

Component 1: Non-fiction Texts and Transactional Writing

‘A Passage to Africa’ from the *Pearson
Edexcel International GCSE English
Anthology*.

Exemplar responses – Summer 2023

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Examiner Overview of Question 4

This question is on Text Two, the Anthology text, and is assessed for **AO2**: Understand and analyse how writers use linguistic and structural devices to achieve their effects. It is therefore a more challenging and discriminatory question and is worth 12 marks divided over five levels.

In this examination, candidates were asked how the writer, George Alagiah, uses language and structure in the extract from *A Passage to Africa* to shock the reader.

This piece contains a very wide range of features of language and structure as exemplified in the mark scheme, but examiners were advised that these are just examples of possible points that could be made and instructed that any valid points that candidates make that are securely rooted in the text can be rewarded. There does not need to be an equal number of points on language and structure, but both should be addressed as, indeed, they were by nearly all candidates. It was evident to examiners that most candidates had a secure knowledge of this text and could approach the question with confidence and one examiner reported that 'there were few candidates who scored below 6 for this question.'

Examiners commented that the majority of responses offered at the least some understanding of the text. At the lower levels, candidates either identified features of language (and sometimes structure) but offered little explanation of their effect or described and made general comments on the text, failing to focus on how the writer shocks the reader. At this level, some candidates offered a straightforward narrative account of the text with vague observations about sentence lengths creating 'impact' or general comments such as 'the use of first-person engages the reader', 'the use of past tense makes it more credible'.

Mid-level candidates tended to work through the text, made a sound range of points and selected apt textual references for support, but often did not move on to analyse closely the impact or connotations of individual words and phrases or fully consider the effect of the structural features. At this level candidates missed the subtleties of the passage and thought, for example that the short sentence 'Habiba had died' simply indicated a lack of feeling. There was usually explanation of a range of features such as simile and parallel sentences, but some responses did not cover the whole passage and did not tackle the significance of 'the smile'.

The most successful responses dealt with the whole passage and made many insightful points, with candidates selecting their textual references judiciously from throughout the text. One examiner noted that the analysis of the impact of the smile was often a discriminator with candidates referring to 'Alagiah's epiphany moment'. Candidates at this level were also able to recognise the deliberately detached tone and the sub-text of anger and embarrassment and were precise in their use of quotations, linking different parts of the text.

There are still some candidates who spend too long on unnecessary introductions and conclusions that simply repeat the points already made; the focus should be on making a range of relevant points, not simply reiteration. Examiners noted that a number of candidates used extra sheets of paper to complete their answer to this question; this should not be necessary and candidates who write at great length here risk running out of time for the higher tariff questions.

Exemplar 1

- 4 How does the writer, George Alagiah, use language and structure in **Text Two** to shock the reader?

You should support your answer with close reference to the extract, including **brief** quotations.

(12)

~~George Alagiah starts as~~

In the start of this extract, George Alagiah uses powerful adjectives to grip the readers attention. The words 'hungry, lean, scared and betrayed' show the use of ~~imagery~~ imagery to make the reader feel the emotions that he did at the time therefore catching the readers interest. The writer then carries on in the next paragraph to describe how remote the village he was going to was. "end of the tarmac", "onto a dirt track" and "like a ghost village". This use of short sentences emphasises how remote and deserted the village was to shock the reader.

Commentary

The candidate starts with a point about 'powerful adjectives' and selects an appropriate example, although the comment about this use of 'imagery' being 'to make the readers feel the emotions that he did at the time' is not entirely convincing. Another undeveloped comment is made about the remoteness of the village. The candidate makes little progress into the text and this answer is

best-placed just into level 2. Aim to look at more than just the opening paragraphs of the text. Try to select relevant features from the whole passage.

Exemplar 2

- 4 How does the writer, George Alagiah, use language and structure in **Text Two** to shock the reader?

You should support your answer with close reference to the extract, including brief quotations.

(12)

George Alagiah uses language and structure in text two to shock the reader.

Firstly, Alagiah uses graphic imagery to bring to light the grotesque and abnormal horrors he ~~is~~^{has} faced: such as 'shattered' and 'fused'. Alagiah also uses repetition to communicate how overwhelmed he was by the situation 'It was rotting; she was rotting.' This imagery makes the reader confused, uncomfortable and shocked. This technique also makes the reader question things: how can a person be alive and rotting? It sends the reader into disbelief and shock.

Alagiah uses structure to shock the reader by using short sentences. 'like a ghost village...' This short sentence builds tension and holds

the reader in fear. His ~~short~~ longer sentences also communicate shock and build disgust. By using words such as 'sick', 'yellow eyes', 'putrid', 'recycled', 'struggling' and 'smell' *Alagiah builds up a disturbing picture for the reader which leaves them shocked and horrified as ~~the~~ these ~~sends~~ things many people ~~don~~ do not come across very often in every day life.

