

# AQA GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

## PAPER 2 READING

## REVISION GUIDE



By Racheal Smith, Educator and Copywriter ©

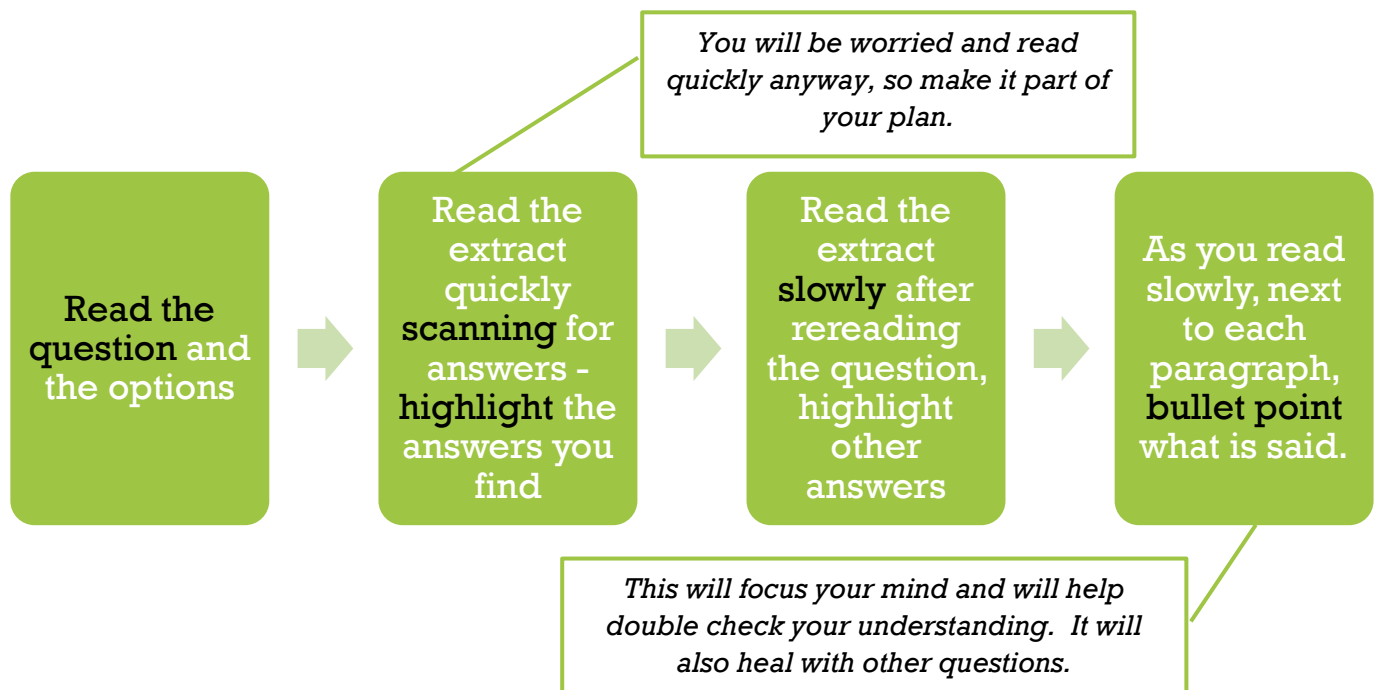
# QUESTION 1: Choose four statements below which are TRUE

## Skill 1: Working on your exam routine

The first question is testing your ability to read the extract. This should be easy. However, there are three things in the way of this question being easy:

1. You are in an examination and this is the first question
2. The extract will have words you have never met before
3. Some of the answers will require you to puzzle out the meaning

Like in any examination, the way to make it easy is to practise good examination technique. Here is the process you should go through:



Once you have gone through this process you should double check your highlighted text against the answers listed. Then, you should shade in the correct answers.

This will feel like it is taking a long time. But, this process will help you answer the other questions in the examination too.

Task 1: Think for yourself. Will this plan work for you at the start of an important examination? Imagine the start of the examination. Write a script for the way you want the first question to go in your ideal start to this paper.

*Tip: Visualising the way you want an examination to go is an important revision activity. Even down to where you are going to put your pens and pencils on the table.*

0 1

Read again the first part of **Source A** from lines 1 to 15.

Choose **four** statements below which are TRUE.

- Shade the boxes of the ones that you think are true.
- Choose a maximum of four statements.

[4 marks]

- A Jay Rayner has good memories of his time in school.
- B Jay Rayner was happy to help his son with his homework.
- C As a boy, Jay Rayner worried about handing in his homework on Monday mornings.
- D Jay Rayner could not think of a food metaphor to help his son.
- E Jay Rayner was very able in school.
- F As a boy, Jay Rayner did not enjoy doing homework.
- G Jay Rayner looked forward to receiving feedback from his teachers.
- H Jay Rayner makes a joke to cover up his own real exam results.

