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## A Level

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Answers to activities in this book and other supporting material can be found on your free support website. Access the support website here:

www.oxfordsecondary.com/9780198445760
Genre and context

One way in which we start to understand any text that we encounter is by trying to relate it to other similar texts that we have seen before. We immediately start to think about characteristics of this text that are familiar to us. Consider, for example, the warning sign in Figure 2.1. The information given is quite simple: CAUTION TRIP HAZARD. But someone needed to design this for particular effect. In other words, even the shortest of texts have genre constraints and considerations to be borne in mind.

So how did this notice come into being? The person who created this sign probably (even if unconsciously) went through the following process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>author</th>
<th>the person in charge of public safety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>audience</td>
<td>ordinary people, hence both words and cartoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purpose</td>
<td>to warn people of the hazard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situation</td>
<td>a public place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical form</td>
<td>a bright sign, big writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constraints/rules</td>
<td>no need for salutations etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>content</td>
<td>brief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level of formality/register</td>
<td>formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>style</td>
<td>directly addresses the other person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>written language</td>
<td>doesn't need to be in sentences; emojis/cartoons could be used. Words need to be straightforward and easy to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structure</td>
<td>none required, but probably short, simple sentences or phrases or single words; needs absolute clarity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

↑ Figure 2.1 How effective is this sign?
The notice would be much less effective if it said:

_Note to users: Members of the public are advised that there is some risk of tripping up in this area._

Any good piece of writing does what it needs to do: nothing more, nothing less.

The left-hand column of the table on page 14 gives you a list of terms that are useful for the analysis of any text that you come across, and you should get in the habit of reading texts with them in mind. The important point to recognise is that, almost unconsciously, you make a large number of decisions about any text you either produce or try to interpret. This is _genre classification_, and it is a key factor in being able to make sense of a text. In very formal terms, this sort of text identification is known as _corpus linguistics_, the linking of a text to the ‘body’ of other texts with which it shares central characteristics.

There are, of course, instances of writers playing tricks with genre, using an established form in order to manipulate a reader. William Carlos Williams wrote the following: ‘This is just to say I have eaten the plums that were in the icebox and which you were probably saving for breakfast Forgive me they were delicious so sweet and so cold’. At first it seems like a casual note, in part because of its lack of punctuation. But once you know that Williams was a famous poet, it changes things considerably.

Try comparing the version above with the way that the poem appears in Williams’s _Collected Poems_ (below). You will need to think about the layout, the use of capital letters and the fact that it is typeset, not hand-written.

![Activity 2.1](image)

All of a sudden, you have to start applying the rules of genre that you know as poetry, not the rules for casual notes stuck to the fridge, and so you have to ask rather different questions of the text from those you might have originally had in mind.
As you can see, context and audience make a difference to your interpretation of a text. For example, the sentence ‘You have a green light’ is ambiguous. Without knowing the **context** (the identity of the speaker/writer, his or her intent, the **situation**) it is difficult to infer the meaning with confidence. It could mean:

- that you have a green light while driving your car and can move on
- that you can go ahead with a project (a metaphorical meaning)
- that your body has a green glow
- that you possess a light bulb that is tinted green.

This is an example where context gives the clue, of pragmatics in action.

### Activity 2.2

Select three or four texts from a variety of sources and see if you can apply the rules of genre classification to them. Remember that the texts can be quite short.

In classifying these texts, you are demonstrating some of the fundamental skills you need for this course: you are responding to a number of forms, styles and contexts and thinking about the audience that they are directed towards. You could, of course, also apply these ideas to an evening’s viewing on the television – the conventions for news broadcasts are, for example, entirely different from those of a cookery programme.

As you work, it will be clear that you are applying a series of rules in order to place the texts. They will probably be something like this:

- obvious features of form and shape – formal letters or a utility bill might be examples of this
- particular subject matter – a detective story focuses on finding out who committed the crime while a **biography** focuses on detailing the life of its subject, usually chronologically
- the writer’s attitudes or the expected response from a reader – a travel brochure is based on the reasonable understanding that the reader agrees with the writer that taking a holiday to an exotic spot is a worthwhile thing to do
- expectations over time – if you have experienced James Bond or Bollywood movies, you know what to expect when one comes on the television. In other words, you have a **prototype** (a pre-formulated model) in mind as you read, watch or listen.

