

# GCSE

# English Language

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Hub schools network meeting

Activities booklet

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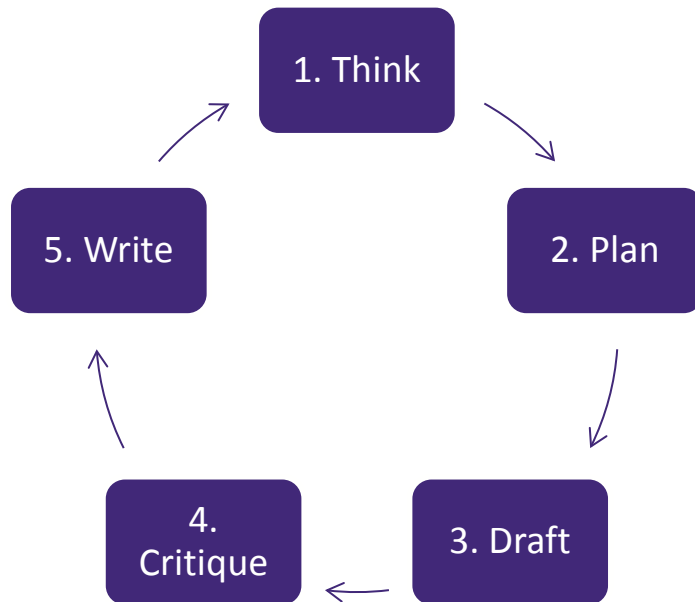
# Introduction

Where are you now?

	Current position	Ideas from session
Paper 1	Strengths/weaknesses	
Paper 2		
Key action steps: 1. 2. 3.		

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## Teaching over time: Writing as a process



In order to address underachievement in writing, one centre decided to unpick the steps involved in producing a response and came up with a 'process.'

Step 1 – Thinking – students too often rush to put pen to paper. This step makes them consider the topic in more detail. For example, students look at a Paper 2 Question and then respond through a silent debate (still retaining focus on quiet thought rather than discussion) or, two minutes of free writing on the topic in order to encourage a range of points and build resilience.

Step 2 – Planning – students experiment with a range of planning tools in order to embed this as a key step to success with their writing.

Step 3 – Draft – students are encouraged to see 'first' attempts as works in progress so that they get into the habit of checking through their work and making improvements. Under timed, examination conditions, the step of 'draft' might be working out an introduction, a few phrases, a conclusion.

Step 4 – Critique – within the classroom, this can be done as self-editing or peer assessment. In an examination, the students need to remember to 'critique' and shape their responses throughout.

Step 5 – Write – the final write up is an outcome of executing all the other steps.

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# Writing for English Language Paper 1

In Paper 1, Section B offers students a choice of creative writing tasks – there may be a choice of two narratives, two descriptions or one narrative and one description. They are linked thematically to the source material in Section A.

The two choices are not labelled A and B, and this is deliberate. There is frequently an overlap of purpose with no clear distinction between a story and a description, ie a narrative piece will often have engaging descriptive details and a description may be structured within a narrative framework. This is absolutely fine because it is the **quality of writing** that is being assessed, and the same mark scheme is used for both narrative and descriptive writing (and, indeed, for Paper 2 Q5).

June 2017 options:

**Either: Describe a journey by bus as suggested by this picture:**



**Or: Write a story about two people from very different backgrounds**

There will always be a picture stimulus for the first option. Students are expected to base their creative writing on the given focus but use the picture as a springboard for their imaginations – suggested by means just that.

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Writing responses are worth 40 marks and are assessed for both content and organisation and also technical accuracy.

Content and organisation (24 marks). This assesses AO5:

- communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences
- organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.

Technical accuracy (16 marks). This assesses AO6:

- Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

The most important word in AO5 is communicate. Students are assessed on their ability to communicate according to the key words for each of the mark scheme levels:

- simple, limited communication (Level 1: 1–6 marks)
- some successful communication (Level 2: 7–12 marks)
- clear and consistent communication (Level 3: 13–18 marks)
- convincing and compelling communication (Level 4: 19–24 marks).

Once this is determined, examiners fine tune within the level according to specific skills descriptors.

Students are expected to demonstrate a number of different writing skills for AO5, and the degree to which they are successful determines their mark scheme level and ultimately their mark within that level. These skills include:

- audience/register
- purpose
- quality of vocabulary/phrasing
- effective use of linguistic devices
- effective use of structural features
- engagement through subject matter and detail
- linking and development of ideas
- paragraphs/discourse markers.

A response does not have to fulfil every skill in a level before it can move up to the next level. For example, if a candidate does not use paragraphs, it does not mean they cannot achieve more than Level 1. Although candidates should obviously be encouraged to write in paragraphs, paragraphing is one skill among many. The response is placed in the appropriate level according to the **quality of writing** and credit given for the skills descriptors that **are** being fulfilled.

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# Activity one

Example 1 is a descriptive response that is structured within a narrative framework: a girl returns to the city and through the power of her imagination, views a journey by bus as something magical... until reality hits.

- Read through example one and discuss what makes this an effective description.
- Consider which AO5 writing skills are being demonstrated and where these skills are being met.

## Example one

Through the haze of the window the city burned before her in a cacophony of neon laser lights, blazing across the world of darkness like stars across a night sky.

Upon the great stone and metal monoliths, the stars danced and flashed, swirled and sparkled in proud shades of red, green, yellow, blue; every colour that could be imagined was roaring in the silent symphony. These lights played and twinkled in her wide eyes. The city rose within her, a feeling long forgotten: one of wonder, beauty, adventure, one subdued by the monotony of life, one that had been sorely missed.

Sharing the will of those terrific, persistent stars, she tore her eyes away from the scene to look back, to reflect how she had ever come to live without this.

