This full-colour workbook helps to prepare students for the requirements of the AQA Key Stage 3 English Language optional test papers. The workbook is structured around the individual test paper questions and skills, with clear explanations, support and activities, enabling students to practise and demonstrate their reading and writing skills in the context of the test paper requirements.
Question 2 on Paper 1 is all about language. The question asks:

**How does the writer use language to ...?**

There will usually be a focus for this question, such as how the writer uses language to show a character’s feelings, to create a mood or to describe a setting. The skills you need to respond to this question are exactly the same whatever the focus you are given. You need to identify interesting choices of language made by the writer – words, phrases and features – and analyse the effect these choices have on the reader.

Read the extract below, which is the opening to a supernatural short story called ‘Silver Laughter’.

---

‘Silver Laughter’ by Celia Rees

The Hadley place lay deep in the woods. No one knew for sure who the Hadleys were, or when they’d lived there, or why they’d left, but it must have been long ago. The garden was full of waist-high weeds; the shrubs and bushes had turned into trees. The roof had begun to shed its tiles. They hung down like huge, black leaves and littered the ground below. The house was not boarded up. There was nothing to stop the vandals invading, or the weather from following them. The front door was twisted back on one rusty hinge and the downstairs windows were all smashed in. Only a few upper storey panes, just out of stone-throwing range, still clung, bleary with age, to their black rotten frames.

Inside, sections of wood panelling had sprung away from the walls and paper hung down like peeling skin. There were things, family things, in some of the rooms. Most of the portable stuff had been carted away, but some of the furniture still remained, giving an air of warped normality, like the setting for some sinister fairy story. A sofa and chairs were grouped round the fireplace, just like in someone’s home, but this three-piece was fat with damp, as soft and slimy as a clump of toadstools. The mantelpiece jutted like a bracket fungus. Above it hung a picture, permanently askew; suspended from a chain, twisted and clotted with verdigris. A squat stove stood in the hearth. One of the little doors was hanging off, the ancient coals spilling out. Its chimney had collapsed and lay broken into pieces, strewn across the floor.

---

**Glossary**

1. **bracket fungus** – a type of fungus that grows on trees and juts out, like a shelf
2. **askew** – not straight; crooked
3. **verdigris** – a bright blue-green crust that forms on copper or brass
4. **hearth** – the area in front of a fireplace
The description in ‘Silver Laughter’ gives the reader a depressing image of the abandoned house, which is the setting for the rest of the story. This is the effect of the writer’s choice of language. The house has been damaged and destroyed, but is also now rotting and decaying. The question you will answer in this section is:

How does the writer use language to create an impression of damage and decay?

Read what two students wrote about some of the writer’s language choices from the text on page 6 connected to the idea of damage:

Student A

The writer has used lots of words to describe the setting. All the words are linked to the idea of damage. Some of the words she used are ‘hanging off’ and ‘twisted back’. The effect of these words makes me think the house is badly damaged.

Student B

The writer has used violent words such as ‘hanging’, ‘smashed’ and ‘collapsed’ to describe the damaged house, as if the house had been badly treated, almost like a person. Words like ‘twisted’ and ‘warped’ make me think there is something creepy and unnatural about the house.

Activity 1

1. Underline the sections in both responses above that comment on the effect of the language choices.

2. Which do you think is the better response: Student A or Student B? Explain your answer.

3. Now write a paragraph to analyse the effect of the words and phrases in the text on page 6 connected to the idea of decay.
In Question 2, you are writing about how the writer uses language. The writer uses **similes** in the description of the house on page 6 to create a more intense effect.

**Activity 2**

Identify from the text on page 6 what image the writer has used to describe each of the following objects in the house.