* All in the same sentence...

Commentary

The candidate makes points about the use of 'graphic imagery', 'repetition', 'short sentences' and 'longer sentences' which contain some strong vocabulary all being intended to shock the reader. There is some explanation and clear understanding but points, although supported by relevant references, lack development. A mark in the middle of level 3 is appropriate. To improve the response, the candidate might have explored **how** exactly the list of descriptive words selected create a 'disturbing picture'.

Exemplar 3

- 4 How does the writer, George Alagiah, use language and structure in **Text Two** to shock the reader?

You should support your answer with close reference to the extract, including brief quotations.

Alagiah uses the list of adjectives: ⁽¹²⁾ "I saw a thousand hungry, lean, scared and betrayed faces". The listing of the adjectives emphasises the condition the people he sees are in. The ~~number~~ ^{word}, "thousand" also tells the reader that this happens to a lot of people. The poor conditions, being immediately described shock the reader from the moment they start reading.

Alagiah also utilises short sentences to shock the reader. "Habiba had died.", the short sentence focuses on this fact to emphasise the terrible thing ~~but~~ that has happened, but the matter of fact and emotionless way it is told to us shocks the reader, as death is seen as a commonality here.

The author also uses sensory imagery to surprise the reader. "It was rotting; she was rotting." This makes the reader feel sorry for the

condition of the old woman ~~and~~ ^{but} the imagery of the description still disgusts and shocks the reader that someone could be left like this.

The author also use juxtaposition, he says "My reaction to everyone else I met that day was a mixture of pity and revulsion". The juxtaposition of the words "pity" and "revulsion" shocks the reader. ~~as they because, as they read it~~
The word "revulsion" by itself is also shocking because, as Adagiah says himself, talking about it is a "taboo that has yet to be breached."

Commentary

The candidate shows a clear, and at time thorough, level of understanding and makes some relevant points about the use and effect of listing adjectives, the opening of the extract, short sentences, sensory imagery and juxtaposition. The response meets all of the level 3 criteria and, whilst there is certainly scope for further development of ideas, there is just enough in the way of exploration of ideas to lift it into level 4.

To improve further, aim to make reference to the really important elements of the text; 'the smile' that affects the writer is very significant within this passage.

Exemplar 4

- 4 How does the writer, George Alagiah, use language and structure in **Text Two** to shock the reader?

You should support your answer with close reference to the extract, including brief quotations.

(12)

In this extract 'From A Passage to Africa', George Alagiah uses language and structure to shock the reader. In this text, the writer is describing his thoughts about what he witnessed as a television reporter in war-torn Somalia.

The use of hyperbolic language ('thousand hungry, lean, scared and betrayed faces') emphasises the large scale and severity of the Somalians situation whilst dealing with the brutal realities of war.

A sense of isolation and seclusion is created ~~as~~ by Alagiah through the use of alliteration ('back of beyond'), ~~as~~ the writer amplifies this by the use of vivid, descriptive imagery ('-like a ghost village'). The use of 'ghost' suggests how few people are still in Somalia as there is an absence of people, this is shocking to the reader as no-one has helped aid the situation but instead evacuated the isolating village.

The unpleasant, unfeeling descriptions about the journalists is ~~more~~ surprising for the reader as the writer himself is a journalist. The word 'ghoulish' in the quotation 'In the ghoulish manner of journalists' shows how Alagiah is self-critical and feels little emotion or sympathy for the people living in the war-torn areas. This idea ~~that~~ is further emphasised on line 11: 'craving for a drug', this conveys that the journalists are only searching for a story to benefit themselves by writing about people's life-threatening situations.

The use of emotive, hyperbolic language ~~shows~~ ('sick for days', 'reaching the final enervating stages of terminal hunger') is ~~rather shocking~~ ^{rather} shocking for the reader ~~as~~ as it ~~also~~ highlights how ~~secluded~~ ~~they~~ the 'young* girls' are from any medical care ~~as~~, no help is given to help improve their health in hope for a chance of survival. The bluntness of the quote 'Habiba had died' shows how, for the village, no-one notices as it's now a common occurrence and not deemed 'important' enough to make the headlines, ^(lamine away from the headlines) it's just an emotionless 'passing away' with 'No rage, no whimpering'.

The use of sensory language: 'smell' in the quotation 'the smell of decaying flesh' further conveys how no aid is provided for the dying, suffering families in war-torn Somalia. Followed by the ~~re~~ re-emphasis of absolute ~~a~~ illness caused by the lack of sanitation and clean facilities ('sick, yellow eyes and smell in the putrid air she recycled with every struggling breath').

The unconscious, unknowing 'smile' shows how death and illness had overtaken the subject's body ('there had been a smile, not from me, but from the face'), perhaps showing that the person's body was still hanging onto life however the soul and emotion was a profound absence ~~the~~ from the never-ending 'suffering' from utter 'deprivation'.

