uses in the article).

4.3 Techniques for informative writing



Activity 13: writing to inform

► Turn to pages 176 and 177 in the textbook

Complete:

Activity 1 (p.176)

Activity 2 (p.177)

4.4 Features of explanatory writing

HOW AND WHY:

An exam question that asks you to say ‘how’ and ‘why’ is asking you to explain. Likewise, a text that has a title or opening paragraph that asks ‘how’ and ‘why’ is often a piece of explanatory writing.

USE OF STRUCTURE:

The specific structural features of an ‘explain’ text are:

- clear paragraphs
- bullet points
- subheadings
- bold or underlined font
- some diagrams, graphs or images (as appropriate)
- very clear structure that has a circular narrative (the end reminds the reader of the beginning)

LEARNING MATERIALS

USE OF LANGUAGE:	<p>The specific language features of an 'explain' text are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connectives to explain cause and effect (e.g. because, therefore, moreover, consequentially) • formal or impersonal style, so that neither the author nor the reader are emotionally involved • may use technical or specialist language
-------------------------	--



Activity 14: writing to review

Read a variety of reviews.

- Film reviews**
Start your reading at [The Guardian's Film+ review page](#)
- Music reviews**
Start your reading at [The Independent's album, gig and festival review page](#)
- Book reviews**
Start your reading at [BookPage's review page](#)
- Gaming reviews**
Start your reading at [The Telegraph's gaming review page](#)

4.5 Features of reviews

PURPOSE:	<p>A review explains and describes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key features • overall qualities • effects of the product/event on the reviewer/others
FORM:	<p>It could have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a catchy title or heading • sub-headings • an opening paragraph that uses figurative language to entice the reader
USE OF STRUCTURE:	<p>The specific structural features of a review text are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear paragraphing • PEE used effectively • a score may be used at the end ('Great potential left unrealised: 3/5')

LEARNING MATERIALS

AUDIENCE:	<p>When you read examples of the four different types of reviews linked above, did you notice that the language, tone and vocabulary were different depending on the type of review, and who the reviewer's intended reader would be? If you didn't have another look at a gaming review and a book review. Compare the two.</p> <p>A review should always be very clear about who the intended reader will be – a festival lover, a film buff, a teenage boy who spends all of his time in front of his Xbox...</p>
TO NE:	<p>It always:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critiques – this means that problems are highlighted. The reviewer may say that X would have improved the experience • offers an opinion <p>Importantly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • although it is personal, every point needs to be substantiated (supported). You can't just say something without it being backed up • the review must not be biased – this isn't a sales pitch, but a reasoned piece of writing • it should be authoritative – a reviewer is employed to be the 'person in the know' <p>The tone is set by you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this is the most personal of all writing purposes, so you can set your own tone. What you choose must be consistent, so the voice that you choose needs to carry through the whole piece • formal/informal – it's up to you
USE OF LANGUAGE:	<p>The specific language features of a 'review' text are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a personal style - what you choose must be consistent, so your use of language needs to carry through your writing • use technical or specialist language confidently • you may want to create a backstory ('In this franchise's previous incarnations the character of Wilhelm Storm was one dimensional and tiresome') • use language descriptively – paint a picture for the reader • this is an opportunity to show off a wide vocabulary using lots of superlatives (look this word up and add it to your vocab list!) • connectives to explain cause and effect (e.g. because, therefore, moreover, consequentially) • a personal style, so that both the author and the reader are involved in the review

LEARNING MATERIALS

Creating your 'review' style can be described as creating your review recipe: choose what elements you will use, and practice to see what linguistic and structural ingredients go together to make an effective review.

Make sure that you read a good number of examples – see what features work well, and make notes on what techniques you can use in your reviews.



In a nutshell:

In this section we have looked at the other areas that make a piece of writing successful: form and audience. We have used SLAP and have put all of this together to collate the techniques for writing to inform, explain and review.

We have studied *Explorers or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill* from Part 1 of the anthology and have continued to explore how to analyse a text.

LEARNING MATERIALS

5. Putting it all together: exam question



Ready, steady, go!

In this section we will look at how to put everything that we have learned together to successfully answer a transactional writing exam question.

Note: What you will learn in this section is applicable to Paper 1 (transactional writing).

5.1 Planning

For all questions that expect extended answers (such as the reading questions about the anthology and unseen texts, as well as your writing questions), you will be given marks for how well-organised your writing is, so always **write a plan** before you start to help you to think about the different points you want to make.