It will also be clear that, as with the Williams poem, there is no such thing as a fixed number of sorts of texts and that ‘genre’ is often a flexible term. Genres can be very wide: when you categorise the natural world, vultures, albatrosses and chickens all belong to the family of birds, even though each is obviously and very significantly different from the others. Similarly there are vast numbers of different types of experience categorised as ‘smartphone apps.’
A toolbox for textual analysis

Voice and point of view

Every text you come across, unless it is mechanically generated (a bus ticket, for example), will create a relationship with the audience. It does this in part by establishing a **voice**, a personality that comes through as you read or listen. Before we go into the detail, it’s important to understand that there are two fundamental ways of creating a voice in a piece of writing. The first is when you aim to tell things from your own point of view, using the word ‘I’. This is called **first-person narrative**. You can also tell things in a rather more objective way, **third-person narrative**, where everything seems to be seen as a camera might take a picture, without prejudice and simply reporting what is seen. Both may involve you in talking about **point of view**, the stance that the narrator is taking in relation to the information he or she wants to tell you.

You can, incidentally, also write using the second person, using ‘you’, which is what this book is doing by talking to you directly on paper.

**First-person narrative**

With first-person narrative, the advantage is that the writing has a sense of immediacy – the reader gets involved with the person that is talking to them right from the beginning. Even a few words are enough to draw you in: ‘I come from Des Moines. Somebody had to’, the opening to Bill Bryson’s book *The Lost Continent: Travels in Small Town America*, leads you into thinking that you are listening to someone who has a good sense of humour. Think too about the opening of Herman Melville’s 900-page novel *Moby Dick*, where we are invited into an immediate and close relationship with the narrator with the words ‘Call me Ishmael.’
Look at the opening of the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by American writer Mark Twain and have a go at Activity 2.4.

**Activity 2.4**

What sort of person is talking to you here? What can you work out about Huck from the way in which he addresses you?

---

**Text type: prose narrative, fiction, USA**

You don’t know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; but that ain’t no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary. Aunt Polly – Tom’s Aunt Polly, she is – and Mary, and the Widow Douglas is all told about in that book, which is mostly a true book, with some stretchers, as I said before.

Now the way that the book winds up is this: Tom and me found the money that the robbers hid in the cave, and it made us rich. We got six thousand dollars apiece – all gold. It was an awful sight of money when it was piled up. Well, Judge Thatcher he took it and put it out at interest, and it fetched us a dollar a day apiece all the year round – more than a body could tell what to do with. The Widow Douglas she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn’t stand it no longer I lit out. I got into my old rags and my sugar-hogshead again, and was free and satisfied. But Tom Sawyer he hunted me up and said he was going to start a band of robbers, and I might join if I would go back to the widow and be respectable. So I went back.

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain

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**Reflecting on language data**

You might recognise that there is quite a subtle mixture of first-person and second-person narrative going on here, and that the writer is aiming for a very particular effect from this. A further point to note, of course, is that Huck is a fictional creation – his voice has been created by Mark Twain – but Twain tries hard to give the reader the impression that the narrator is quite simple, speaks truthfully and is not very educated. Although the book is a novel, it has disguised its genre to give you the impression that it is an **autobiography** (someone’s life directly written or spoken from their own experience). The text is a written text, but it’s clear that Huck thinks that he is talking directly to you from the page, almost as though this is a transcript of a live interview. Fairly obviously, as the speaker is involved in the action, his point of view is **subjective** and may be biased or slanted in order to present himself in a particular way.
Here are two more examples for you to talk about.

**Text type: prose narrative, fiction, USA**

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I’ve been turning over in my mind ever since.

“Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone,” he told me, “just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had.”