Here is what Question 01 looks like. You may have seen this examination paper already.

It repeats the word **FOUR** and it puts this word in bold. They really mean 4. If you shade in more than 4 you will likely get **NO** marks. If you make an error, put a clear line through the shape you have shaded wrong.

It says **READ AGAIN** – so the examiner expects you to read the extract twice

Some of the statements will be close to being true. So, you need to read the statements carefully and double check.

**Task 2:** A good way to get into the mind of the examiner is to make up eight statements, some of which are obvious and some of which are tricky. Here is an extract. Makeup eight statements for someone else to select **FOUR** true answers.

### **An extract from chapter 10 of To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee (1960)**

*"Atticus was feeble; he was nearly fifty. When Jem and I asked him why he was so old, he said he got started late, which we felt reflected upon his abilities and manliness. He was much older than the parents of our school contemporaries, and there was nothing Jem or I could say about him when our classmates said, "My father—"*

*Jem was football crazy. Atticus was never too tired to play keep-away, but when Jem wanted to tackle him Atticus would say, "I'm too old for that, son." Our father didn't do anything. He worked in an office, not in a drugstore. Atticus did not drive a dump-truck for the county, he was not the sheriff, he did not farm, work in a garage, or do anything that could possibly arouse the admiration of anyone.*

*Besides that, he wore glasses. He was nearly blind in his left eye, and said left eyes were the tribal curse of the Finches. Whenever he wanted to see something well, he turned his head and looked from his right eye.*

*He did not do the things our schoolmates' fathers did: he never went hunting, he did not play poker or fish or drink or smoke. He sat in the livingroom and read. With these attributes, however, he would not remain as inconspicuous as we wished him to: that year, the school buzzed with talk about him defending Tom Robinson, none of which was complimentary."*

## QUESTION 1: Choose four statements below which are TRUE

### Skill 2: Understanding the extract

So, we have addressed the fact that this question is at the start of the examination paper. Now you need to deal with the fact that some of the words in the extract will be tricky and that some of the answers might sound possible but are incorrect.

There are a few strategies you can use to understand complicated pieces of writing. These include:

1. Puzzling out the word, using the rest of the sentence/ paragraph to help
2. Guess what you think it means as best you can
3. Focus on what you do understand and not what you do not understand – in other words – ignore the hard bits!

Task 1: Here is an extract. Use these strategies to rewrite the extract in your own words.

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.

Your version of the extract would be:



*Tip: If you still find it difficult you could use a highlighter to show the words or phrases that you know. Then, put these words together to write a bullet point to sum up the bits you do understand.*

Task 2: Here are three statements about the text. One is obviously wrong. One is possible but incorrect. One is true. Label each statement.

Statement 1: Human beings know everything.

Statement 2: If human beings connect everything we know we will destroy ourselves.

Statement 3: If the sciences work together then we will get too excited.

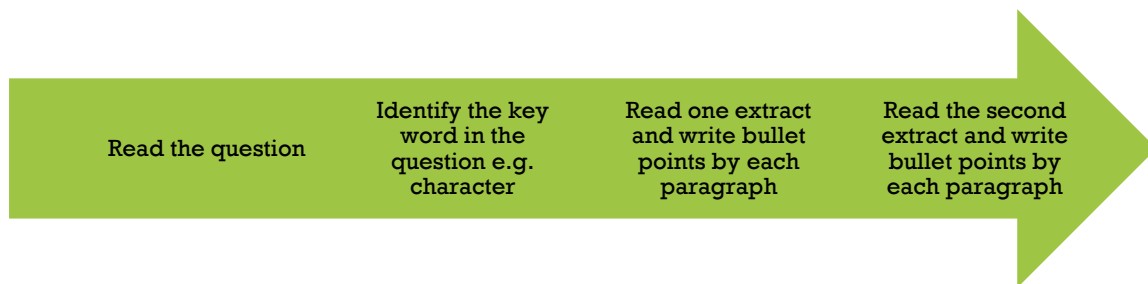
*Tip: You can use the statements to help you understand what the extract is saying. Treat it like a puzzle – connecting the answers with what you have read.*

## Question 2: Write a summary of the differences/ similarities...

### Skill 1: Learning to summarise

You will be asked to read two texts. You will then be asked to look at one text and say why it is either similar or different in one aspect of the text. So, you could be asked to sum up how two characters are different. You could be asked to summarise how two settings are similar.

First you need to be able to summarise what is happening in one text.



You should link each bullet point you write should link to the key word in the question.

**Task 1: Here is an extract about Farmer Oak. Write a bullet point next to each paragraph that sums up Farmer Oak's character.**

When Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun. His Christian name was Gabriel, and on working days he was a young man of sound judgment, easy motions, proper dress, and general good character.

