



Focus on success: **GCSE English Language**

Writing

Activities booklet

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Box planning

Activity 1

Having been introduced the Box planning approach, try it out: Draw a series of boxes to focus your attention on the following image. Consider:

- how you will order your boxes
- the content and key aspects of each box
- how you will link each of the boxes?

Remember, students can decide whether to choose the image provided or describe a related image from their imagination.



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Notes

Writing in action – Paper 1

Activity 2

Read the two extracts below from two student responses to the November 2017 narrative writing task: Write a story, set in a mountainous area.

Which response is better and why?

Extract 1

Walking fastly. Chest pounding as walking through this green, old, smelly canal trying to get away from the awful smell. Watching out for holes in the floor was hard, scared in case James fell and then I would have been alone and terrified.

Looking sharply. Wanting to find the big, snowy mountains, probably as big as my future, the green brown trees swinging side to side whilst I was trying to see the mountains. James was breath-taken by the wonderful, life-changing view.

Extract 2

The surrounding water on the dock was calm – a bit too calm for me. The surrounding mountains looked dark and ominous – how I felt inside.

Far beyond the darkness around me I could make out a blinding light, it hurt my eyes if I looked directly at it for a long period of time. Out of nowhere, a beautiful dainty looking bird landed close to me on one of the stilts. I have a weakness for animals, they're the only thing the brings warmth to my stone-cold heart.

Notes

Then read the full response which is provided in the *Handout booklet* (page 12).

What five features would you identify in the response that might be seen as characteristic of a Level 2 response?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Level 3 responses

Activity 3.1

Turn to page 13 and 14 of the *Handout booklet* and read both full responses to the narrative writing task: Write a story, set in a mountainous area (Nov 2017). Then complete the table below.

What qualities in each response merit a Level 3?	Response A	
	Response B	
How have they demonstrated the same level but in different ways?		

Activity 3.2

Returning to the extract, where can you find evidence of the following:

- enigmatic opening
- distinctive narrative voice
- shifts in focus or mood
- short paragraphs for impact (and within context)
- use of fronted adverbials and prepositional phrases to vary sentence openings
- use of non-finite clauses to extend sentences
- tricolon structures
- effective similes
- some sophisticated vocabulary
- any other linguistic, structural or grammatical features that are worthy of comment.

Annotate your extract to identify the above.

Level 4 responses

Activity 4

Compare these two extracts from Level 4 responses.

Extract A

As the man sat on the damp wood he began to glare at the expansions of the mountains forming a zig-zag, a delicate white bird caught his eye, it was resting on the wooden post, calmly stretching his satin soft wings and letting the soft Scotland breeze dance with his wonderful white feathers. It were as if he was an angel. The jagged peaks of the mountains are towering so high that they kissed the cascade of clouds as they devoured the blue in the sky. The fresh air whistled as it spoke of the picturesque landscape that had been carved by God himself. As the man was watching the clouds race each other like birds it felt like the world was going back in time.

Extract B

I am completely alone up here, I realise, as the overwhelming sound of nothing envelops me. When I gaze down into the water of the lake, my own reflection stares back at me, only slightly contorted by the light ripples: the day is calm, the air is still, and the weather although chill is surprisingly welcoming. The high peaks of the mountains loom ahead, barely meeting in the middle and creating a gateway for the valley beyond. I can see the trail of the lake as it heads up hill, only slightly obscured by the light mist that curls around the slopes of the mountains in the distance. When summer breaks through the veil of spring the slopes will be mottled yellow, pink and healthy green as the warmth encourages life back into the landscape. For now, everything is cast through a stale grey filter.

Where can you locate the following in the extracts above?

1. Multiple adjectives to build noun phrases.
2. Feels like a list of observations.
3. Would have benefitted from more effective use of discourse markers.
4. Additional clauses help build descriptive detail.
5. Sentence openings lack variety.
6. Evidence of conscious crafting.
7. Extensive vocabulary.
8. Temporal connectives aid cohesion.
9. Varied sentence lengths and openings create a more engaging rhythm.
10. More effective use of punctuation.

Commentary

Both students employ adjectives effectively, although their use in extract A feels a little contrived in places. However, it should be noted that extract A also offers some figurative detail – the mountains ‘kissed the cascade of clouds’ and ‘devoured the blue in the sky’. One way of differentiating the two extracts is B’s use of more varied sentences which offer a greater sense of rhythm. Another is the way in which extract B links the different images together using temporal connectives (‘when I...’, ‘for now’) and there is less of the impression that the writer is dealing with a catalogue of images.

The full responses are provided in the *Handout booklet* (see page 15).

Writing in action – Paper 2

Activity 5.1

An example student response at each level of performance is provided with examiner commentaries. These begin on page 36 of the *Handout booklet*.

You can engage with these in different ways:

- For each response you could identify five features that might be seen as characteristic of the level awarded.
- Alternatively, search for evidence of the typical features highlighted on the presentation slides.
- Can you spot evidence of some of the strategies we've explored in this part of the session?

Activity 5.2

Read the Level 4 response on page 39 of the *Handout booklet* and provide answers to the following questions.

What's the key idea in each paragraph?	Paragraph 1	
	Paragraph 2	
	Paragraph 3	
	Paragraph 4	
	Paragraph 5	

Annotate the response where you find evidence of the following:

- extensive or ambitious vocabulary choices
- evidence of 'conscious crafting'
- examples of effective structure/linking of ideas
- use of counter argument
- climactic point.

Now consider the following questions:

- Where are the convincing/compelling moments?
- Where does the response move into Level 4 for AO5?

Technical accuracy

Activity 6

Read through the four paragraphs below. Rank order the responses (Levels 1 – 4) and discuss the quality of the technical accuracy skills demonstrated in each.

Response 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.

Level:

Response 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.'

Level:

Response 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 extreemly 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.

Level:

Response 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.

Level:

Post-session reflection

Reflecting on what you've covered during the course of this training session, evaluate the comments you made beforehand and whether anything has changed.

- Has your level of confidence improved in certain aspects?
- Where knowledge was secure, has it been consolidated?
- Which areas still need further consideration?
- Make a pledge to yourself and write down at least one action you will take forward.

Paper	Feeling more confident about...	Still need to focus on...
Paper 1		
Paper 2		
Next steps:		

Notes

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