He didn’t say any more, but we’ve always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. In consequence, I’m inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores. The abnormal mind is quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of being a politician, because I was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men. Most of the confidences were unsought – frequently I have feigned sleep, preoccupation, or a hostile levity when I realized by some unmistakable sign that an intimate revelation was quivering on the horizon; for the intimate revelations of young men, or at least the terms in which they express them, are usually plagiaristic and marred by obvious suppressions. Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth. And, after boasting this way of my tolerance, I come to the admission that it has a limit. Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes, but after a certain point I don’t care what it’s founded on. When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart.

*The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

**Text type: prose narrative, fiction, UK**

It was 7 minutes after midnight. The dog was lying on the grass in front of Mrs Shears’ house. Its eyes were closed. It looked as if it was running on its side, the way dogs run when they think they are chasing a cat in a dream. But the dog was not running or asleep. The dog was dead. There was a garden fork sticking out of the dog. The points of the fork must have gone all the way through the dog and into the ground because the fork had not fallen over. I decided the dog was probably killed with the fork because I could not see any other wounds in the dog and I do not think you would stick a garden fork into a dog after it had died for some other reason, like cancer for example, or a road accident. But I could not be certain about this.
I went through Mrs Shears’ gate, closing it behind me. I walked onto her lawn and knelt beside the dog. I put my hand on the muzzle of the dog. It was still warm.

The dog was called Wellington. It belonged to Mrs Shears who was our friend. She lived on the opposite side of the road, two houses to the left.

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon

You will have noticed that as you read you are hard at work trying to make sense of the voice, to work out whether the speaker is old or young, rich or poor, clever or stupid – the list could go on. And, of course, you have to decide if you want to listen to this voice, whether you trust and like it or not. If you write in the first person, you need to be very aware that readers are conjuring up a picture of you in their minds. The advantage of the voice here is that we are allowed direct access into the thoughts of the person writing. The disadvantage is that we have no means of knowing what other people might think about the events that are being described or whether the narrator is telling the truth.

**Third-person narrative**

As we have seen, first-person narrative offers you intimacy with the speaker or writer’s voice. You can demonstrate this easily by contrasting Haddon’s narrator in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* to the opening of Charles Dickens’s novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, below.

*Text type: prose narrative, fiction, UK*

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

*A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens

Here Dickens writes as though he is omniscient, with an all-seeing eye, someone who is telling the story and has the right to observe events and comment on them in very serious tones. Sometimes the writer creates a voice that comments on the action explicitly, as here. This is called intrusive narration. Narrators who simply let the action unfold are unintrusive. If the writer seems to know everything then it can be called unrestricted narrative. On the other hand, sometimes writers limit themselves to restricted narrative, where the events unfold themselves without the writer seeming to know everything from the start. Remember, too, that writers may be trying to convey an impression of themselves as they write which may not correspond to the day-to-day characters of the writers themselves. You will also notice that a writer can choose to be objective, non-judgemental, about what is being said, or can offer a commentary in which they express some opinion, which then makes the writing subjective.
Midnight was closing in, the one-legged woman was grievously burned, and the Mumbai police were coming for Abdul and his father. In a slum hut by the international airport, Abdul’s parents came to a decision with an uncharacteristic economy of words. The father, a sick man, would wait inside the trash-strewn, tin-roofed shack where the family of eleven resided. He’d go quietly when arrested. Abdul, the household earner, was the one who had to flee.

Abdul’s opinion of this plan had not been solicited, typically. Already he was mule-brained with panic. He was sixteen years old, or maybe nineteen—his parents were hopeless with dates. Allah, in His impenetrable wisdom, had cut him small and jumpy. A coward: Abdul said it of himself. He knew nothing about eluding policemen. What he knew about, mainly, was trash. For nearly all the waking hours of nearly all the years he could remember, he’d been buying and selling to recyclers the things that richer people threw away.

Now Abdul grasped the need to disappear, but beyond that his imagination flagged. He took off running, then came back home. The only place he could think to hide was in his garbage.

He cracked the door of the family hut and looked out. His home sat midway down a row of hand-built, spatchcock dwellings; the lop-sided shed where he stowed his trash was just next door. To reach this shed unseen would deprive his neighbors of the pleasure of turning him in to the police.