On Sundays he was a man of misty views, rather given to postponing, and hampered by his best clothes and umbrella: upon the whole, one who felt himself to occupy morally that vast middle space of Laodicean neutrality which lay between the Communion people of the parish and the drunken section,—that is, he went to church, but yawned privately by the time the congregation reached the Nicene creed, and thought of what there would be for dinner when he meant to be listening to the sermon. Or, to state his character as it stood in the scale of public opinion, when his friends and critics were in tantrums, he was considered rather a bad man; when they were pleased, he was rather a good man; when they were neither, he was a man whose moral colour was a kind of pepper-and-salt mixture.

Since he lived six times as many working-days as Sundays, Oak's appearance in his old clothes was most peculiarly his own—the mental picture formed by his neighbours in imagining him being always dressed in that way. He wore a low-crowned felt hat, spread out at the base by tight jamming upon the head for security in high winds, and a coat like Dr. Johnson's; his lower extremities being encased in ordinary leather leggings and boots emphatically large, affording to each foot a roomy apartment so constructed that any wearer might stand in a river all day long and know nothing of damp—their maker being a conscientious man who endeavoured to compensate for any weakness in his cut by unstinted dimension and solidity.

Mr. Oak carried about him, by way of watch, what may be called a small silver clock; in other words, it was a watch as to shape and intention, and a small clock as to size. This instrument being several years older than Oak's grandfather, had the peculiarity of going either too fast or not at all. The smaller of its hands, too, occasionally slipped round on the pivot, and thus, though the minutes were told with precision, nobody could be quite certain of the hour they belonged to. The stopping peculiarity of his watch Oak remedied by thumps and shakes, and he escaped any evil consequences from the other two defects by constant comparisons with and observations of the sun and stars, and by pressing his face close to the glass of his neighbours' windows, till he could discern the hour marked by the green-faced timekeepers within.

Task 2: Turn your bullet points into a paragraph about Farmer Oak. This will help you practise summarising ideas in your own words.

*Tip: In the examination, you must bring together two texts. This means you will need to merge this summary of Farmer Oak with a summary of a character from another extract. This means moving between characters using words like "Yet" or "Also" depending on if you are saying what is similar or different.*

### Revision Activity:

1. Turn to random pages in books. Summarise the content of the page.

## Question 2: Write a summary of the differences/ similarities...

### Skill 2: Writing about extracts

You are being tested on your ability to keep two pieces of writing in your mind at the same time. This sounds easier than it is because you must answer a question at the same time.

**Task 1: Practise reading understanding and writing bullet points about the characters the Brangwens from this extract.**

The Brangwens had lived for generations on the Marsh Farm, in the meadows where the Erewash twisted sluggishly through alder trees, separating Derbyshire from Nottinghamshire. Two miles away, a church-tower stood on a hill, the houses of the little country town climbing assiduously up to it. Whenever one of the Brangwens in the fields lifted his head from his work, he saw the church-tower at Ilkeston in the empty sky. So that as he turned again to the horizontal land, he was aware of something standing above him and beyond him in the distance.

There was a look in the eyes of the Brangwens as if they were expecting something unknown, about which they were eager. They had that air of readiness for what would come to them, a kind of surety, an expectancy, the look of an inheritor. They were fresh, blond, slow-speaking people, revealing themselves plainly, but slowly, so that one could watch the change in their eyes from laughter to anger, blue, lit-up laughter, to a hard blue-staring anger; through all the irresolute stages of the sky when the weather is changing.

Living on rich land, on their own land, near to a growing town, they had forgotten what it was to be in straitened circumstances. They had never become rich, because there were always children, and the patrimony was divided every time. But always, at the Marsh, there was ample. So the Brangwens came and went without fear of necessity, working hard because of the life that was in them, not for want of the money.

Neither were they thriftless. They were aware of the last halfpenny, and instinct made them not waste the peeling of their apple, for it would help to feed the cattle. But heaven and earth was teeming around them, and how should this cease? They felt the rush of the sap in spring, they knew the wave which cannot halt, but every year throws forward the seed to begetting, and, falling back, leaves the young-born on the earth. They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the daytime, nakedness that comes under the wind in autumn, showing the birds' nests no longer worth hiding. Their life and interrelations were such; feeling the pulse and body of the soil, that opened to their furrow for the grain, and became smooth and supple after their ploughing, and clung to their feet with a weight that pulled like desire, lying hard and unresponsive when the crops were to be shorn away. The young corn waved and was silken, and the lustre slid along the limbs of the men who saw it. They took the udder of the cows, the cows yielded milk and pulse against the hands of the men, the pulse of the blood of the teats of the cows beat into the pulse of the hands of the men.

