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Realising potential

GCSE English Literature Focus on:

Managing multiple texts

Build on your students' assessment performance using our self-guided, modular training pack

Activities Booklet

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Creative approaches to comparing texts

Activity 1: Using images to improve skills for Question 2

Look at the images on page 4 of the *Handouts* booklet and discuss the differences and similarities between them. Use the pyramid diagram to capture your thoughts.

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Once you have collected your thoughts use the table to refine your ideas.

Source A

What can you see? (denotation)	What can you infer? (connotation)

Source B

What can you see? (denotation)	What can you infer? (connotation)

(You can cross-reference your answers against the model provided on page 5 of your *Handouts* booklet)

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Once you have completed your table, discuss how you might approach the following question:

Question
Both images show different learning environments. Use details from both sources to write a summary of what you understand about the differences between the classrooms.

Answer

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Activity 2: Comparing student responses

Read the example student responses on page 7 of the *Handouts* booklet.

Consider how the second response improves on the first one. Think about how the differences and the inferences are developed as well as the use of vocabulary to express subtle nuances between the two sources.

Answer

(You can cross-reference your answer against the commentary provided on page 39 of your *Handouts booklet.*)

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Activity 3: Interpreting differences between information texts

Look at the texts provided on pages 9-10 of the *Handouts* booklet. Use the table below to make notes on what we understand about each hotel from:

- the description of each hotel's location
- the description of the accommodation
- the list of facilities provided for each hotel
- the numbers and sizes of rooms.

Source A	Source B

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Activity 4: Writing a question

Look at the same two sources in November 2020 exam provided to you. Can you write a Question 2 that would go with these sources?

Question 2 example:

When complete turn to page 11 of your *Handouts* booklet for a Level 4-type response.

What prevents us from writing a Question 4 using these two sources?

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Reading the sources

Activity 5: Using the source information and 'context' box

Read the source information and the context box for each source and consider the questions below.

Source A: *Touching the Void* (an extract from an autobiographical account by Joe Simpson published in 1988)

Source A is an extract from *Touching the Void*, in which experienced climber Joe Simpson describes how he and fellow climber Simon Yates scaled a 21,000 foot mountain in Peru. On the way down, Joe fell and broke his leg. In this extract, Joe explains how, because of his broken leg, Simon had to lower him down the mountain using a rope.

This is a 20th century experience. How might it be different from an account written in the 19th century?

This is an autobiography. What do we expect from this type of text? How does this affect the way we might respond to the narrator's adventures?

What might we infer from the title 'Touching the Void'? What does the word 'void' suggest? How does our knowledge of his survival affect our reading of the source?

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What might be the consequences of a broken leg in such a challenging environment?

How might Simon, as a fellow climber, be affected by Joe's injury?

Source B: *Climbing the Meije* (an extract from a letter written by explorer Gertrude Bell in 1899).

In 1899, British explorer Gertrude Bell set out to climb one of the most dangerous mountains in the Alps, the Meije. Source B is an extract from the letter she sent home describing the climb.

This is a 19th century experience. How might this be different from a modern experience of climbing a mountain?

This is a letter that Gertrude sent home. How might this affect the way she describes her adventure?

Gertrude is a woman explorer in the 19th century. How might this affect our understanding of her character? How might she have been perceived at the time?

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Activity 6: Reading the sources

Refer to the sources used in the November 2020 Paper 2 exam (see insert). Think about the similarities and differences between the two texts. Use the table below to respond to the questions.

Focus	Source A: *Touching the Void*	Source B: *Climbing the Meije*
What do the writers focus their attention on? Think about events, places or people described.		
How are the narrators similar or different? Do they exhibit specific characteristics that you might be able to comment on?		
How are the texts structured? Do they build up to a particularly important conclusion?		
What other prominent methods/language features do you notice?		
Why do you think the examiner has chosen these two texts? Apart from their subject matter, what do they have in common? What themes or 'big ideas' do the sources engage with?		

(You can cross-reference your answers against a model provided in your *Handouts* booklet on page 12.)

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Activity 7: Image analysis and 'big ideas'

Look to the image on page 14 of the *Handouts* booklet.

Take a few minutes to write down a list of what you can see. Make these observations **factual** and add these to Column 1. Then, consider each of these elements and think about the connotations and associations they offer before adding these to Column 2.

Column A: What can you see? (denotation)	Column B: What can you infer? (connotation)

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Activity 8: Connecting to the ‘big idea’

Take one of the words below and write a sentence to explain how the image from Activity 7 connects to this ‘big idea’.

- Poverty
- Politics
- Race
- Gender
- Morality
- Society
- Health
- Culture

Response

Activity 9: What are your ‘big ideas’?

List the ‘big ideas’ that you engage with in your classrooms. For example, issues of gender in *Macbeth*, or democracy in *Lord of the Flies*.

Text	‘Big ideas’

Activity 10: ‘Big ideas’ in the exam

What are the ‘big ideas’ present in the GCSE English Language Paper 2 November 2020 exam? Use the table below to record your thoughts.

In the final column, consider how a ‘big idea’ reading of the sources might be used to explore wider concepts and issues, or provide opportunities to approach the text from a different perspective.