Around her she saw the same tired people, heads down, dead still, as if shackled by some unhappy master, but now she saw so much more. Their lives and dreams and meaning were unveiled through the eye of her vivid imagination. With this new found, childlike wonder, she saw movie stars, murderers, secret aliens, as if gazing at them through a kaleidoscope. Herself, she saw as an astronaut, gliding past the bright, fiery suns in her spaceship.

Once more she gazed out through the fogged screen to see fellow vessels buzzing past, and to them she waved. She closed her eyes and smiled, reclining against the soft comfort of her chair, and she listened to every varied beep and whir. The gentle but powerful growl of the engine soothed her, every now and then breaking as a piece of music faded in, then just as rapidly faded out, forever.

The light and noise faded, slowly, away, but just as the embrace of rest was closing around her, a shrill monotonous sound cut through the silence.

‘Last stop for the night.’

Disturbed and unsettled, she disembarked from the bus, stepping onto the rough, damp pavement. Weary, she gazed up. Some neon signs glowed above the entrance to a tower. Cars droned past, just as they had always done. She frowned and looked up again, but the sky was dark and colourless, covered in cloud. It was the same dull sky she had seen thousands of times before. She stood there, still, as if shocked.



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## Box planning – sharing practice



Many of you will be familiar with the idea of box planning. Using this planning tool, students are encouraged to think about how to focus their description on specific details within the image, zooming in on detail and generating more sustained responses (if they zoom in on five aspects they are likely to write approximately two sides).

Using Example 1 as a starting point, discuss what a series of five lessons would look like in order to achieve this type of response?

Agree on your key learning objectives (LO)

- 1. LO: Box planning
- 2. LO:
- 3. LO:
- 4. LO:
- 5. LO:

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# Activity two

Example two is a narrative response that contains effective descriptive detail. It fulfils the brief of being about two people from very different backgrounds, while creating a setting and characters that are original.

- Read through example two and discuss what makes this an effective narrative.
- Consider which A05 writing skills are being demonstrated and where these skills are being met.

## Example two

She walked closer to the line, tousled thick hair flowing down her shoulders like a mane, golden eyes blinking owlshly as her head tilted in contemplation. Ebony skin littered with thick raised scars, shaped in whorls that danced over her shoulders and spilled onto her back whilst slowly creeping up her neck and face, glistened dimly in the scorching heat of the day. She shuffled a step closer, tattered furs that were used as clothes softly flapping against her skin as she moved. Her head tilted in the opposite direction: who are you? Her eyes – there was wildfire floating in her eyes – widened slightly. Curiosity? Or perhaps apprehension.

The other side of the line, a boy. Alabaster skin, milk hair – a strange sight in the Wildlands. He was ice, cold, unmoving, his eyes twitching ever so slightly as he drank in the girl in front of him. He held some sort of tablet in his hand, casting red rays of light that flickered across the ground. A black box was attached to a wide strip of material at his waist, occasionally letting out an eerie beep. The girl's eyes darted to it every time it did so, curiosity etching itself into every pore of her skin.

He took a step closer.

The girl's eyes widened in fright as she slithered backwards, clutching for a hunting knife tucked in the small of her back. The boy's eyes widened as he stopped, slowly dropping the outstretched arm that had risen without his command. He raised his hands in a placating gesture so not to scare her further, then slowly released the catch on his belt and let it fall into the soft sand with an audible thump.

Creeping forwards, one inch at a time, he moved towards the line. Cautiously he lowered himself onto the floor and sat still.

After sitting, the girl moved out of the crouch she had put herself in unconsciously. She looked confused, brows digging deep trenches on her forehead, turning a still lake into a turbulent sea of waves. She shuffled closer.

The boy didn't move. His stormy grey eyes tracked her movements as she slid forwards, one step at a time. Reaching the line, she paused. A dizzying second passed before she folded in on herself, sinking into the sand as if there was running water in her bones, effortlessly flowing and ebbing, saving and drowning.

They stared at each other.

Her eyes roved over his face, flitting from feature to feature, always returning to his eyes. They were like the glaciers of the North Mountains: cracking; moving; halting; freezing. An endless cycle of ice, drowning out all the thoughts in her head.

He was doing the same. The scars, he saw, continued: fine lines, swirls and points, running across the bridge of her nose, twisting up her temples and disappearing into her hair line. Her eyes, he thought, were like the golden spires of his home; rivers of molten gold encircling pyres of white fire.

He smiled at her, inciting warm stirrings in her heart. She smiled back, and watched as a thousand suns shone through the icy panes, lightning crackling through her spine.

She lifted her hand, palm upturned. An invitation.

He gazed at it, drums pounding through his head, blanking out the rustling sands and birds. Slowly he licked his lips, biting the lower in apprehension.

He lifted his hand, every second looking back at her, checking and re-checking.

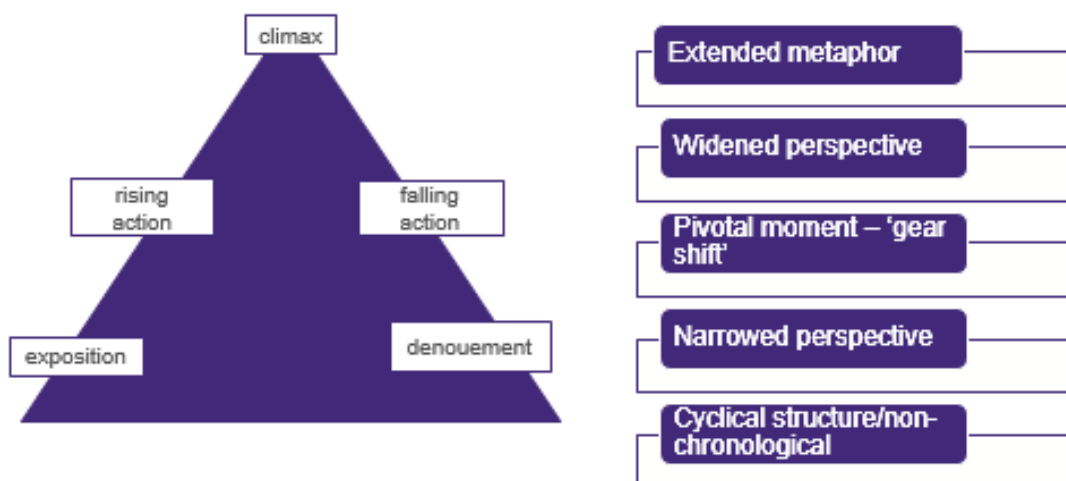
Their hands slid together, fingers entwining like thick vines as they used each other as anchors. She laughed. It was such a beautiful sound! The sweetest birdsong paled in comparison.