Task 2: You now need to keep these two texts in your head at the same time. You need to focus on Farmer Oak and the Brangwens at the same time.

What do you know about the characters? Fill in this table. Write in bullet points

Farmer Oak	Brangwens

*Tip: Drawing a table like this in the examination is an excellent technique. It means you don't have to remember both extracts because you have written it down. Then, you can focus on answering the question!*

This table is the building block of your answer to the question. You will select the information from this table to help you.

Here is an example question:

*You need to refer to Source A and Source B for this question.*

*Use details from both Sources. Write a summary of the similarities between Farmer Oak and the Brangwens.*



Task 3: Highlight the ideas in the table that show the similarities between the two characters. These will be the ideas in your answer.

Task 4: Look in a thesaurus. Look up the word "also" and the word "and". List the words that will help you say how the two characters are the same.

To add depth and detail to your answer you need to answer these questions:

- What quotations show the characters share this quality?
- Why does this detail make the characters similar?

So, you might have noticed that both characters love the land.

Here are some quotations:

"On Sundays he was a man of misty views" – Farmer Oak

"The Brangwens had lived for generations on the Marsh Farm" – Brangwens

Task 5: Answer this question: Why do these details show us that the characters love the land?

Then, join all the parts together in a paragraph. The sentence that says they both like the land. The quotations and answers to the questions.



## Question 3: Use language

### Skill 1: Identify the language used

When you are writing about language you need to be able to name the language used. This will mean you are answering the question. It will also mean that you sound like an expert.

Here is a table that includes some words that help us write about language.

Words and phrases	Language features and techniques	Sentence forms
Noun	Metaphor	Statement
Noun phrase	Simile	Question
Verb	Personification	Command
Verb phrase	Repetition	Imperative
Adverb	Exaggeration	Exclamation
Adverbial phrase	Hyperbole	Simple sentence
Adjective	Oxymoron	Incomplete sentence
Adjectival phrase	Paradox	Compound sentence
Pronoun	Symbolism	Complex sentence
Superlative	Alliteration	Rhetorical question
Conjunction	Pattern of three	Short sentence
In/definite article	Irony	Run on sentence

**Task 1:** Select 10 to 15 of these language terms that you would like to use in the examination. Produce a poster that helps you remember what these words mean. Use a dictionary and the internet to find out what these terms mean.

**Task 2:** Name the language that is highlighted.

Gatsby believed in the **green light**, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther... And then one fine morning—So we beat on, **boats against the current**, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

To sound even more expert, you need to be able to adapt the language term so that it fits well into a sentence. Such as: metaphorical, symbolic, ironic, alliterative, personified, paradoxical – and so on.

**Task 3:** Write sentences introducing the language terms you highlighted. Change the term so that it fits well into your sentence.

## Question 3: Use language

### Skill 2: Commenting on the impact of the language

Once you have spotted the language you need to be able to say how it impacts on the reader or on another character within the extract. Writers can use language to create an image or create a sound.

Task 1: Choose language techniques that creates –

Images:

Sounds:

Impact then focuses on the thoughts and the feelings of the reader. So, some good questions to ask would be:

- What would the reader think in response to the language choice?
- What would the reader feel in response to the language choice?

Look at this sentence from a story:

*“In autumn the partridges whirred up, birds in flocks blew like spray across the fallow, rooks appeared on the grey, watery heavens, and flew cawing into the winter.”*

The writer has use the nonmatopoeiac verb “whirred” to describe the flight of the partridges.

So, good questions would be:

- What would the reader think in response to the use of onomatopoeia “whirred” when describing the partridges?
- What would the reader feel in response to the use of onomatopoeia “whirred” when describing the partridges?

Task 2: The writer has also used the simile “blew like spray” when describing the flight of the birds. Make up questions that you would ask about this simile.

#### Revision Activity:

2. Open a book to a random page and name the language techniques used by the writer.
3. Make up a series of questions that you could answer about these language techniques.

Coming up with an answer to the questions is a matter of putting forward a **reasonable guess**.\* Your teacher will tell you that there is no right and wrong answer. They are right. You cannot be wrong. However, you can say something that will appear **silly or completely random**. So, your guess – which is all teachers do – **has to sound reasonable** – like it is possible that's what the impact would be on most readers. The good news is that you are at an advantage: **you are a reader**. So, how it impacts on you is a reasonable place to begin!