He didn’t like the moon, though: full and stupid bright, illuminating a dusty open lot in front of his home. Across the lot were the shacks of two dozen other families, and Abdul feared he wasn’t the only person peering out from behind the cover of a plywood door. Some people in this slum wished his family ill because of the old Hindu–Muslim resentments.

The open lot was quiet, at least—freakishly so. A kind of beach-front for a vast pool of sewage that marked the slum’s eastern border, the place was bedlam most nights: people fighting, cooking, flirting, bathing, tending goats, playing cricket, waiting for water at a public tap … The pressures that built up in crowded huts on narrow slum lanes had only this place, the maidan, to escape. But after the fight, and the burning of the woman called the One Leg, people had retreated to their huts.

Now, among the … water buffalo … there seemed to be just one watchful presence: a small, unspookable boy from Nepal. He was sitting, arms around knees, in a spangly blue haze by the sewage lake—the reflected neon signage of a luxury hotel across the water. Abdul didn’t mind if the Nepali boy saw him go into hiding. This kid, Adarsh, was no spy for the police. He just liked to stay out late, to avoid his mother and her nightly rages.

It was as safe a moment as Abdul was going to get. He bolted for the trash shed and closed the door behind him.

Inside was carbon-black, frantic with rats, and yet relieving. His storeroom—120 square feet, piled high to a leaky roof with the things in this world Abdul knew how to handle. Empty water … bottles, mildewed newspapers …, wadded aluminum foil, umbrellas stripped to the ribs by monsoons, broken shoe-laces, yellowed Q-tips, snarled cassette tape, torn plastic casings that once held imitation Barbies. Somewhere in the darkness, there was a Berbee or Barbie itself, maimed in one of the experiments to which children who had many toys seemed to subject those toys no longer favored.

*Behind the Beautiful Forevers* by Katherine Boo
Another technique that a third-person writer can use is to give you partial insight into what one of the characters or participants is thinking, or how he or she is responding to a situation. The voice is external, but we are seeing the situation through the eyes of a character. The opening of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s novel *Half of A Yellow Sun*, set during the civil war in Nigeria, offers a fine example.

**Text type: prose narrative, fiction, Nigeria**

Master was a little crazy; he had spent too many years reading books overseas, talked to himself in his office, did not always return greetings, and had too much hair. Ugwu’s aunty said this in a low voice as they walked on the path. “But he is a good man,” she added. “And as long as you work well, you will eat well. You will even eat meat every day.” She stopped to spit; the saliva left her mouth with a sucking sound and landed on the grass.

Ugwu did not believe that anybody, not even this master he was going to live with, ate meat every day. He did not disagree with his aunty, though, because he was too choked with expectation, too busy imagining his new life away from the village. They had been walking for a while now, since they got off the lorry at the motor park, and the afternoon sun burned the back of his neck. But he did not mind. He was prepared to walk hours more in even hotter sun. He had never seen anything like the streets that appeared after they went past the university gates, streets so smooth and tarred that it itched to lay his cheek down on them. He would never be able to describe to his sister Anulika how the bungalows here were painted the colour of the sky and sat side by side like polite well-dressed men, how the hedges separating them were trimmed so flat on top that they looked like tables wrapped with leaves.

His aunty walked faster, her slippers making slap-slap sounds that echoed in the silent street. Ugwu wondered if she, too, could feel the coal tar getting hotter underneath, through her thin soles. They went past a sign, ODIM STREET, and Ugwu mouthed street, as he did whenever he saw an English word that was not too long. He smelled something sweet, heady, as they walked into a compound, and was sure it came from the white flowers clustered on the bushes at the entrance. The bushes were shaped like slender hills. The lawn glistened. Butterflies hovered above.

“I told Master you will learn everything fast, osiso-osiso,” his aunty said. Ugwu nodded attentively although she had already told him this many times, as often as she told him the story of how his good fortune came about: While she was sweeping the corridor in the mathematics department a week ago, she heard Master say that he needed a houseboy to do his cleaning, and she immediately said she could help, speaking before his typist or office messenger could offer to bring someone.