1. Roof tiles like ________________________________
2. Wallpaper like ________________________________
3. Sofa and chairs as _____________________ as ________________________________
4. Mantelpiece like ________________________________

The writer has deliberately chosen to use images that are linked to the idea of decay. The ‘fungus’, ‘toadstools’ and ‘black leaves’ are all images you would expect to see in a wood, in autumn or winter. They are damp and slimy; the complete opposite of what you would expect to find in a warm, comfortable house.

The writer could have used a simile such as ‘paper hung down like peeling bananas’ but the effect would be to make you laugh or imagine a tropical jungle with monkeys in the trees and the image of the haunted house would be ruined. Similarly, the writer could have described the sofa as ‘soft and slimy as seaweed’, which would have been an interesting comparison, but the effect would be to remind the reader of the seaside, not of the woods.

**Activity 3**

Analyse one of the similes from the text on page 6 by describing what it reminds you of and what effect it creates.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Another language feature the writer uses in the text is **personification**. This is when a writer compares an object to a person. In the description on page 6, the writer uses personification to describe the house, as well as the weather. She describes the house as if it had skin – ‘paper hung down like peeling skin’ – which is a painful image. It creates the idea that if the house is a person, it is a very sick and elderly one.
The writer also gives the house eyes, describing the window panes as ‘bleary with age’. The word ‘bleary’ is usually used to describe someone who is old or tired and having difficulty seeing. The effect of describing the windows like this is to make us feel sad about the house decaying, like it is an old person who nobody cares for any more. It is interesting that the phrase ‘black rotten frames’ is describing the window frames but could also make the reader think of the frames on a mouldy pair of glasses.

**Activity 4**

Explain why you think the writer of ‘Silver Laughter’ compares the house to a person.

---

The writer’s choice of language – the words, phrases and features – contributes to an overall mood or atmosphere. The text you have been studying, ‘Silver Laughter’, is a supernatural story, which readers would expect to be scary, but is that the mood of the extract you have read on page 6?

**Activity 5**

Circle three words that you think best describe the mood or atmosphere of the text on page 6.

- tense
- confused
- terrifying
- angry
- unnatural
- cheerful
- disturbing
- ominous
- sinister
- gloomy
- blood-curdling
- threatening
- sad

**Activity 6**

Using all you have learned so far, answer the following question:

How does the writer use language in the extract on page 6 to create an impression of damage and decay?

Write your answer on separate paper.
Objectives

- Explore genre and style
- Develop narrative structure
- Extend range of sentence forms

In the Writing section of Paper 1, you are given a choice of two tasks for Question 5. You must choose one of these tasks to complete. You will be asked to write either a description or a narrative (a story). They may both be description tasks or both narrative tasks, so you need to prepare for both. One of the questions will have a picture as a starting point for your ideas.

A typical narrative writing question might be:

- Write a story suggested by the picture.
- Write a story about someone who is lonely.

Look at the picture below and complete Activity 1.

**Activity 1**

The boy in the picture could be a character from many different genres of fiction: a crime story, a thriller or a school drama. Think of other genres of fiction and add them to the list.

- crime
- thriller
- school drama

**Key term**

**genre** a category of literature, e.g. crime, romance, horror
Choosing a genre for your narrative is helpful because it gives you lots of ideas for other characters and for what events might take place. It also gives you an idea of what style to write in. A thriller, for example, might start with a tense, confident style:

Barney sat sulking on the swing by himself. Little did he know the kidnappers were hiding, watching, ready to pounce...

However, a school drama might start with a more relaxed, chatty style:

Barney wandered down to the park after school. His best mate, Jake, was playing football, but Barney didn’t feel much like watching the match after what happened in double Science...

Activity 2

Choose a genre from the list you wrote in Activity 1 and write the opening paragraph of a story about the boy on the swing, using a style that matches your chosen genre.

You will not have time to write a whole story in the test, so you should focus on writing just one section. The structure of most narratives follows a pattern of rising action (where the events get more exciting) leading to a climax (which is the most exciting part) and then to falling action (where the events slow down).