‘Big idea’	How is this evident in the texts?	What questions does this raise?
Ethical, moral, and professional responsibilities		
Gender expectations and stereotypes (and class)		
The power of nature		
Other		

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Synthesis and inference – Question 2

Activity 11: Identifying similarities and differences

Refer to Source A and Source B from the GCSE English Language Paper 2 November 2020 exam.

Both writers are accompanied by another person on their adventure: Simon in Source A, and Marius in Source B. Use details from both sources to write a summary of what you understand about the differences between the two companions, Simon and Marius.

Use the Venn diagram on the next page to include details about Simon and Marius. Use the central section to record similarities between them.

(Some ideas are provided for you in your *Handouts* booklet on page 15).

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Activity 12: Referencing the text

Refer to the sources once more. Complete the example writing frame below using evidence from the text.

Both have a responsibility towards the writer. Simon and Joe are climbing partners, and Simon's responsibility is made more acute by Joe's situation. This is shown by...

On the other hand, Marius is a guide, probably paid, and he has a professional responsibility towards the writer. This is shown when...

Both Simon and Marius are shown to have physical strength and determination. In Simon's case...

Marius' situation is less urgent than Simon's, but he still shows physical strength when...

Overall, the two climbing partners are different because...

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Activity 13: Comparing student responses

Read Students A and B starting on page 16 of the *Handouts* booklet and using the table below compare how each student:

- explores differences between the two sources
- infers from both sources
- infers from the differences
- incorporates big ideas.

Area	Student A	Student B
Explore differences		
Infer from both sources		
Infer from the differences		
Incorporate big ideas		

Once complete, you can cross-reference your answers against the commentaries provided in your *Handouts* booklet on page 39.

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Vocabulary and 'levelling up'

Activity 14: Combing the vocabulary

Referring to the November 2020 Paper 2 mark scheme (see *Handouts* booklet, page 19), look at the indicative standard and identify ways in which the vocabulary exemplifies increasing precision in the explanation of differences and inferences.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4

You can cross-reference your answers against the examples provided in your *Handouts* booklet on page 21.

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Activity 15: Comparing student responses

Read the two further student responses provided in your *Handouts booklet* (page 23) and identify the differences in vocabulary used by each student. Comment on:

- the use of abstract ideas and terminology
- the differences in their use of Tier 2 vocabulary.

Response	Abstract/big ideas	Use of vocabulary
Student C		
Student D		

Activity 16: Vocabulary and extended knowledge

Here's another example from Source A (*Touching the Void*): 'There would be a flare of agony as the knee kinked back'.

On the top row, the inferences made from the word 'flare' are restricted to its function as a light. What additional inferences might be made given a wider understanding of the word 'flare'?

Comparing perspectives – Question 4

Activity 17: Incorporating methods

Read the two student responses (E and F) starting on page 28 of your *Handouts* booklet and identify where each student has included some comment on methods (annotate the response).

Then discuss (or note down here) what advice you would give each student to move to the next level? What advice you would give each student to move to the next level

Student E	Student F

Consider how might you use these responses as a model to support your own students' progression?

You can cross-reference your answers against the commentaries provided on page 40 of your *Handouts* booklet.

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Activity 18: Comparing structure

Use the table below to identify key structural elements in both sources from the November 2020 Paper 2 exam. Comment on the impact/effects of these structural features. How do they engage the reader?

(You might want to refer to the table used in Activity 6 for some ideas).

Source	Structural features/methods	Impact/effects
Source A: *Touching the Void* (an extract from an autobiographical account by Joe Simpson published in 1988).		
Source B: *Climbing the Meije* (an extract from a letter written by explorer Gertrude Bell in 1899).		

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Activity 19: Student responses

Read Student response G provided on page 34 of the *Handouts* booklet and identify where the student has included some comment on structural features (annotate the response).

Discuss (or note down here):

What advice you would give Student G to move to the next level.

Consider how might you use this response as a model to support your own students' progression?

You can then refer to the commentary provided on page 40 of your *Handouts* booklet.

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Activity 20: Using the ‘hook’ method

Read Student response H provided on page 36 of the *Handouts* booklet and consider the following questions:

- How does the ‘hook’ method help the student structure their response?
- What advice would give the student to move to the next level?
- How might you use this as a model for students to support their progression?

Discuss with colleagues or use the space below to note down your thoughts:

Response

Activity 21: ‘Big ideas’, vocabulary and the ‘hook’ method

Read Student response I provided on page 38 of the *Handouts* booklet in your and discuss the questions below (or note down your thoughts in the space provided).

- How does this student use ‘big ideas’ as a hook to structure their response?
- What methods does this student refer to?
- How does the student’s use of vocabulary help to nuance their ideas?

You can then refer to the commentary provided on page 41 of the *Handouts* booklet.

Response

Post-session reflection

Grade the area of development statements according to your confidence where 0 is not confident at all and 5 is very confident.

- What do you enjoy about teaching non-fiction texts?
- What do you find challenging?
- Which aspects of the assessment are secure and where do you need more clarity?
- Thinking of your GCSE teaching group(s), what level(s) are they currently working at and what's their potential? In which areas do they need more support/development?

Area of development	Confident – areas of strength/secure knowledge	Less confident – areas needing clarity/more support
Teaching the reading of non-fiction texts		
Understanding the skills students need to succeed in Question 2 and Question 4		
Assessment of Question 2 and Question 4		

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Notes

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