“I will learn fast, Aunty,” Ugwu said. He was staring at the car in the garage; a strip of metal ran around its blue body like a necklace.

“Remember, what you will answer whenever he calls you is Yes, sah!”

“Yes, sah!” Ugwu repeated.
They were standing before the glass door. Ugwu held back from reaching out to touch the cement wall, to see how different it would feel from the mud walls of his mother’s hut that still bore the faint patterns of moulding fingers. For a brief moment, he wished he were back there now, in his mother’s hut, under the dim coolness of the thatch roof; or in his aunty’s hut, the only one in the village with a corrugated iron roof.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

**Activity 2.6**

What do you learn about Ugwu from the passage? How do you learn it?

**Speeches**

We have looked at genre and voice and can now think about how they combine in political speeches.

Here is the ending of John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address given on 20 January 1961 on becoming President of the United States of America.

**Text type: scripted spoken, USA**

So let us begin anew – remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.

Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us. Let both sides, for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms, and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations. Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths, and encourage the arts and commerce. Let both sides unite to heed, in all corners of the earth, the command of Isaiah – “undo the heavy burdens, and [to] let the oppressed go free.” And, if a beachhead of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion, let both sides join in creating a new endeavor – not a new balance of power, but a new world of law – where the strong are just, and the weak secure, and the peace preserved. All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days; nor in the life of this Administration; nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin. In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe. Now the trumpet summons us again – not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need – not as a call to battle, though embattled we are – but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, “rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation,” a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.

Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?
In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility— I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it. And the glow from that fire can truly light the world. And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God’s work must truly be our own.

John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address

Activity 2.7

What picture does Kennedy aim to give of his new administration?

Now look at the Gettysburg Address, given by Abraham Lincoln towards the end of the American Civil War at the inauguration of the American National Cemetery (1863).

Text type: scripted spoken, USA

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln
When Kennedy was preparing his speech, he got his speechwriters to study Lincoln’s words carefully. What connections in terms of style and strategy can you make between the two pieces?

It might help you to see the similarities by using the table that you used to determine the genre of a text (see page 14).

You will probably find that you have identified some of the following:

- emotive language, designed to stir your emotions
- bold, simple statements
- rhetorical questions – ‘Will you join in that historic effort?’; you, the listener, are not being invited to reply out loud, so it is a question where the answer is already understood
- inclusive pronouns (we, our)
- metaphor (‘can we forge against our enemies …’)
- alliteration
- repetition/parallels
- understatement
- irony
- escalation in tone (the relationship between diction, sentence structure, etc.)
- colloquial or idiomatic language – language that makes you feel that the speaker is talking directly to you and using expressions that are quite informal or local, and turns of phrase that are understood by first-language speakers but cannot be easily defined by looking up the individual words (‘brush with death’, for example)
- allusions – references to other texts: politicians are particularly fond of the Bible because it makes them sound like prophets)
- discourse markers, terms such as but and now that move the argument forward and link paragraphs

Almost certainly, you will have considered the following areas:

- context – cultural, social and historical
- ideas and issues
- values
- structure
- style and language features
- rhetorical devices.

What’s very clear is that both of them are trying to conjure up a presidential voice to match the seriousness of the occasion.
Activity 2.9

See if you can apply the same principles to the following speech given by the Australian Prime Minister, The Hon. P.J. Keating, in 1993 on the burial of his country’s Unknown Soldier, a symbol of all who die in battle but whose bodies, if recovered, are never identified.

Text type: scripted spoken, Australia

We do not know this Australian’s name and we never will. We do not know his rank or his battalion. We do not know where he was born, or precisely how and when he died. We do not know where in Australia he had made his home or when he left it for the battlefields of Europe. We do not know his age or his circumstances – whether he was from the city or the bush; what occupation he left to become a soldier; what religion, if he had a religion; if he was married or single. We do not know who loved him or whom he loved. If he had children we do not know who they are. His family is lost to us as he was lost to them. We will never know who this Australian was.

