



Unit 4. Becoming a better writer.

In this unit we will be looking at the 3 main types of writing that you will come across in your studies. They are:

- writing to inform
- writing to argue
- writing imaginatively to entertain your readers

Writing to inform or explain

Writing to inform or explain is writing which is **factual**. It is important that **factual writing** is as clear as possible, whether you are explaining a situation, an activity or an interest, or providing some instructions for carrying out a task. Make sure your writing is focused and objective, clear and systematic.

Be focused and objective

Your purpose is to make the information clear to your readers, not to give them your own opinion on the subject, so stick closely to the subject and don't be tempted to add comments of your own.

Key terms

Factual: A factual piece of writing contains details that can be proved to be true.

Factual writing: Writing which explains or gives information in a straightforward, unbiased way, not influenced by the personal opinions of the writer.

Be clear and systematic

The point of an explanation is that it should be simpler and clearer than the original. Here are some techniques to help you achieve this:

- Use vocabulary that is easy to understand.
- If you are answering a directed writing extended response to reading question, be careful not just to repeat chunks of the original text; instead, find simpler ways to express the same ideas so that you are genuinely explaining them.
- Use sentences that are not too long or complicated.
- Make sure your punctuation is accurate and helpful so that readers can easily see their way from one point to the next.
- Use a new paragraph for every main point that you make: start the paragraph with a 'topic sentence' to tell your reader what the paragraph will be about and use the rest of the paragraph to develop the point.



1

Example of an
informative text



'The riddle of the Nile'

*Read the text on page 48-49 and do
the Exercise 2.*

Writing to argue or persuade

This kind of writing needs to be convincing and logical. Here are some useful techniques.

- Decide **what** you want to persuade your reader to believe. Which viewpoint are you going to put forward?
- Make 'for and against' lists: one list of the facts and ideas from the text that support your viewpoint, and another list of those which do not.
- State your chosen viewpoint simply at the beginning.
- For each main point that you make to support your viewpoint, **give evidence and examples** to back up your case- **use the text!**

- **Be balanced-** your argument will be most convincing if you make points for both sides but prove that your own chosen viewpoint is the better one. Use your 'for and against' lists.
- Use paragraphs to help you make your points clearly.
- Use persuasive phrases such as: 'It seems clear to me that ...', 'The text shows that ...', 'This example indicates that ...'.
- Use linking phrases to move between the two sides of the argument, such as; 'Nevertheless ...', 'On the other hand ...'.
- Finish by restating your viewpoint, perhaps saying also that although you can see the other point of view, you are convinced that yours is the right one.



2

Example of
persuasive writing



'Negative impact of tourism on the environment'

Read the article on page 52-53 and do the Exercise 4.

Writing imaginatively to entertain your readers

If you are writing an imaginative piece- narrating a story or writing a description, for example- because you are hoping to engage a reader's imagination and not just give factual information, you will not have to structure your piece in the same logical, argued way as for an informative or persuasive piece.

Perhaps most importantly, you need to know how your story will end before you start. You might want your ending to be surprise to your readers, but it shouldn't be a surprise to you! The beginning is important, too.

A good piece of imaginative writing is varied and inventive. Here are some ideas on how to make sure your skills in this area are clear to the reader!

- Be varied and inventive.
- Use some words which are abstract and colourful.
- Use descriptive vocabulary: **adjectives, adverbs**.
- Use **imagery**, for example, '*she grinned like a crocodile*'.
- Use **exclamations** and / or words that convey their meaning through sound. /These might be dramatic, for example, 'Thud!', 'Crash!'; or they might just be well-chosen words that convey the exact sound you have in mind, for example, 'tinkling', 'rustled'./

- Your paragraph should vary in length. An occasional very short paragraph can make a strong impact. Some paragraphs might even be just one word long, such as 'Help!'
- Your sentences should also vary in length- this is a good way to have an effect on your reader's feelings. For example, if you have just been setting a frightening scene, a short sentence such as 'We waited.' or even just 'Silence.' can be very effective.

Key terms

- ◎ **Imaginative writing**: Imaginative writing is writing that is not concerned with giving factual information but which creates a story and setting from the writer's imagination.
- ◎ **Adjective**: A word used to describe a noun, e.g. the **angry** teacher.
- ◎ **Adverb**: A word, frequently ending in –ly, that is used to describe the action expressed by a verb. Ex: The teacher shouted **angrily** at the class.

- **Imagery**: Language/such as similes/ used to create a figurative description.
- **Exclamation**: A sudden outcry or remark, usually showing surprise, anger or pain.



3

Example of
imaginative writing



SUNRISE ON THE MOON

As we saw it first it was the wildest and most desolate of scenes. We were in an enormous amphitheatre, a vast circular plain, the floor of the giant crater. Its cliff-like walls closed us in on every side. From the westward the light of the unseen sun fell upon them, reaching to the very foot of the cliff, and showed a disordered escarpment of drab and greyish rock, lined here and there with banks and crevices of snow. This was perhaps a dozen miles away, but at first no intervening atmosphere diminished in the slightest the minutely detailed brilliancy with which these things glared at us. They stood out clear and dazzling against a background of starry blackness that seemed to our earthly eyes rather a gloriously spangled velvet curtain than the spaciousness of the sky.