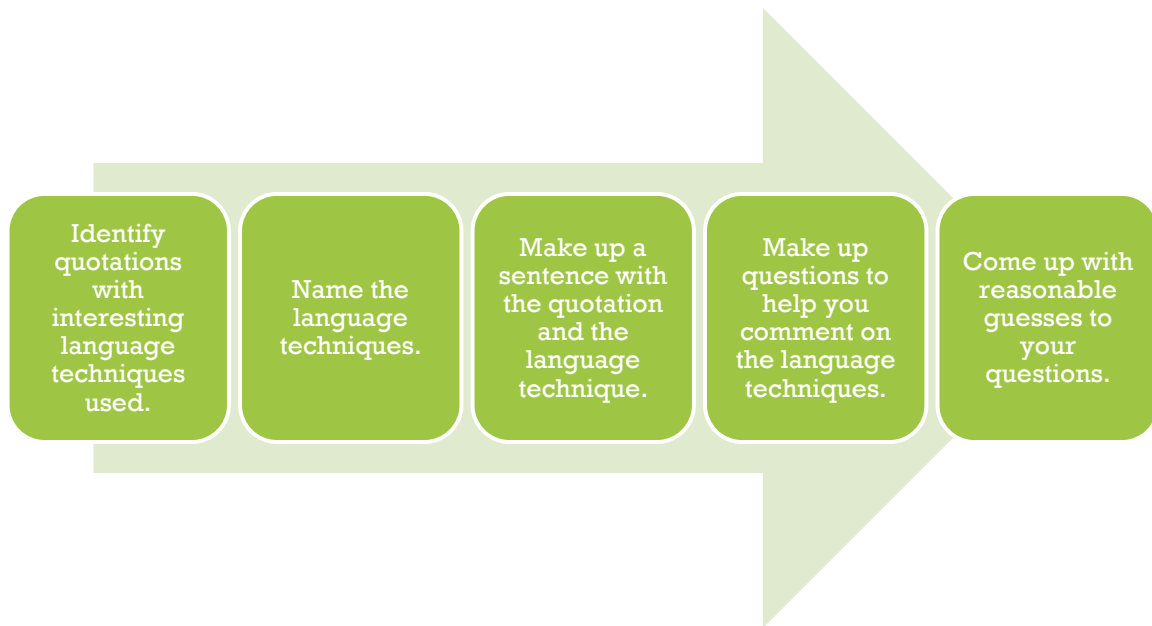
(\*Be aware that clever people call guesses “theories” or “interpretations”. These theories and interpretations are just their best guess that they have fancied up with clever words.)

Task 3: Come up with your best guesses to these questions:

- What would the reader think in response to the use of onomatopoeia “whirred” when describing the partridges?
- What would the reader feel in response to the use of onomatopoeia “whirred” when describing the partridges?

Then, move on to answer your questions about the simile describing the flight of the birds.

*Tip: Use the meaning of the whole text to help you come up with your best guesses. Sometimes it is about making links to other parts of the extract and this is your answer.*



#### Revision Activity:

4. Use the flow diagram to drill the skill of analysing language use in extracts. You can find extracts in every book – just turn to a random page!

## Question 4: Compare how the two writers convey Skill 1: Revising how to compare

The whole of the paper is designed to prepare you for this big question at the end of the examination.

- Question 1 is testing if you can read to understand.
- Question 2 is asking you to compare.
- Question 3 focuses you on the techniques of the writer

Now you need to compare how two texts are written. You need to compare the way the writer has chosen to impact on the reader in a similar and different way to another writer.

This is the most difficult question you can be asked in English. It is only 16 marks over two examination papers. So, do not worry too much – try your best. This is the question that will show the examination board who deserves a Grade One.

When you are comparing you are saying if something is similar or different.

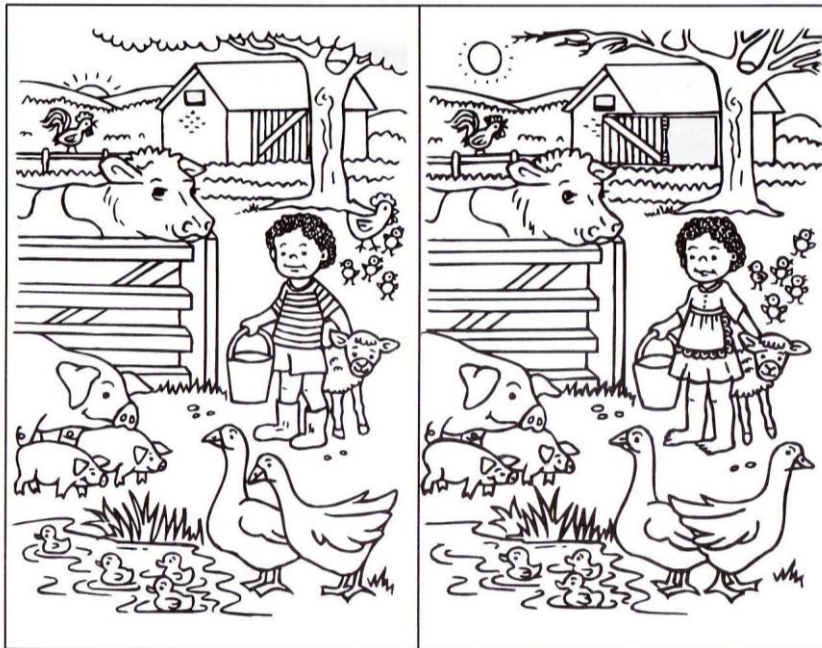
The starting point here is learning some comparative connectives, or words that help you compare.