They both looked at their joined hands, white twisting around black, providing a stark contrast to each other, highlighting each other, eyes down from one to the next and back again.

They looked... perfect together.

Don't you think?

## Narrative planning - sharing practice



Students need to think about the shape of their writing and also consider the effects they wish to achieve at certain points. When responding in the examination they do not need to write a whole narrative, but it is useful to teach them to think about what will happen in their 'exposition' etc. At the rising action point of their response, will they zoom in and create a narrowed perspective? Is there a 'gear change' in their writing where the reader will feel a switch in emotion? How will the narrative end?

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# Activity three

There is some evidence that students are increasingly thinking about the structure of their Q5 responses now that they have to analyse structure in Q3 – the original intention of the 8700/1 specification was that by analysing the structure of a writer's work in Section A, students would be able to apply some of these structural skills in their own creative writing in Section B.

Example three is a descriptive piece of writing that again has a narrative framework. It is particularly effective because it is structured well and deals with a complex concept; the idea of humanity in isolation.

Read through Example three.

Discuss what structural features are deliberately crafted by the writer. Look in particular at:

- shifting between different times or places
- a sudden or gradual introduction of a new character at a significant point
- combining external actions with internal thoughts
- switching between different points of view
- developing and reiterating: focussing on a point of view by expanding and repeating it
- positioning of key sentences and their impact on the whole.

Write a structural plan for this response.

Consider how a plan like this would be useful to students when answering Q3.

## Example three

I sit in my seat – aisle, two rows from the front – and I look out. I see the shop lights, the street lights, the car lights illuminating the town engulfed in darkness. The clouds part just enough for the moon to penetrate through the smog and connect all those who see it. I see it, the woman besides me sees it, the man outside sees it, but do we see each other?

Outside, I can see the noise. The windows are shut and so my hearing is impaired, but I see the noise: see the drummer play the rhythm; the mouths moving; the door bells ringing. Inside it's quiet. No one speaks. A group of girls disrupts the silence, screeching about one guy or another; yet everyone else remains still and soon they do, too.

The doors open and I can taste the lively humanity outside: the laughing of colleagues; the defensive cry of a mother; the awkwardness of a first date. But then the doors shut. The silence rules once again and I simply stare once more.

Two rows back is a woman. Long dark hair, eyes like emeralds and soft skin glimmering in the moonlight. That girl and I have got the same bus every day for three years. Not one word has ever played between us; unless you count the time I apologised to her after bumping into her walking off the bus. I don't.

There is something about a bus. It's all about community yet I have never seen two strangers talk. Eye contact for too long is considered creepy and people who sit next to you when there are free doubles might as well be stalking you; because there is something about a bus. Even when you come on with a friend conversation eventually dies because you are in public and everyone knows the best talks are in private. Yet somehow we participate in this strange community of sharing and silence.

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The bus continues. Capacity had been reached and people are standing. The bus takes a sharp turn and one man attempts to play out his magnificent stumble. He looks around, checking if anyone witnessed his embarrassment. We all look down; why embarrass him more?

Once more the door opens and I can hear the shouting, smell and taste the takeaways. I see the fun yet once more the doors shut and all I can feel is the scratchy seat below me, once I was so thankful to have after a strenuous day of work. So I just sit and observe.

Finally my stop comes. I carefully manoeuvre the rows, awkwardly side step a stroller and leap out. The bite of the wind snatches at my jacket, but I don't feel it. I feel ready to go see my children, greet my husband and hug my couch.

I stand there. I turn back and watch the bus go. I watch as twenty people's stories press pause whilst they take the bus; because the bus is the journey and we all want to reach our destination.

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# Activity four

Example four is a narrative piece of writing that again contains effective descriptive detail. It is particularly effective because it is structured well and deals with a complex concept; what is real and what is virtual.

- Read through Example four.
- Discuss what structural features are deliberately crafted by the writer. Look in particular at:
  1. Shifting between different times or places
  2. A sudden or gradual introduction of a new character at a significant point
  3. Combining external actions with internal thoughts
  4. Switching between different points of view
  5. Developing and reiterating: focussing on a point of view by expanding and repeating it
  6. Positioning of key sentences and their impact on the whole
- Write a structural plan for this response.
- Consider how a plan like this would be useful to students when answering Q3.

## Example four

Do my eyes deceive me? Have I gone crazy? Excuse me if I'm wrong, but I heard him.

Three years, two weeks and four days ago I landed here. Here: a planet, by our standards uninhabitable, fourteen billion light years away from Earth – and not one spark of life has been seen.

Before you ask, there's no way back. I spend my endless days baking in the 241 degree sun, its white glare an oppressive presence, a cruel, ultraviolet overlord that blinds and burns. I spend my infinite nights wrapped up in my tiny vessel, no familiar moon to guide my dreams.

Three years, two weeks and four days ago I became the loneliest man on Earth ... my Earth. I yearn for the touch of another man, the familiar rising and falling of a breathing chest, a simple yet life-changing 'hello'.

And there it is. 'Hello.'

I shoot up from my seat in the dune buggy: in all my solitary stasis my mind never stooped as low as inventing voices of its own. But I heard it.

'Don't be afraid. I'm right behind you.'

Somebody once told me that people are alike all over. I turn my head so slowly I feel every single muscle in my neck contract, and then I see him.