Top tip

It is a good idea to structure your story so you focus on the rising action and finish with the climax.
Question 3

Writing about language

Objectives

- Identify language choices
- Comment on effects

Question 3 on Paper 2 is about language. The question will ask you to read one of the two source texts again and comment on the way language is used. A typical question you might be asked is:

How does the writer use language to inform you about...?

To answer Question 3, you need to identify some interesting choices of language, choose quotations to support your choices and comment on what effect the language has on you, the reader.

Read the following text, written by food writer Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, and complete Activity 1.

'Ices' from The River Cottage Family Cookbook by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall

It's a long, hot summer's day. You're scrabbling over the pebbles on the beach or feeling the heat rise as you walk along the pavement. Fancy an ice cream? Of course you do. Something sweet is always a treat. But something that's both sweet and ice cold has come to be one of the biggest treats we know. Everybody loves ice cream.

A scoop of vanilla ice cream melting over a hot blackberry and apple crisp is delicious even on the coldest day. But it's summer that really draws us to ice cream. The heat, the dust, the salty sweat on our lips – it makes us long for something cold. It's such a craving that hundreds, even thousands, of years before refrigerators and freezers were invented we found a way to cool our throats during the hot, dusty months of July and August. Ice.

A thousand years ago, the Moorish kings of North Africa used to send servants into the High Atlas Mountains to cut a block of ice, then run home with it on their backs. If they were fast enough, the king could enjoy a cold drink in the heat of the day. If they were too slow, the ice would melt and the king would stay hot and bothered. The consequences for the servants could be dire.

Centuries later, ice was shipped from Norway and taken by railway to country houses across Britain to make frozen desserts for the wealthy. You, though, can walk to the freezer, take out a plastic tub, and scoop up a ball of ice cream. No long-distance running necessary, no risky sea journey. What will it be today? Raspberry, peach, gooseberry, chocolate...?
The text on page 32 is from a cookbook. The writer has written the text to inform readers about ice cream and to persuade them to make it. He uses a whole range of interesting vocabulary as well as language features to achieve that purpose and to create particular effects.

**Activity 1**
Highlight or underline words and phrases in the text on page 32 that you find interesting. If there are examples of language features that you recognize, highlight and label those too.

**Key term**
**purpose** the reason for writing a text, e.g. to entertain, to inform or to persuade

**Activity 2**
Find examples of words or phrases in the text that have the following purpose:

1. To appeal to the reader directly
2. To make ice cream sound delicious
3. To create the sense of being hot and thirsty
4. To persuade you to make ice cream now

The words and phrases you selected for Activity 2 were used deliberately by the writer to create effects. Language is very powerful and can be used to create a wide range of effects. Look at the verbs in the diagram below to see some of the different effects language can have:

**Top tip**
The verbs in the spider diagram are useful when you are describing the effect of language. There are many more.

**Activity 3**
Circle two effects on the spider diagram that you think the writer creates in the text on page 32.
So far in this section, you have learned how to identify interesting choices of language and explored some of the effects. To achieve the highest marks for Question 3, you need to write about those effects in detail. Read what one student wrote about the effect of language in the text on page 32.

The writer starts by telling you: ‘You’re scrabbling over the pebbles.’ This is directly addressing ‘you’ as the reader to make you imagine being on a stony beach. The word ‘scrabbling’ makes it sound like hard work, as if you are struggling or scrambling to get somewhere. He repeats the same consonant sound in ‘scrabbling’ and ‘pebbles’ to emphasize how the beach is uneven and difficult to walk on. The word ‘scrabbling’ is used so that the reader imagines feeling hot and exhausted and to create a contrast with the next sentence, ‘Fancy an ice cream?’

The student analyses the phrase ‘You’re scrabbling over the pebbles’ using three key skills:

Choosing relevant quotations, including individual words, such as ‘scrabbling’ and ‘you’

Commenting on the effect the language creates, such as ‘so that the reader imagines feeling hot and exhausted’ and ‘as if you are struggling or scrambling to get somewhere’

Identifying language features and using the correct subject terms, such as ‘direct address’, ‘consonant sound’ and ‘contrast’

These are the skills you need to answer Question 3 in the test.