To ensure that you construct your writing effectively, it is really important to plan. You may think that you won't have time to plan in your exam, but the answer is, make time. A response will **always** be better if you have thought through how it will work before you start – the examiner will be able to tell if a piece of writing has no real purpose. With planning you will have confidence in your ideas, and that confidence will show in your writing. For your transactional writing question, aim to spend 5-10 minutes planning.

How you plan is completely up to you – practice planning throughout your studies so that you can hone your skills and see what works best for you. Here are some ideas:

5.1.1 Spider diagrams

In a spider diagram, put the question in the middle with 'legs' coming off it where you write down main ideas or concepts, and brief notes organised under each 'leg'. Spider diagrams are an excellent way to get quick ideas down on paper.

For transactional writing, each 'leg' could be a paragraph that you will develop in your response. Link the paragraphs together so that you can see how they can flow from each other. You could always number them, so the order can be clearly followed in your writing.

Don't forget to include audience, purpose and form in your plan, so that they are at the forefront of your mind when writing. Think SLAP.

LEARNING MATERIALS



Further resources:

 [Spider diagrams - How spider diagrams can help you organize your best ideas](#)
 [Creately: Spider diagram - template](#)

5.1.2 Bullet points

A great way to fill out what you will discuss in each paragraph/section of your writing. Consider key words, linguistic features (such as rhetorical questions, metaphors, use of voice) and form in your notes. Again, seeing your ideas jotted down like this will keep you on track, and will help you to plan how your ideas will flow and connect to each other. This is a really good way of creating structure and for making sure that your beginning, middle and end are all clearly linked to each other.



Essential reading – planning:

▶ Turn to pages 202-203 of the textbook: read and make notes

5.2 The question

We will now work through the type of transactional writing question you may get in your exam, putting into practice what you have studied on this topic.

Your writing needs to meet two assessment objectives – the examiner will use these to assess your writing and award marks:

WRITING	AO4	Communicate effectively and imaginatively, adapting form, tone and register ² of writing for specific purposes and audiences.	Maximum available marks = 27
	AO5	Write clearly, using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, with appropriate paragraphing and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation.	Maximum available marks = 18



Activity 15: audience

Read the question carefully.

‘The government is going to introduce a new law making it illegal to take part in dangerous sports and other such dangerous activities.’

² Register = the language style (e.g. formal or informal)



LEARNING MATERIALS

Write an article in a travel magazine giving your views.

Your response will be marked for the accurate and appropriate use of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and grammar.

(Total for Question = 45 marks)

Notice that the question is not directing you to say whether you are in favour of the new law or not. It is entirely up to you.

You may even have mixed views (this is good, it will give you contrasting approaches to answering the question. This usually leads to a well rounded and considered piece of writing).

What you must do is explain your views, whatever they might be.

Before we begin to write, we first need to plan our writing, at least using SLAP:

S = Subject	government deciding the legality of dangerous sports and activities.
L = Language	the piece needs to explain your views. The language needs to be persuasive and compelling. The form is an article. The language will inform , explain , it may imagine the consequences of this law and seek to persuade the reader to agree with the writer.
A = Audience	the audience is the readership of the travel magazine.
P = Purpose	to explain .

An article can be constructed in a number of ways. Consider the approach that you will take, and the other purpose(s) that you may utilise in your writing. Will it:

- be an **informative argument**?
- **describe** in order to evidence what you're saying?
- **persuade** the audience to support your view?
- **explore** the pros and cons of becoming a prescriptive nanny-state?
- use a creative approach to **entertain**?
- **imagine** different scenarios to highlight how these laws would be policed?
- **advise** to conclude and consolidate your views?

Let's go through an answer to this question together. As you work through it, keep coming back to SLAP, using the assessment objectives (AOs) to assess whether the writing is successful.

LEARNING MATERIALS



Clever Cat says:

“Doing this now will practise the analytical skills that you need to assess your own writing in your exams. Make sure that you are always critical and analytical of your own work so that you can adjust and edit it successfully.”

5.2.1 The Beginning

So the Tories want to tie me down? Not a chance!

I live for extreme sports. Nothing can beat the dizzying adrenalin rush when you leap out of an aircraft and hurtle towards the ground: the feeling of unfettered freedom is unattainable in any other way. That is why I oppose this new law banning dangerous activities, and I call on all of the freedom fighters amongst you to join me in calling for this idiotic idea to be quashed.

To consider how successful this beginning is, we need to go back to the two areas that all writing tasks will be assessed on by the examiner:

WRITING	AO4	Communicate effectively and imaginatively, adapting form, tone and register of writing for specific purposes and audiences.	Maximum available marks = 27
	AO5	Write clearly, using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, with appropriate paragraphing and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation.	Maximum available marks = 18

Have we met these so far?