Him! Him! It's a him! His figure matched my own, the cockroach of the mammals, dark chestnut skin stretched over his long, thin body, pale yellow eyes piercing holes through mine as I stammer and splutter like a nervous schoolboy asking the gorgeous Ginny Waters out in year seven. This man is real, physical, muscular, atomic matter; my prison of loneliness, solitude, agonising seclusion is finally finished.

He tells me stories of his land, one of emerald green leaves, flowers that dance and sing, communities that thrive and share, a planet respected for Her beauty, grace and resources. I lay

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back on my man-made carbon fibre receiver on the dijon-mustard sand: his homeland sounds like the Utopia only seen in the fiction of terrestrial bodies.

‘What is your planet like?’ he asks, smooth tones oozing from his mouth like sweet molasses.

I could tell him stories of a planet at breaking point, polluted over hundreds of years with the kicked up dust of an ungrateful bacteria, the human race. I could tell him of how we exploited Her for every resource imaginable, all whilst millions died daily from malnourishment. I could tell him how we can’t even see the stars at night for the sake of greenhouse gas.

He glares at me with a strange look, cunning and clever yet as if he is waiting for me to slip. Even after the fortune of solitude, this creature before me is not welcoming. Our lives are polar opposites: white skin, black skin; Utopia, dystopia; real, virtual. I don’t tell him anything of the original Earth. I can’t trust him.

‘Francis,’ he mutters, the voice now raspier and more impatient. I stare with glazed eyes, lost in calculation of who this creature is and what he wants from me and why we are the only beings here and how does he know my name and why doesn’t he look 100% real?

His hand on mine breaks the spell of paranoia that he cast over me. His grip tightens. His teeth flash in a manipulative grin and they look like pearls from the real Earth. As I look deep into his eyes, still frozen, they grow and shrink, the iris melting into a black puddle just resting on his lower eyelid. I try to pull back, to no avail.

‘Francis,’ he smirks. ‘People are alike all over. Even here in the next dimension. See? I look just like you.’

Something isn’t right here. The light in his eyes ... almost pixelated ... smears like a digital glitch. Who is virtual? Me, or him?

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# Writing for English Language Paper 2

## Introduction

The purpose of the writing task in Paper 2 Section B is a familiar one for both teachers and students. The task invites students to present a point of view on a topic related to the theme introduced by the two reading sources in Section A. The question paper used in this session is the November 2017 paper, based on the theme of education.

The writing task is intended to build on what students have understood about the ideas, attitudes and perspectives of the original writers, and have written about in their responses across all reading questions. It is also intended to draw on what students have understood about the language, structure and other methods used by the original writers, encouraging them to experiment with some of the same methods in their own writing.

### Links to Question 4

Question 4 requires students to engage with both ideas and methods. In fact, you could see Q4 and Q5 as different sides of the same coin. While in Q4 the student is commenting on the writers' perspectives and how they are conveyed, in Q5 the student is creating their own text, combining similar ideas and methods. There are obviously differences in form (for example, the reading source might be a letter and the writing task a speech) but there are significant features of content, language and structure which could be borrowed from the reading source to support the creation of the writing piece.

This does **not** mean copying whole chunks of the original source, or even short phrases. What it does mean is that students can usefully borrow the same linguistic and structural features whose effectiveness they have just analysed in Q4 as models of the features they incorporate into their own writing in Q5. This might mean using the idea of contrast as a structural feature to shock the reader with the difference between state and independent schools, for example; or using single sentence paragraphs to create a sudden impact by isolating a significant point; or using a metaphor to make an abstract idea more concrete, such as the idea of education as a journey or a mountain.

Likewise, students could borrow concepts or ideas from the original sources, such as the idea from Source B that education is a war between teachers and students. If students have just completed an analysis of how effective these ideas and methods are, then they are missing a golden opportunity if they do not use some of them in their own writing response.



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## Key writing skills

Question 5 assesses two separate assessment objectives – Content and Organisation (AO5) and Technical Accuracy (AO6). The focus in this section is to look in detail at some of the skills required to meet AO5 where students can benefit from additional guidance in order to improve their performance overall.

The mark scheme for Q5 AO5 Content and Organisation lists the range of skills assessed:

Key writing skills (AO5)
Addressing the audience
Matching the purpose
Adopting a register
Using vocabulary
Using linguistic devices
Using structural features
Sequencing ideas
Using paragraphs
Using discourse markers

Each of these skills is important but we are going to focus on just two key skills: using linguistic devices and sequencing ideas.

## Linguistic devices

Using linguistic devices can be a minefield for students. They are often sent into the exam, armed with a mnemonic, determined to use every one of the devices they have been taught and memorised, regardless of their appropriateness to the topic and task. At its worst, the use of linguistic devices can be laboured, contrived, repetitive, ineffective, distracting, infuriating and ultimately counter-productive; whereas at their best, linguistic devices used carefully and appropriately can create inspiring, engaging, uplifting, reflective, forceful and even compelling effects on the reader.

Some writing tasks will encourage a more creative perspective and will lend themselves to the use of literary techniques such as metaphor and simile; other tasks will be more functional and the judicious use of facts and statistics will be more appropriate; yet other tasks will invite a more argumentative approach and students would be well-advised to employ lists, rhetorical questions and direct address to ensure their views are presented forcefully.

Linguistic devices are unquestionably powerful, but students need careful guidance in judging which weapons to choose, and how and when to deploy the devices they have in their armoury. They also need to learn when **not** to use them, and save themselves from sabotaging their own achievements.

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## Sequencing of ideas

It is crucial when presenting a point of view that the reader can follow and understand what is being proposed. This requires the student to present a sequence of ideas which are linked by an underlying argument. One of the key questions an examiner will consider, having read a response to Question 5, is ‘What is the central argument here?’

