

5 Cohesion

What is cohesion?

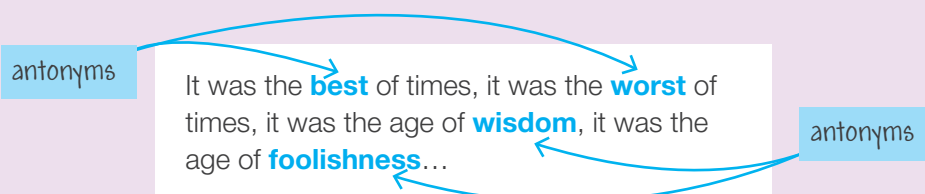
Language works at a level beyond words and sentences, and often demonstrates links and connections across a whole text. Writers shape and structure a text to make it cohesive, so that it 'sticks together'.

Cohesion can come in the form of connecting sentences through a shared theme or through paragraphing that helps to sequence ideas and establish an overall structure.

Lexical cohesion and grammatical cohesion

Lexical cohesion can involve repeated and linked vocabulary choices, such as words from the same semantic field (i.e. words that are linked in meaning) or words that have a different kind of relationship (e.g. synonyms or antonyms: words that are similar or opposite in meaning). Cohesion can also relate to grammar, where a repeated structure might be used.

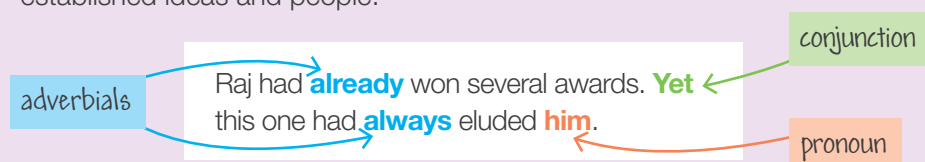
This extract from the opening of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* demonstrates both lexical cohesion and grammatical cohesion.



The grammatical cohesion is achieved through repeating the grammatical structure in each of the pairs of clauses: 'it was the **x** of times' and 'it was the age of **y**'.

Conjunctions, adverbials and pronouns

Cohesion can also be created using devices such as conjunctions that connect one clause, sentence or paragraph to another; adverbials that help sequence events; and pronouns that make reference to previously established ideas and people.



Extract from *Domestic Manners of the Americans* by Fanny Milton Trollope, published 1832

The following text is taken from a memoir by an English writer who travelled extensively in America in the early 19th century.

For many a wearisome mile above the Wolf River the only scenery was still forest – forest – forest; the only variety was produced by the **receding** of the river at some points, and its **encroaching** on the opposite shore. These changes are continually going on, but from what cause none could satisfactorily explain to me. Where the river is encroaching, the trees are seen growing in the water many feet deep; after some time, the water undermines their roots, and they become the easy victims of the first hurricane that blows. This is one source of the immense quantities of drift wood that float into the Gulf of Mexico. Where the river has receded, a young growth of **cane-brake** is soon seen starting up with the rapid vegetation of the climate; these two circumstances in some degree relieve the sameness of the thousand miles of vegetable wall. But we were now approaching the river which is emphatically called “the beautiful”, La Belle Riveriere of the New Orleans French; and a few days took us, I trust for ever, out of that murky stream which is as emphatically called “the deadly”; and well does it seem to **merit** the title; the air of its shores is **mephitic**, and it is said that nothing that ever sunk beneath its muddy surface was known to rise again.

receding moving back

merit deserve

encroaching intruding

mephitic toxic, foul-smelling

cane-brake a thicket of giant grasses

Activity 4 Understanding the text

- Which river is the writer travelling on?
- What does the scenery predominantly consist of?
- Which river is the writer approaching?

Activity 5 Exploring the writer's technique

- In the first sentence the writer repeats certain words and phrases. Underline these examples of repetition. What effect do they have on the reader?

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b) The writer opens two sentences with the clauses 'Where the river is encroaching...' and 'Where the river has receded...'

i. What kind of cohesion is at work here?

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ii. How do these clauses link to the first sentence to develop cohesion?

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c) The writer uses a range of words and phrases for the plants which grow around the river.

i. Identify three different words and phrases she uses.

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ii. What kind of cohesion is at work here?

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d) The writer refers to the river they are travelling on as 'that murky stream'. How does this phrase link to what follows in the rest of the sentence?

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e) i. Circle two examples of determiners which make reference to previously established ideas.

ii. The writer uses adverbials of time. Underline two of these and explain how they make the text more cohesive.

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Activity 6 Test your skills

On a separate piece of paper, write about a place you have visited or know well. Include some of the following cohesive techniques:

- conjunctions
- adverbials of time or place
- lexical cohesion – a range of words from the same semantic field
- grammatical cohesion such as repetition of clause structures
- determiners and pronouns which make reference to previous ideas.

You could begin:

It was the strangest of places; it was the most magical of places.