Yet he has always been among those we have honoured. We know that he was one of the 45,000 Australians who died on the Western Front. One of the 416,000 Australians who volunteered for service in the First World War. One of the 324,000 Australians who served overseas in that war, and one of the 60,000 Australians who died on foreign soil. One of the 100,000 Australians who have died in wars this century.

He is all of them. And he is one of us.

This Australia and the Australia he knew are like foreign countries. The tide of events since he died has been so dramatic, so vast and all-consuming, a world has been created beyond the reach of his imagination.

He may have been one of those who believed that the Great War would be an adventure too grand to miss. He may have felt that he would never live down the shame of not going. But the chances are that he went for no other reason than that he believed it was his duty – the duty he owed his country and his King.

Because the Great War was a mad, brutal, awful struggle distinguished more often than not by military and political incompetence; because the waste of human life was so terrible that some said victory was scarcely discernible from defeat; and because the war which was supposed to end all wars in fact sowed the seeds of a second, even more terrible, war – we might think that this Unknown Soldier died in vain.

But, in honouring our war dead as we always have, we declare that this is not true.

For out of the war came a lesson which transcended the horror and tragedy and the inexcusable folly. It was a lesson about ordinary people – and the lesson was that they were not ordinary.

On all sides they were the heroes of that war: not the generals and the politicians, but the soldiers and sailors and nurses – those who taught us to endure hardship, show courage, to be bold as well as resilient, to believe in ourselves, to stick together.

The Unknown Australian Soldier we inter today was one of those who by his deeds proved that real nobility and grandeur belongs not to empires and nations but to the people on whom they, in the last resort, always depend.

That is surely at the heart of the ANZAC story, the Australian legend which emerged from the war. It is a legend not of sweeping military victories so much as triumphs against the odds, of courage and ingenuity in adversity. It is a legend of free and independent spirits whose discipline derived less from military formalities and customs than from the bonds of mateship and the demands of necessity.

It is a democratic tradition, the tradition in which Australians have gone to war ever since.
This Unknown Australian is not interred here to glorify war over peace; or to assert a soldier’s character above a civilian’s; or one race or one nation or one religion above another; or men above women; or the war in which he fought and died above any other war; or one generation above any that has or will come later.

The Unknown Soldier honours the memory of all those men and women who laid down their lives for Australia.

His tomb is a reminder of what we have lost in war and what we have gained.

We have lost more than 100,000 lives, and with them all their love of this country and all their hope and energy.

We have gained a legend: a story of bravery and sacrifice and with it a deeper faith in ourselves and our democracy, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian.

It is not too much to hope, therefore, that this Unknown Australian soldier might continue to serve his country – he might enshrine a nation’s love of peace and remind us that in the sacrifice of the men and women whose names are recorded here, there is faith enough for all of us.

Prime Minister P. J. Keating speaking at the burial of Australia’s Unknown Soldier

**Structure, form and cohesion**

One of the things to look out for in a piece of writing is its structure, the shaping of the writing. This can also be called form. An obvious example of this lies in jokes. Although they may seem rather trivial examples of texts, you still have to learn the rules in order to be able to tell them effectively. And, as the audience for a joke, you need to know when to laugh.

**Example 1**

Knock knock  
Who’s there?  
Howie  
Howie who?  
I’m fine, how are you?

**Example 2**

An Englishman, Irishman, Welshman and Scotsman are captured while fighting abroad, and the leader of the captors says, “We’re going to line you up in front of a firing squad and shoot you all in turn. But first, you each can make a final wish.”

The Englishman responds, “I’d like to hear ‘God Save The Queen’ just one more time to remind me of the old country, sung by the London All Boys Choir. With morris dancers dancing to the tune.”

The Irishman replies, “I’d like to hear ‘Danny Boy’ just one more time to remind me of the old country, with Riverdance dancers skipping gaily to the tune.”

The Welshman answers, “I’d like to hear ‘Men Of Harlech’ just one more time to remind me of the old country, sung by the Cardiff Male Voice Choir.”