Too often, students present a range of ideas which are entirely unconnected, making their argument very difficult to follow. This is often the result of a failure to plan how the different points will be organised for maximum effect, and a failure to link paragraphs and points effectively. Only a minority of students take time at the start to use planning to improve their writing; those who do invariably reap the benefits of their plan and produce more structured responses.

Topic sentences are another under-used structural writing feature, which are only seen occasionally at the start of new paragraphs. The function of a topic sentence is very straightforward. Once the time and trouble has been taken to write a topic sentence, the rest of the paragraph should naturally follow.

A coherent argument is one where the writer takes the reader on a journey, where a range of points are presented in a controlled and deliberate sequence of ideas, leading the reader to a compelling conclusion. The use of paragraphs, topic sentences and discourse markers, as well as other structural features such as headings, is useful, but even without their support, the sequence of ideas should be clear enough for the reader to follow without difficulty. Generating and ordering a sequence of ideas in a series of paragraphs is crucial to the successful completion of Q5.

Looking in detail at a range of sample responses, we can see how students have demonstrated these two key writing skills at each level. Let’s start with Level 1.

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## Levels and sample responses

### Level 1

There is a range of features which characterise the responses commonly seen at Level 1.

Typical writing features (Level 1)
Lacking any argument
Limited grasp of task
Basic vocabulary
Random linguistic devices
Limited scope
Incorrect focus
Unlinked ideas
Simple assertions
Colloquial register
Contradictory perspective

At this level, there are likely to be few, if any, linguistic devices used. Occasionally, students use a rhetorical question, often as a reply to the question set. There are likely to be only limited ideas provided, often simple random assertions, with no discernible sequence, demonstrating a limited grasp of the task.

In the Level 1 sample response below the student offers a very brief response, with just three or four ideas. The ideas are relevant to the task and therefore have potential, but each sentence introduces a slightly different idea, without being explained or developed any further. There is no clear link between them, other than they are all loosely connected to the concept of education. The student uses one linguistic device - a metaphor describing education as a journey – which, although simple, also shows promise.

To improve, the student could be encouraged to take the five sentences they have written and use each one as the topic sentence for a short paragraph. Each paragraph would then explain the idea in more detail, and could include some examples to illustrate the point. Topic sentences are a useful feature for students at all levels, as they are the primary means of creating links between ideas and paragraphs. It might also be useful for the student to consider their five paragraphs and try them out in various different orders, to identify links between the topics covered in each paragraph and to judge which sequence works best. Writing a plan is not necessarily a waste of time (as many students and some teachers seem to think), as it encourages students to generate a range of ideas and think about how their ideas could be sequenced to build a solid argument.

The metaphor of the journey is one which could be extended very effectively. The student could also consider using a wider range of linguistic devices to raise the level of their writing. The mark scheme for Q5 identifies an attempt to use linguistic devices as one of the criteria for Level 2, so the inclusion of a range of devices would raise the overall level of performance. As this particular task is a speech, the student could be encouraged to consider which devices would work best when spoken aloud, and identify those with an aural element, such as repetition and alliteration.

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Similarly effective in a speech might be those devices which appeal explicitly to the audience, such as rhetorical question and direct address. It might be worth reminding the student that with such a young, familiar audience, humour might also be appropriate as a tool.

## Sample response

I think learning how to act like a good human and also smartly. More involved in your studies makes a good education. Education is experience where you gain almost as much experience as you can. It might not be only about mentally challenged subjects but other things like sports. **It's a journey** on how well you can adapt not a competition.

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## Level 2

There is a range of features which characterise the responses commonly seen at Level 2.

Typical writing features (Level 2)
Lacking central argument
Difficult to follow
Imprecise use of vocabulary
Over-use of linguistic devices
Under-developed points
Tangential focus
Dead end ideas
Dull/repetitive/rambling
Tenuous assertions
Anecdotal/narrative

Many students are working at Level 2, and to some extent it is unfair to characterise their achievements in negative terms, but it would be fair to say that the majority of these students and their teachers are aiming to achieve the clarity of Level 3. Level 2 is defined in the mark scheme by the key phrase 'some success,' which recognises the efforts which the student has made, but also indicates that they are not always successful, hence the negative framing of these typical characteristics.

The sample response reproduced below illustrates the way in which many students make an attempt to use a range of linguistic devices, with varying degrees of success. The student uses direct address in the opening paragraph to good effect, acknowledging the student audience and anticipating their likely response. They also use an appropriate and humorous simile in the final paragraph (assuming the reference to 'mass' is one which would be familiar to the student audience). However, the rhetorical question in the second paragraph may have had good intentions, but in effect leads the reader away from the focus on education, so is less effective than if it were more directly related to the topic. The student repeatedly uses the rhetorical question in each paragraph and it becomes predictable and increasingly ineffective. Likewise, the 'scientifically proven' fact about the value of hobbies is generalised and unexplained, also diminishing its impact.

In terms of sequencing ideas, the student attempts to establish the context for the speech in an opening paragraph, and ends with an appropriate concluding statement of commitment to education, giving an effective overall structure to the response. However, in between there are three paragraphs, each of which introduces a discrete and unlinked idea with a tenuous connection to the theme of the task. The three ideas could be summarised as: making someone proud is good motivation; hobbies support education; listening in class makes school less boring. There has clearly been little thought about the sequence of these ideas, and no attempt to link them in any way. As a result, the focus is tangential, there is no central argument and the student's perspective is difficult to follow.

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To improve, the student could be advised to use linguistic devices more sparingly and avoid repetition of the same device. Facts and statistics are very popular with students, but are often used ineffectively with the results being counter-productive. Facts and statistics are easy to devise but are frequently implausible and contrived. They are often associated with spurious ‘experts’ which usually serves to lessen the impact not increase it. Facts, statistics and expert opinions need to be very carefully presented in order to be credible and if not, should be avoided.