Words to show that things are similar:

*Similarly; Equally; Likewise; As with; Like; In the same way; Also; Both*

Words to show that things are different:

*Whereas; On the other hand; Instead of; Alternatively; Otherwise; Unlike; However; But; Although; In contrast*



Task 1: Use the comparative connectives to write sentences about these two pictures. This is a spot the difference image. There should be similarities and differences in the pictures.

Task 2: Now, use the comparative connectives to describe the similarities and differences in the two rooms described by these writers.

Text 1:

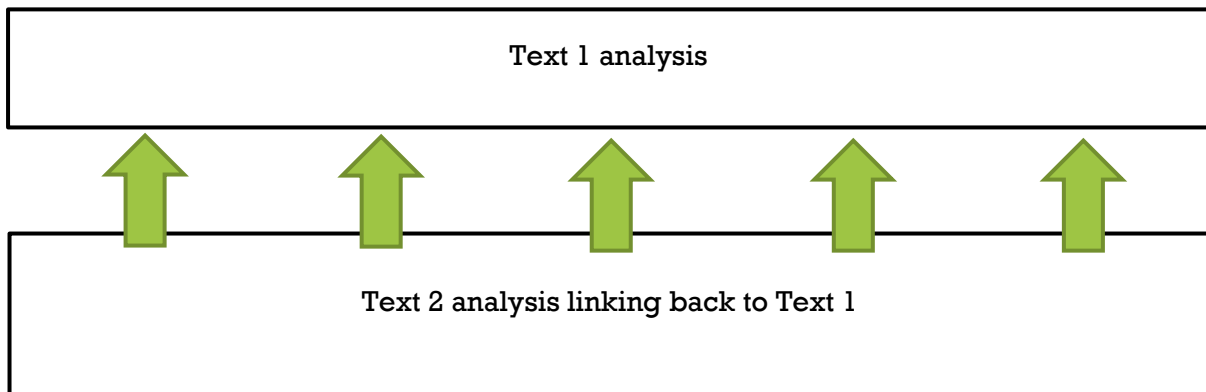
He followed her into the sitting-room. It was a long room, coloured yellow. On the wall opposite William someone had painted a young man, over life-size, with very wobbly legs, offering a wide-eyed daisy to a young woman who had one very short arm and one very long, thin one. Over the chairs and sofa there hung strips of black material, covered with big splashes like broken eggs.

Text 2:

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me.

*Tip: This is a practice activity to help you use comparative connectives. It will be easy to focus on content in the examination like this. This is not comparing language. If you can, try to compare the choices the writers make when describing the rooms in these texts. Don't worry if you are not ready yet. You can build up to this.*

There are two ways you can compare in the examination. One will look like this:



The other will look like this:

Text 1	↔	Text 2
Text 1	↔	Text 2
Text 1	↔	Text 2
Text 1	↔	Text 2

Examiners will like the second way of comparing more. But, both work well enough.

## Question 4: Compare how the two writers convey Skill 2: Revising how to explore writer's techniques



Everything in the extracts you are given include choices by the writer. Still, one of the most difficult jobs when exploring writer's techniques is choosing your examples. There are two thoughts you will have:

- I don't know what the writer has done here
- What if there is a better example somewhere else?

You need to change these thoughts to:

- What bit of the text is interesting to you?
- Call it anything – even if it is just “word” or “sentence”.

The most marks will be given for your comment. So, the bit of the text that interests you the most will give you the best comment.

Task 1: Follow these steps for analysing the extract.

Step 1: Select the quotation you think has been written in an interesting way.



Like a stone idol, like a mountain avalanche, Tyrannosaurus fell. Thundering, it clutched trees, pulled them with it. It wrenched and tore the metal Path. The men flung themselves back and away. The body hit, ten tons of cold flesh and stone. The guns fired. The Monster lashed its armoured tail, twitched its snake jaws, and lay still. A fount of blood spurted from its throat. Somewhere inside, a sac of fluids burst. Sickening gushes drenched the hunters. They stood, red and glistening.

Step 2: Identify the technique that you think is interesting.

Select the quotation	Identify the techniques

Step 3: Ask important questions, focused on the technique and the quotation.

- How does the reader feel about the writer's technique?
- How does the reader think about the writer's technique?