The Scotsman says quickly, “I’d like to be shot first.”
Example 3

Will you remember me in a week?
Yes
Will you remember me in a month?
Yes
Will you remember me in a year?
Yes.
Knock knock
Who’s there?
Forgotten me already?

Reflecting on structure, form and cohesion

In the second example, a rule of jokes is being deliberately broken (it’s almost always three people because three allows the situation to be set up, confirmed and then changed). In this case, there have to be three speakers first in order to establish firmly what a nightmare the Scotsman will face if he has to put up with the others’ last wishes. It’s no accident that Goldilocks has to deal with three bears in the children’s story.

Rhetoric and spoken language

Since ancient times, public speakers have been aware that words need to be particularly and specifically shaped for maximum effect. Modern politicians, like their Roman predecessors, are very fond of building a sentence with the same pattern of repetition in sets of three (technically called a tricolon). It helps them escalate the tone of a speech, and is a clue that they are expecting a round of applause or a cheer. Take for instance the excerpts below from Barack Obama’s election victory speech in Chicago, November 2008.

‘It’s been a long time coming. But tonight, because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America.’

The tone is escalated still further by the repetition of combinations of words, as below with ‘who still’ (technically called anaphora).

‘If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.’

In both cases Obama implies a question through his rhetoric and then answers it for himself – epiphora – in order to elicit a response from his audience.
Cohesion

In your own writing you will need to develop a strong sense of the rules, conventions and structures of a variety of different sorts of writing. It’s perhaps best to see the issue in terms of playing a sport. If there is no net in a tennis game or no lines on a soccer pitch, then some of the challenge of the game disappears and it’s much less fun for the spectators. Similarly, you wouldn’t expect to buy a house or a boat unless you were convinced that it had a coherent design and structure, suited for the purpose you have in mind.

One way of doing this is to make sure that everything fits together logically. It may be, however, that the patterns are not immediately apparent. That doesn’t necessarily make the text less effective: it just means that the reader or writer has to work harder to make sense of the structure, and the process of reading is more strenuous. As we saw earlier in this section, you have to be taught the rules of a joke before you can begin to appreciate the fun.

The business of linking words into phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and then into a whole text is called **cohesion**. A number of principles can be suggested, some of them to do with content, some to do with language.

To be cohesive a text often demonstrates:

- explicit links with what has gone before, connected by relationships of time, result or contrast: ‘I went early. However, Ali stayed for dinner with our friends.’
- features that can’t be interpreted without some reference to what has gone before. This is called **co-reference**. It can look backwards (**anaphoric reference**): ‘The rioters approached. They seemed angry.’ Here the word *they* can’t be understood without the word *rioters* from the previous sentence. The reference can also look forward (**cataphoric reference**): ‘Listen to this: there’s going to be a new James Bond film.’
- **ellipsis**, there is no need to re-explain something that is commonly understood. We saw this as pragmatics earlier on: ‘What time does the match start?’ (There is no need to specify which match.)
- repetition: ‘The doctor arrived. The doctor was cross.’
- relationships between word families (**lexical relationship**): ‘The *boats* steamed into harbour. At the front was a *battleship*.’
- comparison: ‘My homework was *terrible*. Hers was *worse*.’

These are tricks you can use in your own writing. However, you need to be careful not to use these devices without careful thought. The following sentence, dreamed up by the linguist Nils-Erik Enkvist (quoted by David Crystal), is cohesive to the point of excess but nonsense nonetheless:

| ‘A week has seven days. Every day I feed my cat. Cats have four legs. The cat is on the mat. Mat has three letters.’ |
Activity 2.11

1. Here’s a recipe that has been jumbled up. Using both your understanding of textual coherence, your understanding of food preparation, and, of course, your common sense, try to put it into the right order.

Text type: instructional, UK

3 rounded tablespoons of mayonnaise. Place in a large mixing basin and add the scrubbed and coarsely grated carrots, the apples, peeled, quartered and coarsely grated, and the scrubbed and finely shredded celery. 4–5 tablespoons oil and vinegar dressing. ½ a white cabbage heart. Meanwhile, in a small basin, thin down the mayonnaise with the cream.