To add a sense of coherence to the structure of ideas, the student could consider the addition of a topic sentence, which refers back to the content of the previous paragraph and forwards to the content of the current paragraph. If these topic sentences also made reference to the topic of the task as a whole, that would increase the overall coherence of the argument and make it easier to follow.

### Sample response

This statement is very much true in my eyes. **If you are shaking your head ‘no’** because you disagree with it, **just listen to what I have to say.**

**Have you ever wanted to be good at something or make someone proud?** I know I have because being good at something or making someone proud encourages you to do well, it reflects off of your work. Just like if you go into school with a positive attitude, you will most definitely have a better day than going in miserable.

**It is scientifically proven that doing extra activities or hobbies that you enjoy/love will help you with improving your education. Do you have a hobby?** If you don’t then you should. This is why teachers encourage these things to happen because being positive allows you to learn as you aren’t so focused on the negative things.

**Do you think that school is boring?** Yes. I know you think **school is as boring as mass on a Sunday** because you have to sit in silence and listen to everything that is being told to you. Well there are ways around it, for example if you actually listen to the things that are being taught then you would find them interesting and teachers play games if you show respect.

**Therefore I passionately believe education is important.**

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## Level 3

There is a range of features which characterise the responses commonly seen at Level 3.

Typical writing features (Level 3)
Clearly identifiable argument
Logical sequence of paragraphs
Accurate use of vocabulary
Engaging use of linguistic devices
Signposts discourse
Joined up thinking
Realistic/credible/viable
Maintains point of view
Develops ideas
Appropriate level of formality

At Level 3, the student's response is clear. The reader can easily summarise the argument, and it would be possible to imagine the letter being put in the post and sent, or the speech being read at a real life Leavers' Day assembly. Some of the responses at Level 3 may be pedestrian in their approach, others may have some sections which are less successful, but the overall achievement is clear.

The sample response at Level 3 is typical in presenting an argument which is easy to follow. The points made could be summarised as:

- Education is not dependent on talent or where you live
- A good education requires teachers
- The 'teachers' could be parents or friends
- But the most important person is you
- It's your responsibility to meet the challenge of education
- Education is a mountain to climb
- You might think school is finished and education complete
- But education continues and the focus is more on you than ever

The student effectively uses discourse markers and other phrases at the start of each paragraph to signpost each stage of this argument, so that the reader is carried smoothly and consistently through the speech. The student also uses a wide range of linguistic devices, but no single device more than twice. The metaphor describing education as a mountain is impressively extended in subsequent paragraphs. Alliteration is also employed effectively, particularly appropriate for a speech which is intended to be read aloud. There is an occasional stab at humour, with the throw away comment on 'pesky socks' and references to 'Dad jokes' which again are appropriate for a young, lively audience in a relatively informal setting. The rhetorical questions are genuinely thought-provoking, and the student's use of repetition provides a tub-thumping moment towards the climax of the speech.

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In terms of sequencing of ideas and use of linguistic devices, the student meets the criteria for Level 3 comfortably. To improve, the student would need to develop some of the ideas further, and incorporate more complex ideas into the sequence already established. The student could be advised to consider a conceptual framework for their ideas, such as exploring the idea of the place of the individual within society, or the concept of education as life-long learning, or the school curriculum as only a very minor and insignificant factor in the education of young people.

The linguistic devices used are varied and effective but, with the exception of the mountain metaphor, are relatively unsophisticated. The student could improve by considering how they might craft the rhetorical devices and lists more carefully to raise them above their current pedestrian level, perhaps by introducing a higher level of more compelling and sophisticated vocabulary.

## Sample response

Greetings, hello and welcome. It's lovely to see you all. It's lovely to hear you have done so well. I've written a speech for you today to answer this, 'What makes a good education?' Well I know for a fact its not where you grow up, although that helps, its not about how talented you are in the beginning but its who teaches you! It may be yourself, a friend, a teacher or even your parents. It could be Maths, English, Science or even bad jokes from your Dad to tell to your kids one day.

Now you may ask why I say this. Surely talent's important and we're all different aren't we? Good questions but fundamentally flawed, anyone can learn anything as long as you have the right people to inspire you, motivate you and push you to your goals and beyond.

Of course you can't just rely on others to get you those grades, or punchlines, of course you need to do the hardest bit and climb the mountain of education yourself. You can have all the support in the world but you won't move unless you start pulling those ropes.

It may be daunting at first but every mountain looks enormous from the base, but you've already climbed hundreds just like it. Everyone can look back at a time when something looked hard but overcame it with ease, like carrying all the shopping bags from the car in one go, or getting all that laundry upstairs without dropping those pesky socks!

So who cares? Well you've all finished your time here at this school and youre about to head out into the big bad world or carry on education somewhere else but that doesn't mean it will get easier. No no no! It only gets harder from here so prepare yourselves to start learning like you've never learned before because out there you may not have a teacher or your parents but someone who will always be with you is you!

So after all that, telling you to climb mountains and not disregard others help, I say to you that a good education is learning to teach yourself and others, take on others advice and criticism and push yourself to be a better you...



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## Level 4

There is a range of features which characterise the responses commonly seen at Level 4.

Typical writing features (Level 4)
Coherent argument
Individual voice
Impressive vocabulary
Deliberate crafting of linguistic devices
Wide-ranging complex ideas
Conceptualises/ uses abstract ideas
Flows almost seamlessly
Surprising/inventive structure
Highly plausible
Original/subtle

At Level 4, the responses are a pleasure to read. They are all very different, although they share many of the typical characteristics above. They are convincing and often compelling, with ambitious scope and careful execution.

The sample response is typical in so far as it is surprising and compelling. The student adopts an alternative perspective from the start and pursues the same argument coherently throughout. They establish an individual voice and a serious, determined, even forceful, tone which remains consistently effective to the end. The ideas are complex and conceptualised, and structured in a relatively simply sequence which leads the audience irrevocably towards the climax of the argument in the penultimate paragraph. The early repetition of paragraphs beginning with the same pattern of words hammers home the aggrieved message and builds a foundation for the student's increasingly belligerent ideas.

