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Language and structure terms

For GCSE English Language reading questions. Each term has what it means, a short example of our own, and a sentence starter for the part that earns marks: **what effect does it have?** Fill the gaps with your own words from the text.

TERM	WHAT IT MEANS	EXAMPLE	START YOUR EFFECT SENTENCE
Language terms	The words and sentences a writer chooses		
Simile	Compares one thing with another using “like” or “as”.	“The old radiator wheezed like a tired dog settling down for the night.”	The comparison to ___ helps the reader picture ___, which suggests ___.
Metaphor	Says one thing is another, to show what it is like.	“The playground was a boiling pot of shouts and elbows.”	Describing ___ as ___ makes it seem ___, which shows ___.
Personification	Gives a human action or feeling to something that is not human.	“The wind tapped politely at the shed door, then lost its patience.”	Giving ___ human qualities makes it seem ___, so the reader feels ___.
Imagery	Words that build a picture, sound, smell or feeling in the reader’s mind.	“Rain stitched silver lines down the bus window while the streetlamps blurred to orange smudges.”	This image appeals to the sense of ___, so the reader can almost ___, which creates a ___ mood.
Semantic field	A group of words that are all linked to the same idea.	“Hammering, sawing, grinding and clamping filled the workshop.”	The group of words linked to ___ builds a feeling of ___ across the text.
Connotation	The feeling or idea a word carries beyond its plain meaning. “Crept” suggests secrecy; “strolled” suggests ease.	“Dad crept down the stairs with the torch switched off.”	The word “___” suggests ___, which makes the character seem ___.
Pathetic fallacy	Weather or surroundings that mirror a mood or hint at what is coming.	“Thunder rolled over the hills just as the two brothers began to shout.”	The weather mirrors ___, which prepares the reader for ___.
Sound devices	Alliteration (repeated opening sounds), sibilance (hissing “s” sounds), onomatopoeia (words that sound like their meaning).	“The kettle hissed and spat as the steam slid up the glass.”	The repeated “___” sound creates a ___ feel, like ___.
Verb choice	The action word the writer picks. It shows how something is done.	“She snatched the letter and shredded it.”	The verb “___” shows ___, which makes the character seem ___.
Adjectives and adverbs	Adjectives describe nouns. Adverbs describe how something is done.	“The cramped, chilly room smelled faintly of damp paper.”	The adjective “___” tells us ___, which makes the place feel ___.
Sentence types	Simple (one idea), compound (ideas joined), complex (extra detail added), minor (no verb), questions and exclamations.	“Silence. Then the lights flickered, the whole building groaned and every head turned towards the door.”	The short sentence “___” slows the moment down, so ___. The long sentence builds ___.
Tone	The attitude in the voice of the writing, such as calm, bitter or playful.	“Well, that went perfectly, he muttered, watching water pour through the ceiling.”	The tone is ___ because ___, which makes the reader feel ___.
Repetition	Using the same word or phrase more than once to stress it.	“He waited. He waited, and the clock waited with him.”	The repetition of “___” stresses ___ and shows ___.
Emotive language	Words chosen to make the reader feel something strongly.	“Helpless animals are left shivering in a cold, empty yard.”	The emotive words “___” make the reader feel ___, which helps the writer argue that ___.

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TERM	WHAT IT MEANS	EXAMPLE	START YOUR EFFECT SENTENCE
Rhetorical question	A question asked for effect, not to get an answer.	“How many more Friday nights must we spend queuing for a broken machine?”	The question makes the reader think about ___ and suggests the answer is ___.
Direct address	Speaking straight to the reader, using “you”.	“You have probably walked past that empty building a hundred times.”	Speaking to the reader as “you” makes them feel ___, so they are more likely to ___.

Structure terms

How the whole text is ordered and shaped

Opening	How the text starts and what it makes the reader notice first.	“By the time the bell rang, the argument had already started.”	The writer opens with ___, which hooks the reader by ___.
Focus shift	The moment attention moves to something new: a different person, place, time or idea.	“The first paragraph describes the noisy street; the next turns to the silent flat above it.”	The focus shifts from ___ to ___, which makes the reader ___.
Zoom in and zoom out	Moving from a wide view to one small detail (zoom in), or back from a detail to the bigger picture (zoom out).	“The whole square was crowded, but he saw only the hand holding the ticket, trembling.”	Zooming in on ___ draws attention to ___, which suggests ___.
Flashback	Jumping back to an earlier time.	“As she touched the rusty key, she was seven again, in her grandad’s garden.”	The flashback to ___ reveals ___, which helps the reader understand ___.
Foreshadowing	A small clue that hints at what will happen later.	“The bridge creaked once as he stepped on, and he laughed it off.”	The detail of ___ hints that ___, which builds a sense of ___.
Cyclical structure	Ending where the text began, with the same place, image or phrase.	“The story opens and closes with the same empty bus stop in the rain.”	Returning to ___ at the end suggests that ___.
Juxtaposition and contrast	Placing opposite things side by side so each one stands out.	“Inside, the party glittered; outside, a lone figure shivered by the bins.”	The contrast between ___ and ___ highlights ___.
Pace	How fast or slow the text feels to read.	“He ran. Door. Stairs. Another door. Locked.”	The pace speeds up when ___, which creates a feeling of ___.
Paragraph and sentence length	Very short paragraphs and sentences stand out. Long ones can build up or drift.	“Three long paragraphs about the storm, then, alone on its own line: The power went out.”	The one-line paragraph isolates ___, which makes it feel ___.
Tone shift	A change of mood part-way through, such as cheerful to uneasy.	“The laughter faded as the smell of smoke drifted in.”	The mood shifts from ___ to ___ when ___, which makes the reader ___.
Narrative perspective	Who is telling it: “I” (first person) or “he, she, they” (third person).	“I never heard the door open.”	Telling it through ___ means the reader only knows ___, which creates ___.
Ending	How the text finishes: settled, surprising, or left open.	“She closed the door, and for the first time that day the house was quiet.”	The ending leaves the reader ___ because ___.

A simple recipe for one point: pick a short quotation, name the technique, say what it makes the reader picture or feel, then link it back to what the question asks. Always say the effect: naming a term on its own earns very little.

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