5.2.2 The Middle

This new law also covers dangerous sports. Ridiculous. Rugby, football, swimming? Are all these sports to be banned? It should be the decision of the parachute jumper or the athlete whether or not to take part in these dangerous pursuits. This is how athletes make their living. What will happen to the Olympics if this law comes into effect? Remember how enjoyable it is to watch the Olympians breaking records? This will stop. This law will affect us all.

LEARNING MATERIALS



Activity 16: audience

How successful is this writing?

Assess the answer by answering these questions:

1. Is there an awareness of **purpose**? Are we **explaining** our views?
 - a) Is there an awareness of **audience**?
 - b) Are the views explained **clearly**?
 - c) Are the views being explained in a **compelling** way?
2. Are **sentences** and **paragraphs** being used effectively?
 - a) Do they flow into each other?
 - b) Do they help to develop the points raised?
3. Are a **variety of sentence types** being used?
 - a) Are a variety of **writing styles** being used (if necessary)?
 - b) Can you identify a **descriptive** sentence and an **informative** one?
 - c) Is **punctuation** being used to ensure the writing is clear and compelling?

Let's carry on with the next paragraph, assessing it as we go:

I can recall vividly when I went zorbing. I emerged battered and bruised; I'd sprained an ankle and swallowed a few mouthfuls of water.

- Is there an awareness of **purpose**? Are we **explaining** our views?

No, because the **purpose** isn't clear. So let's add a line:

I can recall vividly when I went zorbing. I emerged battered and bruised; I'd sprained an ankle and swallowed a few mouthfuls of water. This law would deprive me of my right to enjoy myself!

- Is there an awareness of **audience**?

No, because the **language** shows that the **audience** has been forgotten. So let's add a line:

I can recall vividly when I went zorbing: rolling down a hill in a plastic ball, in this case with some water inside the ball. I emerged battered and bruised; I'd sprained an ankle and swallowed a few mouthfuls of water. This law would deprive me of my right to enjoy myself!

- Is a **variety of sentence types** being used?

They could be more explicitly varied. So let's add some more short, simple sentences:

I can recall vividly when I went zorbing: rolling down a hill in a plastic ball, in this case with some water inside the ball. I emerged battered and bruised; I'd

LEARNING MATERIALS

sprained an ankle and swallowed a few mouthfuls of water. **But this is part of the fun. No harm done!** This law would deprive me of my right to enjoy myself!

- Is a variety of **writing styles** being used?

There is the sentence that **explains**: **This law would deprive me of my right to enjoy myself!**

And there is a **descriptive** sentence too: **I emerged battered and bruised; I'd sprained an ankle and swallowed a few mouthfuls of water.**

This makes the writing more lively and **compelling**. Furthermore, it also shows an awareness of **purpose**. The writer has decided the best way to **explain** why they are against the law is to **describe** their injuries, in order to show that the danger involved is not important to them. The writer is willing to take the risk.

- Do the paragraphs flow into each other and do they help to develop the points raised?

No, the third paragraph would be better placed after the introduction/beginning paragraph.

This is because the third paragraph is not talking about athletes doing sports – it is still talking about the activities that the writer takes part in, which would follow on nicely from the first paragraph. Suddenly mentioning zorbing after discussing parachuting is a bit awkward.

Let's try and make the answer as a whole flow better:

So the Tories want to tie me down? Not a chance!

I live for extreme sports. Nothing can beat the dizzying adrenalin rush when you leap out of an aircraft and hurtle towards the ground: the feeling of unfettered freedom is unattainable in any other way. That is why I oppose this new law banning dangerous activities, and I call on all of the freedom fighters amongst you to join me in calling for this idiotic idea to be quashed.

What are dangerous activities anyway? How will 'dangerous' be defined? Will zorbing – where participants roll down a hill in an inflatable ball, not unlike hamsters – be classified as dangerous?

I can recall vividly when I went zorbing: rolling down a hill in a plastic ball, in this case with some water inside the ball. I emerged battered and bruised; I'd sprained an ankle and swallowed a few mouthfuls of water. But this is part of the fun. No harm done! This law would deprive me of my right to enjoy myself!

This new law also covers dangerous sports. Ridiculous. Rugby, football, swimming? Are all these sports to be banned? It should be the decision of the parachute jumper or the athletes whether or not to take part in these dangerous pursuits. This is how athletes make their living. What will happen to the Olympics if this law comes into effect? Remember how enjoyable it is to watch the Olympians breaking records. This will stop. This law will affect us all.