The linguistic features are sophisticated and deliberately crafted to magnify the impact of the argument. The inclusion of adjectives in the opening paragraph such as 'mandatory', 'wretched' and 'painful' sets the scene, while the personification of the mark scheme as 'cruel' is a brilliant and unexpected way of highlighting the sense of persecution the student feels. They deliberately select the ironically colloquial phrase 'bang on about' to explain the pressure put on students to use high level vocabulary. The 'marionette' metaphor is an inspired choice and perfectly illustrates the way the student feels they are helplessly in the hands of a merciless and inflexible education system. It would be churlish to suggest ways in which this response could be improved, although there are some sections which are less successful than others, and there is possibly an over-dependence on repetition and listing in places. Overall however, it is an inspiring and engaging response, worthy of marks at the top end of Level 4.

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## Sample response

Education. What is it? Six painful hours of mandatory work for thirteen mandatory years of wretched school life, for a few hours of stressful exams which test how much you've been listening and how much you understand.

Education is reading from a textbook and memorising each and every word because who knows what questions could come up in the test?

Education is listening to a teacher when they tell you 'Write this down, it may come up in the test' because you don't want to fail.

Education is learning the cruel mark scheme off by heart in order for you to know how to answer the question the way the examiner wants it answered and to dodge any sneaky tricks they add in to try and trip you up to fail you.

Education is whatever the government wants it to be.

However, to us, it can become much more. People will tell you that you must hand in your homework at a certain time because it prepares you for deadlines that you will meet at work, correct? And they will bang on about how important it is to use high level words so you sound sophisticated in your work, correct? And they will also tell you that you must score highly in your test because there's nothing else left for you to do if you don't, correct?

Incorrect. Some people struggle with being organised and actually need help becoming more organised. Some people don't have an enormous advanced dictionary in their minds, maybe due to lack of skill or maybe due to learning difficulties. Some people don't perform at their best under pressure, maybe due to nerves or even anxiety. My point is that not everyone has the same skills and abilities and strengths, so why treat them as if they do? Not everyone learns the same way, eats the same way, moves the same way or thinks the same way, so don't treat them as if they do.

Everyone is different and unique and I believe that education is key to highlighting those differences and evolving them to become something even greater. Education should be about encouraging people to explore the world and themselves, to gain experience, to try new things, to find what works best for them. Not forcing them to do everything the same, stripping them of everything but their name for non-identification in a test.

I refuse to be a marionette and let someone else pull my strings. I challenge education to let go and do something different for a change, to let itself evolve like the world around it, before it becomes extinct.

A good education should be dispensed to all. Education with an open mind and diverse ways of thinking. No one is the same so treat them as they deserve to be treated. Don't let us become the victims of education, let us become proud children of it.

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# Activity five

Read through the sample responses for Levels 2–4.

What level of scaffolding/instruction do you give your students for Q5 Paper 2:

- writing frames
- technique checklist
- sentence starters
- set phrases?

What are the strengths/limitations of these approaches?

(Consider in relation to the sample responses and feedback)

## Further discussion prompts:

What skills would you want to emphasise for a student targeting a grade 5?

What skills would you want to focus on for a student targeting a grade 7?

# Activity six

## Graphic organisers

1

- Introduction – how? – who is your audience and what is your relationship?
- engaging - simple sentence/emotive language/establishes argument and overview of topic.
- You could use direct address.
- You could use an 'Imagine the scene...' and create an emotive opening.

2

- Point 1 – you could put in a counter-argument then dismiss this.
- If you are writing an argument – where else could the counter-argument go?

3

- Development of ideas – build on your previous point – how are you going to link?
- Is your tone consistent or are you changing it now?

4

- Climactic point/or supporting point
- Think about whether you put your best point first or build to your best point here.

5

- Conclusion – how does your conclusion link to the beginning?
- How will you bring all your ideas together without just repeating them?

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The graphic organiser is designed to get students to think about the flow of their ideas and different decisions they could make about the positioning of their points.

In addition to organising their ideas – they are then asked to think about where they will include certain linguistic devices to secure their argument.

Creating plans can be set instead of writing a response. Alternative plans and assessing different effects.

Instead of always writing a full response, students can be asked to create a plan – either in class or as homework. An interesting follow-up is to get them to re-organise their plan to see how this might alter the effect, or compare with other students in the class.

- Discuss how graphic organisers might support your students in their writing.
- Are 'organisers' and scaffolds appropriate for higher ability students?

