

## Question 3 and Writing Techniques

For question **3 to 5 of the A Star exam**, you will be asked about **how the writer uses language** and how they **convey** their **message**.

Equally in **part B** of the exam, you will want to **incorporate language techniques in your own writing**.

When you asked to focus on language, it can include any of the following:

**Words/Phrases/Language Features/Language Techniques/Sentence Forms**

Equally, when you are being asked about how the writer **"convey" their message**, you can also focus on **structure, tone and tenses**.

## Language Techniques

There are many language techniques which you can mention. It is better to try and **know some terminology well** rather than trying to learn everything.

While it is very important to include **technical language** in the A Star exam, the key to scoring well is in your **analysis**.

There may be an interesting phrase in the text that you wish to focus on which you either don't know the technique of or doesn't incorporate a technique. In this case, you can just say 'the phrase .... that the writer uses...'.  
**It is better to write generally than to guess what technique is used.**

When **analysing language** in the exam, always go for the low hanging fruit, the **language you understand**. You may recognise that something is a simile but if you don't understand the language, it is not a good phrase to analyse.

Equally, whenever you analyse language, **quality of analysis** is more important than quantity. It is better to **analyse a few phrases in depth** really going into detail than listing different techniques.

### **Metaphor:**

**when a word or phrase is applied to an object or action, which is not literally true.**

**'The sea was a washing machine.'**

**In a phrase like this of course the sea is **not literally** a washing machine but a reader can understand that the sea is incredibly turbulent and that any boats in it would be tossed and turned.**

### **Simile:**

**a type of metaphor but the comparison is made using **like** or **as****

**'The wind was as sharp as knives'**

**Just like with the metaphor, this is not literal. However, a reader can understand that the wind is fierce, strong and piercing, cutting through those who are outside.**



### Hyperbole:

an **exaggeration**, often in the form of figurative language

‘the boy is a devil; I can't stand having him in my class’

In this case, the boy (student) is likely only badly behaved, not an incarnation of evil, but by using hyperbole, the sentence makes clear how difficult he is making the life of the teacher and other students. The sentence is also metaphorical; it is possible for a sentence to be more than one technique.

### Personification:

giving an **object** or a **thing human feelings or characteristics**

‘the branch waved at her, beckoning her through’

By personifying the tree, it makes it a character within the story and makes it possible for a reader to empathise. It can also add a sense of mystery and intrigue.

A type of personification when attributing human emotions to non humans is **pathetic fallacy**. However, you do not need to be so specific to pass.

A lot of students struggle with spotting personification and it is not common in non-fiction so only mention it if you are sure you have spotted it. It can be a really effective technique **to apply yourself if you choose to do question 6B.**

### **Repetition:**

This can be the **repeating** of a single **word, phrase** or **idea** in a short period or over the course of the source. In an individual sentence it is simplistic to spot but the possibility to analyse is more limited.

**‘the waves crashed and crashed into the rocks’**

In this sentence the repetition helps a reader **imagine** and hear the waves. The word **crash** is **onomatopoeia** (a word that sounds like the action)

When repetition is **over the course of the text**, it can be far more useful as it is likely to tell us a **key part of an author’s message**, something which becomes key in questions 4 and 5. Always keep your eyes out for this and this about **why an author may be repeating a phrase and idea**.



### Sensory detail:

This is writing that **appeals to a reader's senses** (touch, smell, sight, hearing, taste)

'The slimy, gooey skin of the reptile has a foul stench of rotten flesh.'

In this case, the language appeals to both touch (the adjectives slimy and gooey) and smell (foul stench of rotten flesh). All of this can help **bring writing to a life** and plays on the imagination.

### Emotive language:

This is language which tries to **invoke an emotional reaction (often sympathy)** from a reader.

'whatever they may have done, to see helpless children trapped behind bars can only invoke a sadness over how society has let them down.'

In this case, the writer is trying to **invoke the sympathy** of a reader with child prisoners by painting the unfairness of the system that has put them there.