Select the quotation	Identify the techniques	Comment using the questions

To get the best mark, you need to write in depth and detail. This means you need to:

- Say a lot about a little (depth)
- Select a few quotations to talk about (detail)

Here is how this works, using an extreme example to help show how possible this is over a whole extract.

Here is one sentence.

*“Like a stone idol, like a mountain avalanche, Tyrannosaurus fell.”*

The simile “like a stone idol” is used to suggest that the dinosaur is a god and that it is grey and hard as rock. Stone is also the material we use to celebrate gods and great people.

The simile “like a mountain avalanche” gives the sound of the dinosaur falling and carries on the idea of a pile of rock falling to the floor. A mountain gives an idea of the size of the dinosaur to the reader.

The use of the verb “fell” instead of the “Rex” like we expect focuses on the idea that the dinosaur is no longer a king, which is what “rex” means and instead has been destroyed. It is no longer in charge of this place.

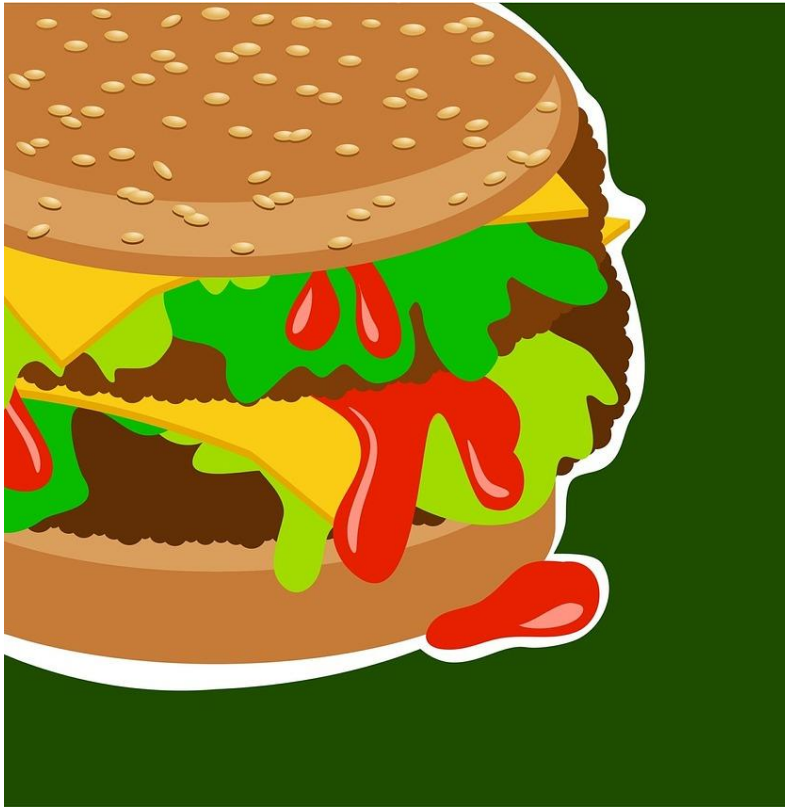
Task 2: Write about this extract in depth and detail. Focus in on three small quotations and say a lot about each of these small choices.

Like a stone idol, like a mountain avalanche, Tyrannosaurus fell. Thundering, it clutched trees, pulled them with it. It wrenched and tore the metal Path. The men flung themselves back and away. The body hit, ten tons of cold flesh and stone. The guns fired. The Monster lashed its armoured tail, twitched its snake jaws, and lay still. A fount of blood spurted from its throat. Somewhere inside, a sac of fluids burst. Sickening gushes drenched the hunters. They stood, red and glistening.

Select	Identify	Comment

## Question 4: Compare how the two writers convey Skill 3: Comparing writer's techniques

The easiest way to think about a comparison paragraph is like a double cheese burger.



Top bun: A topic sentence that compares the two writers' work.

Cheese: A quotation from text one

Lettuce: Identify the technique used

Burger: The comment

Sauce: Comparative connective and link to text 2

Cheese: A quotation from text one

Lettuce: Identify the technique used

Burger: The comment

Bottom bun: Linking comments back to the topic sentence.

The bun of the burger is important because it makes sure you are **answering the question**. The burger is literally the meat of the paragraph – where you **comment in detail**. It is the part of the paragraph where you will get most of the marks. The rest of the paragraph works to link into your ideas and helps you **appear expert**.

Here is an example question.

Compare how the two writers convey their **different attitudes** to creatures.

Task 1: Explain in your own words what you think the words “different attitudes” means.

*Tip: It is important to understand all words in the question if you are going to be able to answer it fully.*



You are going to practise writing a comparative paragraph in answer to this question:  
Compare how the two writers convey their different attitudes to creatures.