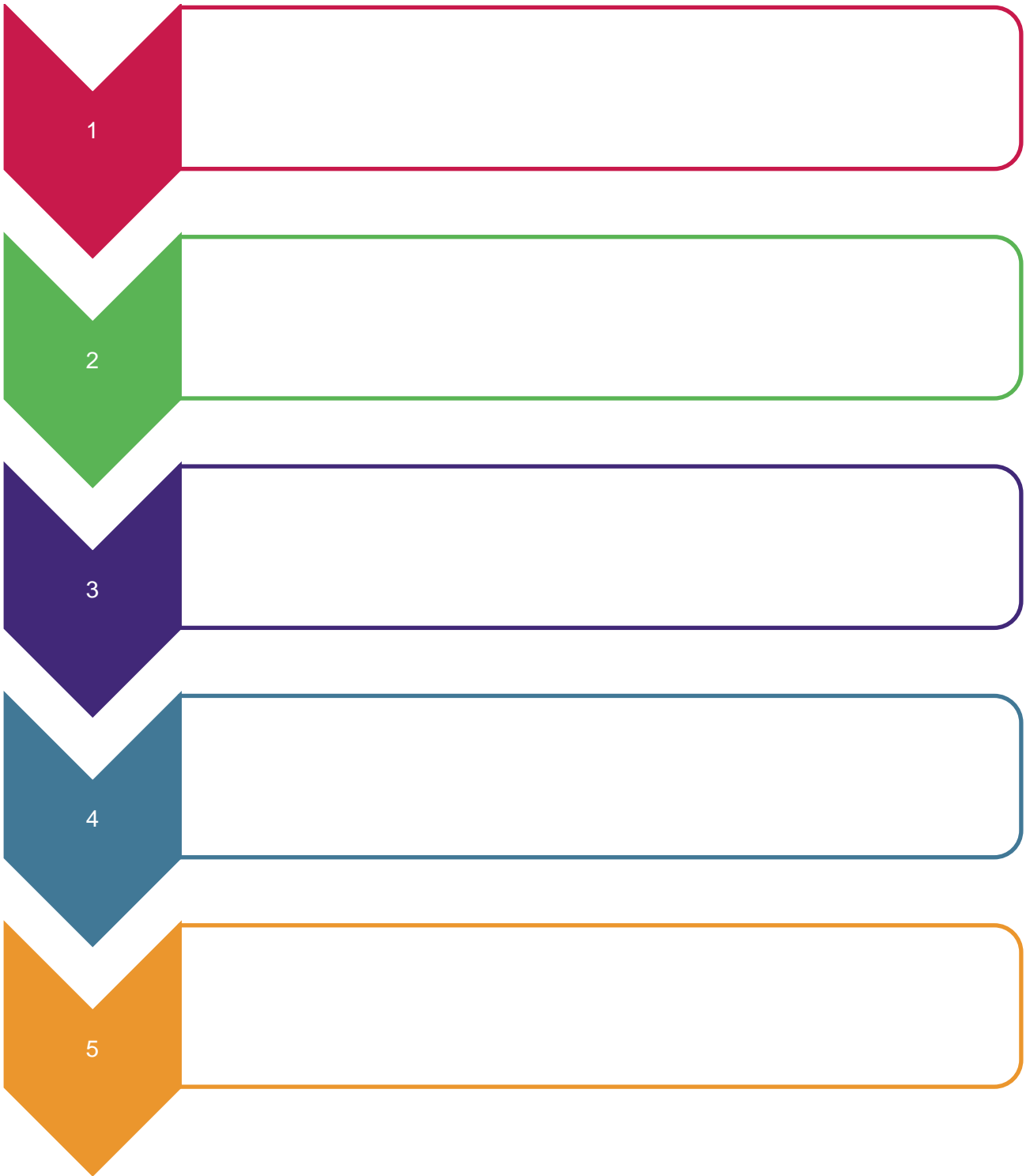
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# Activity seven

Education is not just about which school you got to, or what qualifications you gain; it is also about what you learn from your experiences outside of school.

Write a speech for your school or college Leavers' Day to explain what you think makes good education.

Using the graphic organiser – plan the sequence of your points and also where you would insert certain devices. Make sure you consider **why/effect**.



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Technical accuracy (AO6) is now worth 16 marks.

Students are assessed on six skills:

- Sentence demarcation
- Punctuation
- Sentence forms
- Standard English and grammar
- Spelling
- Use of vocabulary

Using the first bullet point as an example to show progression: at Level 1 there is 'occasional use of sentence demarcation'; by Level 2 this has progressed to 'sentence demarcation is mostly secure and sometimes accurate'. In other words, the response is mostly written in complete sentences, but the punctuation to demarcate the sentences is only correct 'sometimes' (eg it might be missing at times, or a comma might be used instead of a full stop). The Level 3 descriptor is 'sentence demarcation is mostly secure and mostly accurate', so this time the punctuation chosen to demarcate the sentences is 'mostly accurate', rather than being accurate just 'sometimes' (ie most of it will be accurate, with an occasional slip), and finally, Level 4, where 'sentence demarcation is consistently accurate and consistently secure'.

It is worth noting that three of the six skills descriptors are focussed on sentences, highlighting their particular importance in the AO6 mark awarded.



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# Activity eight

- Share good practice on how technical accuracy is currently taught.
- Read through the four paragraphs in Example eight labelled a, b, c and d.
- Decide which response would be in Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4.
- Discuss the quality of the technical accuracy skills being demonstrated in each response.
- Think about how students could be taught to improve their technical accuracy skills, and which skills require the most practice.

## Example eight

a) I waited for the bus to come, late again! I got onto the bus and sat down at the nearest seat I can find, near a window. Of course, it was going to be along journey, the bus was quite empty when I got on, it was silent. I decided to put my headphones in and listen to my music, as the music is playing I carry on looking out the window trees passing so fast all I see is a smuged line of deep green.

b) With a boom, the oak doors in front of them slowly opened, and they hesitantly went inside. The lions on either side almost seemed to be bowing at them, their majestic stone manes elaborately carved, almost sparkling in the heat of the sun. 'Rupert!' exclaimed a young man of a similar age as he strode towards them and offered his hand. Reginald, or Reg as he liked to be called, obviously expected a handshake, so no one was more surprised than he when his friend tackled him in a bear hug. Lightly, so as not to appear impolite, Reg dusted off his jacket before turning to Jessie. 'And you must be Jessie. Here's my wife, Bella. I'm sure you two will get on beautifully.'

c) A boy named william came from a very rich background was trying to get into a posh school but there was no spaces left so William had to go to a normal primery school, his perents were extreamly dissapointed at school no one payed attention to him as kids bulled him for being posh, a small boy approachd him named tay, he lived in a poor area just below the hill where william lived upon, they started playing and got on well.

d) Then a large man stepped on to the bus. 'Oh no,' I thought to myself as I feared the worst, that he would come and sit next to me. He slowly started to waddle to-wards the free seat so I pretended to be on the phone and gazed out of the window into the livley streets. It was Friday night so the streets were flooded with people ready to party. The streets were well lit by shop signs and street lights.

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# Reflection

## Action steps

	Current position	Ideas from session
Paper 1	Strengths/weaknesses	
Paper 2		
Key action steps: 1. 2. 3.		



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