

№3



UNIT 5. MORE
COMPLEX
QUESTIONS/HOW
WRITERS ACHIEVE
EFFECTS

In this unit you will:

- demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes
- demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects and influence readers
- use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context

Writers use a variety of techniques to achieve a particular effect with their writing. They carefully select words and phrases to make their audience respond in a particular way. In this unit we will be looking at ways to approach tasks that ask you about how writers use these tools.

More complex comprehension questions

You might need to use your reading skills to answer questions that require more developed and longer responses. For example, you maybe asked to produce a piece of *continuous writing* in which you show your understanding of a reading passage by using details from it with a different purpose from that of the original writer and addressing a different audience.

Another type of longer question might ask you to write a detailed analysis of the writer's use of language and how it sets out to achieve a particular response in readers.

Understanding how writers achieve effects

All good writers are aware of their audience and choose their words carefully in order to persuade their readers to share their viewpoint. To do this, they pay particular attention to the tone of voice they use.

The **tone** or register of a piece of writing is produced not just by the choice of vocabulary, but also by the lengths and types of sentences used, the choice of **similes** and **metaphors** as well as the use of other literary devices such as irony, rhetorical questions, **alliteration** and so on.

Continuous writing:

Continuous writing describes something like an essay or story that is written in linked, flowing paragraphs with no sub-headings, etc. It differs from directed writing as writers express their original thoughts and ideas and do not have to follow a prescribed content and format.



Tone:

The mood implied by a piece of writing, conveyed through the writer's choice of words, sentence structures and so on.





Simile:

A descriptive comparison introduced by *like* or *as* in which one thing is compared directly to another.

▪

Metaphor:

A descriptive comparison in which one thing is expressed in terms of another unrelated object.





Irony:

The use of words to convey a meaning opposite to their literal sense.

▪

Alliteration:



The repetition of the same sound at the beginning of words in a phrase, for example the *cold, clear, call* of the *cuckoo*.



Purpose:

A writer's purpose is her/his reason for writing. It may be to entertain, persuade, inform, explain, etc.



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Audience:



The people for whom a piece of writing is intended; the spectators at a dramatic or musical performance.

Emotive language

Words have different suggested meanings depending upon the context in which they are used; professional writers are very much aware of these associations and will use them to influence the way their readers respond to what is written. For example, think about the difference between these two sentences:

'On arrival at her uncle's house, she was given a cordial welcome.'

'On arrival at her uncle's house, she was given a hearty welcome.'

Both sentences give the same basic information to the reader, but the choice of adjectives ('cordial' and 'hearty') gives the reader different impressions of the warmth of the welcome the girl received.

'Cordial' suggests something much more formal than 'hearty', although the root meaning of both words is exactly the same. ('Cordial' derives from the Latin word for heart.) A sensitive writer, however, is aware of the different suggestions of the two words (much formal language in English derives from Latin vocabulary) and will choose 'hearty' to describe a friendly reception and 'cordial' to describe a more formal greeting.

Now look at this example: it is a collection of eye-witness reports of the great earthquake that hit San Francisco on the 18th April 1906.

DESTRUCTION IN THE CITY

Businessman Jerome B. Clark lived in Berkeley across the bay from San Francisco. He experienced a minor shake-up at his home in the early morning but this did not stop him from making his regular trip to the city. He describes what he saw as he disembarked from the ferry:

'In every direction from the ferry building flames were seething, and as I stood there, a five-storey building half a block away fell with a crash, and the flames swept clear across Market Street and caught a new fireproof building recently erected. The streets in places had sunk three or four feet, in others great humps had appeared four or five feet high. The street car tracks were bent and twisted out of shape. Electric wires lay in every direction. Streets on all sides were filled with brick and mortar, buildings either completely collapsed or brick fronts had just dropped completely off. Wagons with horses hitched to them, drivers and all, lying on the streets, struck and killed by the falling bricks. Warehouses and large wholesale houses of



all descriptions either down, or walls bulging and buildings moved bodily two or three feet.

Fires were blazing in all directions, and all of the finest and best of the office and business buildings were either burning or surrounded. They pumped water from the bay, but the fire was soon too far away from the water front to make efforts in this direction of much avail. The water mains had been broken by the earthquake, and so there was no supply for the fire engines and they were helpless. The only way out was to dynamite, and I saw some of the finest and most beautiful buildings in the city,

new modern palaces, blown to atoms. First they blew up one or two buildings at a time. Finding that of no avail, they took half a block; that was no use; then they took a block; but in spite of them all the fire kept on spreading.'

A Narrow Escape

The quake awoke G.A. Raymond as he slept in his room at the Palace Hotel. He describes his escape:

'I awoke as I was thrown out of bed. Attempting to walk, the floor shook so that I fell. I grabbed my clothing and rushed down into the office, where dozens were already

congregated. Suddenly the lights went out, and every one rushed for the door.