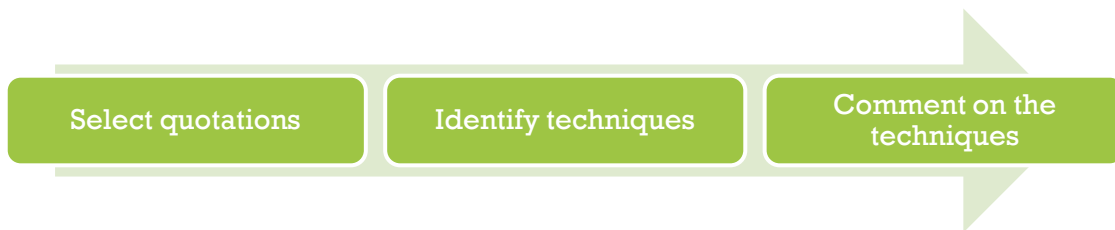
**Text 1: Sound of Thunder**

Like a stone idol, like a mountain avalanche, Tyrannosaurus fell. Thundering, it clutched trees, pulled them with it. It wrenched and tore the metal Path. The men flung themselves back and away. The body hit, ten tons of cold flesh and stone. The guns fired. The Monster lashed its armoured tail, twitched its snake jaws, and lay still. A fount of blood spurted from its throat. Somewhere inside, a sac of fluids burst. Sickening gushes drenched the hunters. They stood, red and glistening.

**Text 2: Call of the Wild**

It was the menacing truce that marks the meeting of wild beasts that prey. But the wolf fled at sight of him. He followed, with wild leapings, in a frenzy to overtake. He ran him into a blind channel, in the bed of the creek, where a timber jam barred the way. The wolf whirled about, pivoting on his hind legs after the fashion of Joe and of all cornered husky dogs, snarling and bristling, clipping his teeth together in a continuous and rapid succession of snaps.

**Task 2: Complete this process with both extracts.**



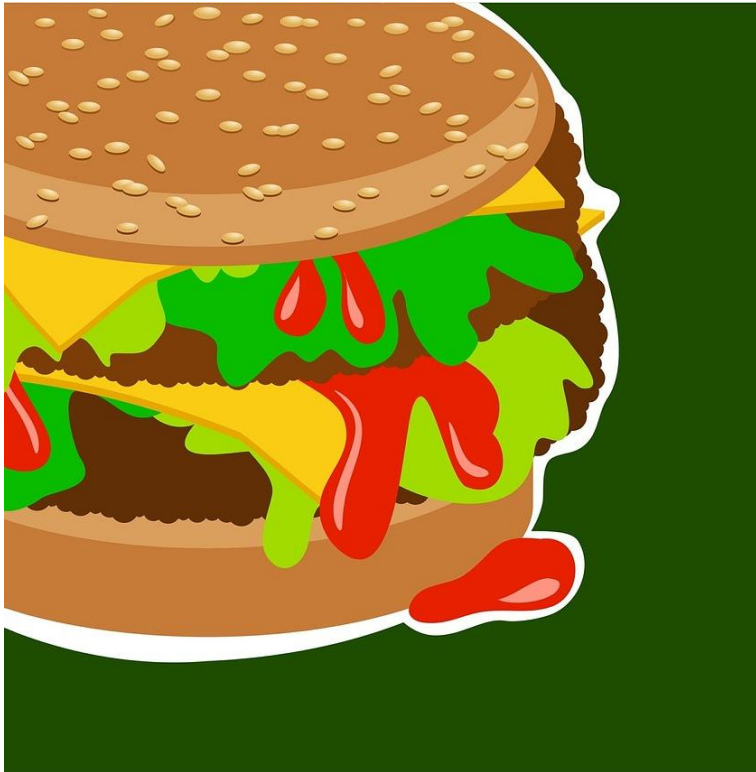
**Task 3: Complete a table like this for both extracts.**

Select	Identify	Comment
Select	Identify	Comment

*Tip: You can draw tables like this in the examination. The truth is though you might not have enough time. So, you need to practise so many times that you can do this analysis without this support.*

To work out the topic sentences you should use, you need to look across the tables and work out what is similar, or similar but done slightly differently. For instance, both might use metaphors but one uses them negatively or both use powerful verbs and this gives energy to the animals.

**Task 4: Write three topic sentences. These topic sentences should answer the question and refer to both texts. Remember to use comparative connectives to move between the texts.**



To build a double cheeseburger you should start with your topic sentence as your top bun. Then, you use information from your tables to build the rest of the burger.

Remember to close the bun by linking back to your topic sentence at the end of the paragraph. No one wants a messy burger... or a messy, incomplete paragraph!

#### Revision Activity:

5. Read lots of stories and other texts. Practice spotting interesting techniques used by the writers you are reading.
6. Compare two texts and practise writing topic sentences.
7. Drill your skills, write as many comparative paragraphs as you can!