The eastward cliff was at first merely a starless selvedge to the starry dome. No rosy flush, no creeping pallor, announced the commencing day. Only the Corona, the Zodiacal light, a huge cone-shaped, luminous haze, pointing up towards the splendour of the morning star, warned us of the imminent nearness of the sun.

Whatever light was about us was reflected by the westward cliffs. It showed a huge undulating plain, cold and grey, a grey that deepened eastward into the absolute raven darkness of the cliff shadow. Innumerable rounded grey summits, ghostly hummocks, billows of snowy substance, stretching crest beyond crest into the remote obscurity, gave us our first inkling of the distance of the crater wall. These hummocks looked like snow. At the time I thought they were snow. But they were not – they were mounds and masses of frozen air.

So it was at first; and then, sudden, swift, and amazing, came the lunar day.

The sunlight had crept down the cliff, it touched the drifted masses at its base and came striding with seven-leagued boots towards us. The distant cliff seemed to shift and quiver, and at the touch of the dawn a reek of grey



vapour poured upward from the crater floor, whirls and puffs and drifting wraiths of grey, thicker and broader and denser, until at last the whole westward plain was steaming like a wet handkerchief held before the fire, and the westward cliffs were no more than refracted glare beyond.

'It is air,' said Cavor. 'It must be air – or it would not rise like this – at the mere touch of a sun-beam. And at this pace ...'

He peered upwards. 'Look!' he said.

'What?' I asked.

'In the sky. Already. On the blackness – a little touch of blue. See! The stars seem larger. And the little ones we saw in empty space – they are hidden!'

Swiftly, steadily, the day approached us. Grey summit after grey summit was overtaken by the blaze, and turned to a smoking white intensity. At last there was nothing to the west of us but a bank of surging fog, the tumultuous advance and ascent of cloudy haze. The distant cliff had receded farther and farther, had loomed and changed through the whirl, and foundered and vanished at last in its confusion.

Nearer came that steaming advance, nearer and nearer, coming as fast as the shadow of a cloud before the south-west wind. About us rose a thin anticipatory haze.

Cavor gripped my arm. 'What?' I said.

'Look! The sunrise! The sun!'

He turned me about and pointed to the brow of the eastward cliff, looming above the haze about us, scarce lighter than the darkness of the sky. But now its line was marked by strange reddish shapes, tongues of vermilion flame that writhed and danced. I saw, a crown of fire about the sun that is forever hidden from earthly eyes by our atmospheric veil.

And then – the sun!

Steadily, inevitably came a brilliant line, came a thin edge of intolerable effulgence that took a circular shape, became a bow, became a blazing sceptre, and hurled a shaft of heat at us as though it was a spear.

It seemed to stab my eyes! I cried aloud and turned about blinded, groping for my blanket beneath the bale.

And with that incandescence came a sound, the first sound that had reached us from without since we left the earth, a hissing and rustling, the stormy trailing of the aerial garment of the advancing day. And with the coming of the sound and the light the sphere lurched, and blinded and dazzled we staggered helplessly against each other. It lurched again, and the hissing grew louder. I shut my eyes; I was making clumsy efforts to cover my head with my blanket, and this second lurch sent me helplessly off my feet. I fell against the bale, and opening my eyes had a momentary glimpse of the air just outside our glass. It was running – it was boiling – like snow into which a white-hot rod is thrust. What had been solid air had suddenly at the touch of the sun become a paste, a mud, a slushy liquefaction, that hissed and bubbled into gas.

There came a still more violent whirl of the sphere and we had clutched one another. In another moment we were spun about again. Round we went and over, and then I was on all fours. The lunar dawn had hold of us. It meant to show us little men what the moon could do with us.

From The First Men in the Moon, H.G.Wells

Exercise: Read carefully the extract again and answer the questions.

- 1 In paragraph 1 where are the explorers and their space craft? (1 mark)
- 2 Explain, using your own words, the meaning of the following words and phrases in italics as used in the passage:
 - a) 'a *disordered escarpment* of drab and greyish rocks' (2 marks)
 - b) 'The eastward cliff was at first *merely a starless selvedge* to the starry dome.' (2 marks)
 - c) 'a thin edge of *intolerable effulgence*' (2 marks)
- 3 By referring to paragraph 3, explain, using your own words, why the explorers were able to see the scenery around them. (2 marks)
- 4 Explain fully, using your own words, the first effects of the appearance of the sun as described by the writer in paragraph 5. (4 marks)
- 5 Explain, using your own words, why the 'crown of fire' around the sun is not visible from Earth. (2 marks)
- 6 What effect does the writer achieve by the four-word paragraph, 'And then – the sun!'? (2 marks)
- 7 Explain, using your own words, the effect on the narrator of the appearance of the sun. (2 marks)
- 8 Re-read paragraphs 10–18 and then write a summary of everything that Cavor and the narrator saw as the sun rose. (7 marks)
- 9 Explain fully, using your own words, what happens to the explorers in the last two paragraphs of the extract. (3 marks)

Good luck!