Rinse the cabbage leaves under cold water and remove any outer damaged leaves. 1–2 sticks celery. Leave to chill for 15–20 minutes. 4 tablespoons of single cream. Pour over the salad and toss well to mix before serving. Cut in half, cut away the core, and then shred the cabbage finely. 2 dessert apples. Coleslaw. Toss the salad with 4–5 tablespoons oil and vinegar dressing. 2–3 new young carrots. Time taken 30–60 minutes.

2. Now examine the recipe using the cohesion terminology you have learned in order to discuss its structure.

Reflecting on Activity 2.11

With luck, you will have established quickly that it’s best to have the ingredients first, followed by a coherent account of the process that needs to be undertaken.

Things get slightly more complicated when you are dealing with a piece of imaginative writing. Ernest Hemingway was known for being able to condense a lot of meaning in a story into very few words. Here’s one of his stories. It is printed complete but in the wrong order.

Text type: prose narrative, fiction, USA

1. All the shutters of the hospital were nailed shut.
2. When they fired the first volley he was sitting down in the water with his head on his knees.
3. There were pools of water in the courtyard.
4. They tried to hold him up against the wall but he sat down in a puddle of water.
5. One of the ministers was sick with typhoid.
6. Two soldiers carried him downstairs and out into the rain.
7. There were wet dead leaves on the paving of the courtyard.
8. Finally the officer told the soldiers it was no good trying to make him stand up.
9. They shot the six cabinet ministers at half past six in the morning against the wall of the hospital.
10 It rained hard.
11 The other five stood very quietly against the wall.

*In Our Time* by Ernest Hemingway

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**Reflecting on Activity 2.12**

What you will certainly notice by the time you agree on your final version is that you have made decisions about the structure of the narrative that also have implications for its meaning. If you clustered all the references to weather at the beginning, you were emphasising the atmosphere. If you used sentence 9 as the opening, you probably wanted to place the political implications of the narration firmly in the foreground of the reader’s thinking. You might also have wanted the shock value of the immediacy of sentence 9.

Answers to activities in this book are available online at [www.oxfordsecondary.co.uk/9780198445760](http://www.oxfordsecondary.co.uk/9780198445760). Here you can find the actual order in which Hemingway wrote the narrative.

What this tells us is that writers are not simply committed to telling stories in chronological order. Matters of theme, character or atmosphere may be just as important. Take, for instance, the opening of Donna Tartt’s *The Goldfinch*.

**Activity 2.12**

Work with a partner to reconstruct Hemingway’s original story. Try to explain why you decide on a particular order, both in terms of the logic of the story and of the various cohesion clues that the story contains.

**Activity 2.13**

Compare your version with Hemingway’s original. What different effects might your version have on a reader?

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**Text type: prose narrative, fiction, USA**

While I was still in Amsterdam, I dreamed about my mother for the first time in years. I’d been shut up in my hotel for more than a week, afraid to telephone anybody or go out; and my heart scrambled and floundered at even the most innocent noises: elevator bell, rattle of the minibar car, even church clocks tolling the hour, de Westertoren, Krijtberg, a dark edge to the clangor, an inwrought fairy-tale sense of doom. By day I sat on the foot of the bed straining to puzzle out the Dutch-language news on television (which was hopeless, since I knew not a word of Dutch) and when I gave up, I sat by the window staring out at the canal with my camel’s-hair coat thrown over my clothes – for I’d left New York in a hurry and the things I’d brought weren’t warm enough, even indoors.

Outside, all was activity and cheer. It was Christmas, lights twinkling on the canal bridges at night; red-cheeked *dames en heren*, scarves flying in the icy wind, clattered down the cobblestones with Christmas trees lashed to the backs of their bicycles. In the afternoons, an amateur band played Christmas carols that hung tinny and fragile in the winter air.

Chaotic room-service trays; too many cigarettes; lukewarm vodka from duty free. During those restless, shut-up days, I got to know every inch of the room as a prisoner comes to know his cell.

*The Goldfinch* by Donna Tartt
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