It is important that you use the correct subject terms when you write about language. Non-fiction texts often use different language features to fiction texts, such as facts and statistics.

**Key terms**

- **consonant** letters of the alphabet that are not vowels
- **direct address** speaking directly to your audience, using ‘you’
- **rhetorical question** a question asked for dramatic effect where the answer is not required
- **statistics** figures
- **vowels** the letters a, e, i, o, u
Activity 4
Read the extract on page 32 again. Highlight and label the text to show where the writer has used the following features:

- single word sentence
- fact
- adjective
- direct address
- rhetorical question
- list of verbs.

Top tip
Look at how the writer uses verbs and pronouns in non-fiction texts.

Activity 5
Choose one of the words or phrases you highlighted in Activity 1 and write about its effect in detail. Remember to use the three key skills listed on page 34.

In Question 3, you may be asked to focus on one particular part of the text. You will be told the line numbers for the part you must focus on in the question, which you can see down the side of the text. This means you must only write about the language in, and choose quotations from, that section.

Activity 6
Using what you have learned about language from pages 32–35, answer the following question:

In lines 5–10 of the text on page 32, how does the writer use language to engage the reader?

Write your answer on separate paper.
Objectives
- Select and sequence ideas
- Explore tone and register
- Develop sentence forms

On Paper 2, the Writing section has only one question, Question 5, and there is no choice of task. Question 5 provides you with a statement on the same theme or subject as the non-fiction texts you will read in Paper 2 Section A: Reading. Your task is to respond to the statement by presenting your own point of view. A typical task might be:

A newspaper has published the following statement in an article on food: ‘Children should be allowed to make their own choices about what they eat. They don’t need parents, doctors or experts to tell them what’s good for them.’

Write a letter to the newspaper in which you explain your point of view on this statement.

Before you start writing, however, it is important to develop a range of ideas.

Activity 1
Add as many ideas as you can to the diagram in response to the statement above.

Younger children definitely need advice.

Children and food

Teenagers should have freedom to choose.
Some of your ideas may agree with the statement and some ideas may disagree. It is very important to choose which ideas you want to present and to organize your ideas in an effective way. For example, look at the plan below. This student has selected four ideas from the six she has noted down and then numbered them to show how the ideas should be organized in the letter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Teenagers should have freedom to choose. (4)</td>
<td>• Kids need to learn about fruit and veg. (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parents and doctors just want to spoil our fun. (x)</td>
<td>• Children always choose sweets and junk. (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children are more responsible than you think. (x)</td>
<td>• Younger children definitely need advice. (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student decided that her strongest ideas are ‘against’ the statement. She decided that using the idea ‘Younger children definitely need advice’ was the best way to start the letter because it is a clear, general idea. She decided to argue secondly that ‘Children always choose sweets and junk’, before arguing thirdly that ‘Kids need to learn about fruit and veg’, because these are both points about types of food so they should be linked. Her fourth and final idea is that ‘Teenagers should have freedom to choose’ because it is a strong idea to end on.

**Activity 2**

Choose the four best ideas from your spider diagram in Activity 1. Decide the order in which you will present these ideas when you write your letter. Write the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 next to the ideas you have chosen.

To help you choose, consider the following:
- Are you going to explain ideas ‘for’ or ‘against’ the statement, or both?
- Which are your strongest, most convincing ideas?
- Which ideas are linked and should be kept together?

Now you have planned the sequence of your ideas, you need to think about the **tone** of your letter. A writer’s tone is the attitude with which they present their point of view. For example, the tone of a letter could be cheerful, critical, anxious or it could be aggressive. It is important that you use an appropriate and effective tone throughout your letter.