

How to analyse effect in your English Language exam

“In your English language exams, you'll be asked to analyse the effect of a piece of writing. You will need to identify the language and structural choices the writer has made, and then explain the effect that the writer is trying to create. To start, you could ask yourself these questions. What effect did the specific words and phrases have on the reader? How has the writer organised the text and why? And what structural techniques and punctuation has the writer used? How do these choices make the reader feel when they are reading the text?

Here's an extract from a text we can analyse: “The girl came across an old type brighter. She hauled it out and placed it on the desk beside her laptop. It was a metallic blue, the colour of the sky in a brighter place. Instinctively she knew how to use it. She fed a sheet of paper into the roller shaped mouth and turned the silver wheel on the side of the machine to make it swallow creakily. She struck a key.”

First, let's look at some language choices the writer has used. By describing the typewriter as metallic blue, and the turning wheel as silver, the writer establishes that the typewriter looks unfamiliar, striking, and perhaps valuable. The writer also uses personification with the phrases “roller shaped mouth” and “swallowed creakily,” suggesting that the typewriter is like a person and perhaps a little frightening to look at.

Secondly, let's look at some structural techniques the writer has used. Structurally, the opening sentence creates intrigue and mystery, which makes the reader ask, who is the girl and where is she? The short sentence “She struck a key” is used for impact, focusing on the single moment in time and highlighting the action the girl makes.

This ending also leaves the reader intrigued and asking questions such as what happens next? And does the typewriter work? Remember everything in a text, the language used and the structure is a choice made by the writer. There are lots of ways you can interpret the effect a text has on you, as long as you can describe that effect and use evidence to explain it.”