### Rhetorical questions:

These are **questions that don't need answering** and often are intended to **invoke a planned response in a reader**.

'Given all of the evidence out there showing its negative effect on childhood obesity, how can it not be right to put a tax on sugar?'

In this case, the question is effectively trying to answer itself, trying **to persuade the reader that there is no good reason not to have this tax**.

Rhetorical questions are a simple and useful technique to use in **question 6**.

### Factual language:

Facts and figures provide **evidence** to back up a writers claims and to add **credibility** to an article.

'A recent survey has found hat 8% of the UK population is now vegan.'

The fact **informs the reader** providing them with new information.



## Language Techniques: Types of words

Beyond analysing phrases and underlying techniques, you can **analyse words** in the exam. Often this is something that second language students are more confident on than native speakers so if you are confident when something is an adjective and when it's an adverb, try to use this skill in the exam.

Speaking about individual words is most effective when you **zoom in on them after looking at phrases as a whole**. Always try to pick on words you are **confident of the meaning** of so you can use synonyms to explain them.

### Adverb:

A word that is **describing a verb**. Nearly always ends in **ly**

He played (verb) the guitar **rapidly** (adverb)

He ran (verb) down the path **quietly** (adverb)

He sung (verb) the song **majestically** (adverb)

When describing an adverb in the exam, focus on the **specific meaning** of it. We do the same with verbs (doing words)



### **Adjectives:** **words that describe nouns**

The man (noun) was absolutely **exhausted** (adjective).

The **red** (adjective) and **orange** (adjective) sunset (noun) was a sight to behold.

The **poor, young, withered** (adjectives) girl (noun) was **desperate** (adjective) for some help.

Like adverbs and verbs, we focus on the **specific meanings of adjectives** in the exam. What do they add to the story?

Beyond techniques and types of words, we can also comment on and focus on the **style of the writer**.

Marks will be gained if you can analyse and explain **why a writer has used a certain style**.

What is the **tone** of the piece?

Tone typically relates to **the mood of a piece of writing** and what emotion it makes a reader feel. There are not technical terms you have to learn for tone, **just think about how a piece of writing makes you feel as a reader and explain tone through this**. If it is **sad**, you can say the writing has a **melancholic tone**.

If it is **happy**, you could describe it as a **joyous tone**.

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### Thinking about:

- whether something is written in **present** or **past tense**,
- whether it **directly addresses** an audience and even **commands** them to do something (imperative)

**can tell us a lot about the intention of an author.**

Equally, the **blurb** (the information at the top of the text) at the top of the text tells us a lot about the **intention** of an author. It will tell us **who is writing, when they are writing and who they are writing to.**

**You can always think about if the author is influenced by the date of the piece or by their position in society or gender. This is called context.**

### Question 3

**3 )You now need to refer only to Source A from lines 26 to 35.**

**'But at that moment I glanced around at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. I looked at the sea of faces above the garish clothes – faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. And suddenly I realised that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it. Here was I, the white man with his gun, seemingly the leading actor of the piece, but in reality I was only a puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those faces behind. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing – no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me.'**

**How does the writer use language to describe the crowd of people? [12 marks]**



## Question 3

**Assessed using AO2:**

**Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views**

**This question assesses Language ie:  
Words/Phrases/Language Features/Language  
Techniques/Sentence Forms**

### Question 3 Tips

Make sure you only focus on language and take examples **from the advised lines**.

Always take the low hanging fruit in this question. **Focus on techniques or words you understand**. Only try and analyse words you are confident of the meaning of. Only name a technique or a word type if you are sure of it.

**Quality is much more important than quantity**. You're not trying to find all the language techniques or to focus on all the different words. **3 good paragraphs going into depth on 3 separate points** is more than enough.

Again make sure that you **read the question** correctly to make sure that you are **focused** directly on it and have your subject correct. Eg. One way that Orwell describes the crowd of people is with the simile 'sea of faces.'