Outside I witnessed a sight I never want to see again. It was dawn and light. I looked up. The air was filled with falling stones. People around me were crushed to death on all sides. All around the huge buildings were shaking and waving. Every moment there were reports like 100 cannons going off at one time. Then streams of fire would shoot out, and other reports followed.

I asked a man standing next to me what happened. Before he could answer a thousand bricks fell on him and he was killed. All around me buildings were rocking and flames shooting. As I ran people on all sides were

crying, praying and calling for help. I thought the end of the world had come.

I met a priest, and he said: "We must get to the ferry." He knew the way, and we rushed down Market Street. Men, women and children were crawling from the debris. Hundreds were rushing down the street and every minute people were felled by debris.

At places the streets had cracked and opened. Chasms extended in all directions. I saw a drove of cattle, wild with fright, rushing up Market Street. I crouched beside a swaying building. As they came nearer they disappeared, seeming to drop out into the earth. When the last had gone I went nearer and found they

had indeed been precipitated into the earth, a wide fissure having swallowed them. I was crazy with fear and the horrible sights.

How I reached the ferry I cannot say. It was bedlam, pandemonium and hell rolled into one. There must have been 10000 people trying to get on that boat. Men and women fought like wildcats to push their way aboard. One big, strong man, beat his head against one of the iron pillars on the dock, and cried out in a loud voice: "This fire must be put out! The city must be saved!" It was awful.

Source: The San Francisco Earthquake, 1906, EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (1997)

Exercise 1

1 (Extended Response to Reading) Imagine that you were visiting San Francisco and survived the earthquake. You were able to escape from the city on the ferry. Write a letter to your older sister telling her about your experience.

In your letter:

- give your impressions of the effects of the earthquake
- describe the suffering of the people you have met
- describe how you managed to escape from the city.

Base your letter on what you have read in the passage. Be careful to use your own words.

2 Re-read the passage and then, referring closely to the words and phrases used in the accounts, explain how they convey to his readers:

- (a) the immediate after-effects of the earthquake on San Francisco
- (b) the feelings and experiences of those who witnessed the earthquake.

Answer techniques

It is important to remember that questions of this type test both reading and writing skills and that very often the marks allotted to the reading elements are greater than those allotted to writing.

When approaching a task such as this, you should ensure that you have a clear understanding of the precise details on which you should focus in the original passage. If the questions contains bullet points (●- dot symbol) indicating key topics /see Exercise 1 above/ than it is good idea to use the bullet points in structuring your response.

Answer techniques

Questions such as question 1 require you to adopt a **persona** (in this case, that of a visitor to San Francisco) and provide you with a genre for writing (a friendly letter) and an audience to whom your writing should be addressed (an older sister).

- Remember, the letter is to a close relative so you will be expected to adopt an **informal** tone and use appropriate **salutation** and **valediction**. However, you should also keep in mind that you need to show your ability to write accurately and clearly in English in English, so your letter should not be so full of colloquial expressions.

Answer techniques

It is also highly unlikely that you will be required to put an address at the top of your letter but will simply be instructed to begin your letter with 'Dear Sister...' or something similar.



Persona:

The role or character adopted by an author.

Informal tone:

Writing that is close to colloquial expression.



Salutation:

The words used at the beginning of a letter to address the person being written to, e.g. *Dear Nanny...*

Valediction:

The words used to sign off a letter, e.g. *Yours sincerely, Yours faithfully.*

Question 2

Questions of this sort are intended to test your appreciation of the ways in which language is used to produce a particular response from a reader. They require you to explore the **suggestions** and **associations** produced in a reader's mind by the vocabulary and imagery used in the passage.

For example, the section headed *A narrow escape* contains words and phrases such as *bedlam*, *pandemonium*, *wild with fright*, *streams of fire would shoot out*, *buildings were rocking and flames shooting*. The first three examples convey impression that the effect of the earthquake was to send people and animals completely out of their minds.

The remaining three phrases which contain the words 'shoot', 'shooting' and 'felled' all suggest that the city after the earthquake was like an horrific war zone, in which the city's inhabitants had little chance of victory. The word *streams* reinforces the unnaturalness of the event, as streams are very often associated with peaceful countryside scenes.

It is important to remember that this type of question tests your ability to explain how a writer uses language to manipulate the reader's response; although the passage may contain metaphors, similes and other figures of speech, the question is not asking you simply to identify them but instead to explain their effects.

Consequently, a comment such as *there were reports like 100 cannons going off at one time* is of little value unless you continue to say how the simile helps to bring the force of the after effects of the earthquake clearly into the reader's mind and why it succeeds in engaging the reader with the passage.

**GOOD
LUCK!**