

Crunched extract

advice alarmed animal anxiety appeared arms black body body butler calf carefully catastrophe catch chanced change checked clear compelled concerned confided convinced convulsed corroborated death descended discovery distance distractions door dreadful drive driving dug effect emotion emotion episode evening evening event evidently examined excited excitement explain expression eyes face facts false fatal features fingers fix followed footprints footprints footprints footsteps footsteps fresh friend gigantic glimpse gone ground hall head health health heart horror hound house however identity importance impression incident injury inquest instant instant justification large look man mind mutual narrative night observe opinion passing past physical prints remarked remember round sank serious shape shoulder small soft something standing stare state statement strangely strong sworn terrible time touched town traces tragedy trivial view voice weeks whisked whisper woman worst

1. What patterns can you spot in the language here? Which words are repeated?

You can categorise words in the grid below if you find it useful (coming up with your own headings e.g. movement, colour). Words can go in more than one box.

Once you have finished, look at your links and consider/make notes:

- What kind of atmosphere do you think the author is aiming for?
- What kind of genre are you anticipating?

19th century unseen fiction extract

This extract is taken from Chapter 2 of a novel by Arthur Conan Doyle. A character seeks help from the private detective Sherlock Holmes.

'I can well remember driving up to his house in the evening some three weeks before the fatal event. He chanced to be at his hall door. I had descended from my gig and was standing in front of him, when I saw his eyes fix themselves over my shoulder and stare past me with an expression of the most dreadful horror. I whisked round and had just time to catch a glimpse of something which I took to be a large black calf passing at the head of the drive. So excited and alarmed was he that I was compelled to go down to the spot where the animal had been and look around for it. It was gone, however, and the incident appeared to make the worst impression upon his mind. I stayed with him all the evening, and it was on that occasion, to explain the emotion which he had shown, that he confided to my keeping that narrative which I read to you when first I came. I mention this small episode because it assumes some importance in view of the tragedy which followed, but I was convinced at the time that the matter was entirely trivial and that his excitement had no justification.

'It was at my advice that Sir Charles was about to go to London. His heart was, I knew, affected, and the constant anxiety in which he lived, however chimerical the cause of it might be, was evidently having a serious effect upon his health. I thought that a few months among the distractions of town would send him back a new man. Mr Stapleton, a mutual friend who was much concerned at his state of health, was of the same opinion. At the last instant came this terrible catastrophe.

'On the night of Sir Charles's death Barrymore the butler who made the discovery, sent Perkins the groom on horseback to me, and as I was sitting up late I was able to reach Baskerville Hall within an hour of the event. I checked and corroborated all the facts which were mentioned at the inquest. I followed the footsteps down the yew alley, I saw the spot at the moor-gate where he seemed to have waited, I remarked the change in the shape of the prints after that point, I noted that there were no other footsteps save those of Barrymore on the soft gravel, and finally I carefully examined the body, which had not been touched until my arrival. Sir Charles lay on his face, his arms out, his fingers dug into the ground, and his features convulsed with some strong emotion to such an extent that I could hardly have sworn to his identity. There was certainly no physical injury of any kind. But one false statement was made by Barrymore at the inquest. He said that there were no traces upon the ground round the body. He did not observe any. But I did - some little distance off, but fresh and clear.'

'Footprints?'

'Footprints.'

'A man's or a woman's?'

Dr Mortimer looked strangely at us for an instant, and his voice sank almost to a whisper as he answered:

'Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!'

Evaluation using 'SITE'

Exam style question:

In this extract there is an attempt to build tension for the reader. Evaluate how successfully this is achieved.

Top tip: to help think about the 'big picture' and 'critical overview' in evaluation questions, you should consider some of the following elements: setting, ideas, themes and events (SITE).

2. Thinking about the Sherlock Holmes extract, identify and write down quotations from the text using these headings.

Setting	Ideas
Themes	Events

Annotation

In order to evaluate effectively, you need to think precisely about **why** a reader might experience tension as a result of some of Conan Doyle's choices.

Consider the following example, which has been annotated for you:

The setting choice of a tree-lined alley is effective as it places the narrator in a position where there is only one entrance and exit - if anything dangerous were to happen, escape routes are limited. As this is written in the first person, readers are experiencing the 'investigation' alongside him and feel anxious for his safety.

'I followed the footsteps down the yew alley, I saw the spot at the moor-gate where he seemed to have waited'

The idea of the reader attempting to solve the crime themselves is heightened by the use of the word 'seemed.' The narrator is clearly trying to make sense of the confusing crime scene and attempting to decipher the victim's last movements, and readers are cleverly manipulated to do this alongside him. Tension is built because we want to puzzle out the answer ourselves.

3. Now, have a go with the following quotation:

'... his arms out, his fingers dug into the ground, and his features convulsed with some strong emotion'

Paragraph task**4. Now, take a quotation of your own choice from your SITE table and write an evaluative paragraph exploring how successfully it creates tension.**

You should tick off the following checklist as you go:

- ☐ I have used the writer's surname.
- ☐ I have used terminology linked to SITE.
- ☐ I have used one or two short quotations to prove my point.
- ☐ I have used some evaluative vocabulary to make a clear judgement.
- ☐ I have discussed how precisely the tension is created to affect readers.
- ☐ I have included some interpretation of the quotation in reference to the question.