**Adverbs** can be a very easy thing to spot and focus on as they nearly always end ly.



### Question 3 Tips

If you are not sure what technique a phrase is, it's better to write that something is a **phrase** than to guess. The main marks will come from the **quality of analysis of the language's effects rather than naming techniques.**

To add to the **flow** of your answer, it can be good to have an **introductory sentence and to try and link your separate points together.** eg: 'Throughout the passage, Orwell uses metaphorical language to show the size and emotion of the crowd. One way that he...'

Equally **a sentence at the end joining your answer together** can be useful. eg: 'all of this combines to create an image of the crowd as...'

As a general guide. This question should take around **15 minutes.**

### **Level 4 Detailed (grades 8 to 9), perceptive analysis 10-12 marks**

**Shows detailed and perceptive understanding of language:**

- a) Analyses the effects of the writer's choices of language**
- b) Selects a judicious range of textual detail**
- c) Makes sophisticated and accurate use of subject terminology**

#### **Extract from Model Answer:**

*The writer uses the metaphor 'sea of faces' to describe how the crowd of people has come together to form one single mass, each of their faces indistinguishable from one another. The image of the 'sea' suggests they have swept in behind him, almost like the tide, and are a powerful and irresistible force of nature, which he cannot withstand.*



## Level Descriptors

### Level 3 (grades 5 to 7) Clear, relevant explanation 7-9 marks

**Shows clear understanding of language:**

- a) Explains clearly the effects of the writer's choices of language**
- b) Selects a range of relevant textual detail**
- c) Makes clear and accurate use of subject terminology**

**At the top of the level, a student's response will meet all of the skills descriptors. At the bottom of the level, a student will have Level 2 and at least one of the skills descriptors.**

#### **Extract from Model Answer:**

*The writer uses the metaphor 'sea of faces' to describe how a number of individual people or 'faces' have come together into one massive group. The idea of the 'sea' suggests the huge size of the crowd and that they are moving together as one, like waves in the ocean.*

### Level 2 (grades 3 to 4) Some understanding and comment 4-6 marks

**Shows some understanding of language:**

- a) Attempts to comment on the effect of language**
- b) Selects some appropriate textual detail**
- c) Makes some use of subject terminology, mainly appropriately**

**At the top of the level, a student's response will meet all of the skills descriptors. At the bottom of the level, a student will have Level 1 and at least one of the skills descriptors.**

#### **Extract from Model Answer:**

*The writer uses lots of different language features to describe the crowd. He says they are a 'sea of faces.' This is a metaphor and makes the reader think that the crowd was as big as the sea, with so many people that he cannot count them.*



### Level 1 Simple, limited comment 1-3 marks

**Shows simple awareness of language:**

- a) Offers simple comment on the effects of language**
- b) Selects simple references or textual details**
- c) Makes simple use of subject terminology, not always appropriately**

**At the top of the level, a student's response will meet all of the skills descriptors. At the bottom of the level, a student will have at least one of the skills descriptors**

#### **Extract from Model Answer:**

*The writer describes the crowd as 'the sea of faces' because there were lots of people and when he turned round to look at them it was like looking at the sea, which is a metaphor.*



### Question 3: AO2 Content

AO2 content may include the **effect of language features** such as:

- **Facts/statistics/hyperbole** – ‘two thousand at the least’
- **Metaphor** – ‘the sea of faces’, ‘I was only a puppet’
- **Simile** – ‘as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick’
- **Colloquialism/understatement** – a ‘bit of fun’
  - **Alliteration** – ‘a puppet pushed to and fro’
- **Repetition** – ‘two thousand,’ ‘faces,’ ‘all happy and excited... all certain’
- **Extended metaphor** – ‘a conjurer about to perform a trick...the leading actor...a puppet’
- **Short sentence** – ‘The crowd would laugh at me.’
  - **Interesting word choices** – ‘immense crowd,’ ‘growing every minute,’ ‘garish clothes,’ ‘marching at my heels’
- **And the effect of any other use of language from the given lines**