- Now do the paragraphs flow into each other, and do they help to develop the points raised?

LEARNING MATERIALS

Yes, the phrase ‘dangerous activities’ is in the last sentence of the first paragraph and the first sentence of the second paragraph. Thus we’ve made our paragraphs flow better.

We are also moving the piece of writing on. In other words we are developing our points:

Paragraph 1 (the introduction/beginning) establishes that the writer is against a law banning dangerous activities and parachuting can safely be classed as a dangerous activity.

Paragraph 2 (the middle) starts to consider other activities that might be classed as dangerous.

Paragraph 3 (the middle) develops the point further. Importantly, it also refers back to the question by starting to consider which sports might be classed as dangerous too. It then develops the point by considering not only athletes, but sports spectators as well.

5.2.3 The End



Clever Cat says:

“You can’t use Paragraph 3 for the conclusion because you have mentioned a new point and a new idea. So now it’s time to pick out the main points from the answer, and conclude the explanation of your views.”



SAQ 21: the end

We are now ready to write our conclusion.

- 1. Go through the answer so far, picking out the main points that you would use to round up in the conclusion.**

Remember to refer back to the question and use SLAP to help you.

- 2. Write the concluding paragraph using those main points.**

Remember to refer back to the question and use SLAP to help you.



In a nutshell:

In this section we assessed the response to a transactional writing exam question together. We have seen what assessment objectives (AOs) the examiner will use to mark your work, and we have looked at how to meet those AOs in our transactional writing.

LEARNING MATERIALS



Let's recap this topic:

In this topic, you have made a fantastic start in your IGCSE studies. We have covered a lot:

WRITING FOR PURPOSE:

- ✓ inform
- ✓ explain
- ✓ review

HOW TO WRITE EFFECTIVELY:

- ✓ audience
- ✓ language
- ✓ form
- ✓ sentences
- ✓ paragraphs
- ✓ PEE
- ✓ structure
- ✓ planning
- ✓ SLAP
- ✓ narrative structural devices
- ✓ using the AOs to assess our writing

READ AND ANALYSED FOUR ANTHOLOGY TEXTS:

- ✓ *The Explorer's Daughter*
- ✓ *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*
- ✓ *The Dangers of a Single Story*
- ✓ *Explorers or boys messing about?*

Fantastic – well done!

Have you checked your SAQ responses yet? If the answers are different then add them to your folder so that you can refer back to them during your revision.

There is now an assessment for you to complete. Your tutor will mark this and will also give you feedback to help you to improve and develop your responses.

In your next topic we will look at the remaining six non-fiction anthology texts, the other writing purposes for transactional writing and improving spelling, punctuation and grammar.

LEARNING MATERIALS

Sources and credits

Sources for these learning materials

Addison, R., et al., 2016. *Edexcel International GCSE (9-1): English Language A – Student Book*. London: Pearson

BBC Bitesize, 2017. English Language [online]. Available at:
<<https://www.bbc.co.uk/education/subjects/zr9d7ty>> [Accessed: 04/10/2017]

Pearson / Edexcel, 2016. *International GCSE English Language (Specification A) ANTHOLOGY*. London: Pearson.

---, 2016. *International GCSE English Language (Specification A) (4EA1) SPECIFICATION*. London: Pearson.

---, 2016. *International GCSE English Language (Specification A) (4EA1) GETTING STARTED GUIDE*. London: Pearson.

Teachit English, 2017. Available at: <<https://www.teachit.co.uk/>> [Accessed: 04/10/2017]

References

Copnall, J., 2011. 'Steak knife' in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 16th December. Available at: <<https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/private/steak-knife/>> [Accessed: 04/10/2017]

TED Global, 2009. *The Danger of a Single Story* [online]. Available at:
<https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story> [Accessed: 04/10/2017]

Image credits

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Section 1:
heading | https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiction#/media/File:Alice_par_John_Tenniel_30.png |
| Section 2:
heading | https://pixabay.com/en/open-book-page-pages-books-163975/ |
| Section 3:
heading | https://www.flickr.com/photos/wendelinjacober/24084122804 |
| Figure 1: | BBC Bitesize, 2016. Language and structure [online]. Available at:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/z2psfg8/revision/3 |
| Section 4:
heading | https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Findfightfollow_ml_brillen.jpg |
| Section 5:
heading | https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=30730371%22%3ELink%3C/a%3E |