Nearing the end of the extract, Alagiah, in an attempt to reinstate the relationship between him, the journalist and the Somali since feeling consequently guilty ~~and~~ for not attempting to help ('my nameless friend, if you are still alive, I owe you one').

Commentary

The candidate has produced a thorough and very thoughtful answer which makes a number of relevant and wide-ranging points about language and structure. Note how this candidate examines, for example, the language of 'like a ghost village' in a way that the level 3 response does not. This response also considers Alagiah's view of his role as a journalist. All of the level 4 criteria are met but the response does not have the degree of analysis or perception needed for a mark within level 5.

Circling key words in the question can help to ensure appropriate focus.

Exemplar 5

- 4 How does the writer, George Alagiah, use language and structure in **Text Two** to shock the reader?

You should support your answer with close reference to the extract, including **brief** quotations.

(12)

One way that Alagiah shocks the reader is through his recounting of two sick girls dying of hunger. This is the first specific example that the reader is given of the suffering in Cufgadund, so is immediately very unexpected and hard-hitting. Alagiah describes the names and ages of the two suffering girls, ~~saying~~ writing that 'Habiba was ten years old and her sister, Ayaan, was nine' - these specific details immediately humanise the suffering in Cufgadund and ~~then~~ shocks the reader as the two girls are so young, yet they have experienced unimaginable suffering. Alagiah ^{then} uses a short, sharp sentence 'Habiba had died.' to convey how this is, ~~unfortunate~~ unfortunately, a part of everyday life in a place like Cufgadund, which shocks the reader. Alagiah then describes it as a 'simple, frictionless, motionless deliverance', with the triplet of adjectives emphasising the quiet death that it was, and the repeated use of 'less' to show how the girl, Habiba, lacked what the reader may take for granted, and how much she lost. This example of the death of Habiba shocks the reader through the sensitive, emotional

descriptions of the suffering Habiba and Ayman went through.

Alagiah also shocks the reader further on, through his descriptions of the suffering of an old woman, using graphic language to shock the reader with the extent and severity of her wounds. Sensory graphic language is used as Alagiah explains that the 'smell of decaying flesh' drew him to her, suggesting that the smell was very strong. The verb 'decaying' connotes death, and a semantic field of death and suffering is created through words such as 'decaying', 'festering' and 'rotting' to evoke feelings of pity from the reader, as well as great shock at the woman's terrible injuries. Alagiah then describes how 'it was rotting; she was rotting' - the repetition of 'rotting' and the extension of not simply the wound rotting but the woman as a whole rotting evokes disgust from the reader, and horror-filled shock.

Furthermore, Alagiah shocks the reader through his descriptions of being in a feeding centre. Alagiah shocks the reader here by describing in vivid detail how the human body is weakened and destroyed, to the extent that it is almost beyond recognizable. The phrase 'ripped of its natural vitality by the twin evils of hunger and disease' is very powerful, and the ^{verb} ~~verb~~ 'ripped' suggests that people no longer have control over their bodies. ~~the~~

The metaphor 'twin evils of hunger and disease' could be seen as hyperbolic, but in this case it certainly isn't, as the reader has been told about so much of the devastating destruction that hunger and disease cause.

Throughout the extract, Alagiah continually mentions the one face he will 'never forget', and this engages the reader, and the reader is eagerly waiting for the explanation of this face. Alagiah then shocks the reader ~~on~~ through his description of the smile that changed everything, as it is not a story of terrible suffering like the others - it ~~was~~ is even more than that. Alagiah uses assonance in 'fleeing meeting', to convey how briefly he saw 'the face'. This ~~later~~ shocks the reader, as in only a brief few seconds, Alagiah seems to have learnt and seen so much. Alagiah then uses ~~on~~ the metaphor 'turned the tables on that tacit agreement', with alliteration throughout the phrase, to ~~was~~ shock the reader with the effect that the smile had, the ~~all~~ alliteration serving to emphasise the power of the smile. Alagiah then uses the metaphor 'cut to the heart' to further reinforce the power of the smile, and this is emphasised to shock the reader with the comparative statement 'between me and him, between ~~the rich world~~ us and them...' ~~to~~ to convey how Alagiah was so deeply affected by the smile, shocking the reader that one simple smile had such an effect.

(Total for Question 4 = 12 marks)

Commentary

This impressive response contains a number of perceptive and insightful points and demonstrates an extremely good understanding of the impact of the 'smile'. The candidate is discriminating in their selection of references and offers some analysis of a range of language and structural features such as the use of detail, 'short, sharp sentence', 'triplet of adjectives' and repetition which are all covered on the first page. Points are often developed with close examination of word choice. The response not only considers how Alagiah is moved by what he sees but also looks at how the reader is affected by the way in which the piece is written. This fulfils all of the level 5 criteria.

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