

## Unit 1 – Tips for Success

### Understanding and Producing Non-Fiction



#### What's the point of these skills?

Writing non-fiction texts is an essential part of functioning in the world around us. We must learn to communicate effectively in a variety of styles that allow us to meet the needs of the **audience** we are writing for and to fulfil the **purpose** of the text we are writing. In preparing for this section of the exam, you cannot separate your writing from your reading – you have learnt to identify how texts are written and presented to appeal to specific target audiences and how writers and designers select language and presentation devices to make their work effective. You then use these features to write your own texts.

#### What's in the paper and what will I be tested on?

In **Section A** you are tested on your **reading skills**. There are three reading sources on which the questions are based. All three reading sources are used in the exam and all three are 'unseen'. There are four questions.

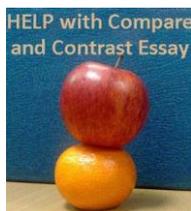


**Question 1** refers to the first source, called Item 1, and will test your ability to *retrieve information and ideas* from the source text.

**Question 2** refers to the second of the sources, called Item 2, and will test your ability to *understand and interpret* presentational features such as headlines, sub-headlines, pictures and captions from the source text.



**Question 3** refers to the third source, called Item 3, and will test your ability to *understand and interpret meaning* in the source text.



**Question 4** refers to the third source together with one of the other sources chosen by the candidate. This tests your ability to *compare the effectiveness of language* used by the writers in the source texts.

In **Section B** you are tested on your **writing skills**. This means that your writing is assessed on its *content, organisation, accuracy and developing vocabulary*. There are two writing questions. There are **no choices** to be made, so you need to time yourself for both questions.

- The first writing question is focused on **writing to inform and perhaps describe**.
- The second writing question is focused on **writing to persuade or to argue a point of view**.

**How do the marks work and how much time should I spend on each bit?**



The paper is 2 hours long.

<b>Section A Reading</b>	<b>Section B Writing</b>
20% total GCSE mark, 40 marks	20% total GCSE mark, 40 marks
Spend <b>one hour</b> on this section	Spend <b>one hour</b> on this section
Spend <b>10 minutes</b> reading the sources and questions and thinking/planning your answers	Q1, 16 marks, 25 minutes (including a plan)
Q1: 8 marks: 10/11 minutes Q2: 8 marks: 10/11 minutes Q3: 8 marks: 10/11 minutes Q4: 16 marks: 15/17 minutes	Q2, 24 marks, 35 minutes (including a plan)

### How do I get a good mark for Q1?



#### Skill: RETRIEVE INFORMATION/IDEAS (summary)

- This is likely to be a ‘What do you learn from the text?’ question or something very similar
- Read the text carefully and identify what you think are the **key points** from each paragraph. Highlight, underline or make a marginal note as you go along
- Then you can write your answer in **full sentences** (aim for half a side or a little more) and **in your own words** as far as possible. Drop key words/phrases from the text into your sentences to **support key points**

### How do I get a good mark for Q2?

#### Skill: INTERPRET HEADLINES/SUBHEADLINES/CAPTIONS/PICTURES

- As with any presentation feature, it is important to start off by describing what you see: what the headline tells you; what the picture shows and so on. However...
- You need to explain what makes it effective and how it is connected with anything else in the text. Focus on how it links to the main topic or subject matter of the whole text
- You must say more than ‘it makes it stand out’ or ‘it draws you in’. If you make these points then explain what or **how** something ‘stands out’ or ‘draws you in’
- Here are some words you could use which describe **purpose** to presentation features: summarise, **INFORM**, **explain**, dramatise, **sensationalise**, **highlight**, **illustrate**, exaggerate, **support**, **entertain**
- Make very specific connections with the rest of the text. Use a quotation, for instance, that links to the headline/picture etc.



- For **Headlines/subheadlines/captions**: look out for – CAPITALS, **bold**, underlining, wordplay, puns, metaphors, similes, personification, alliteration, assonance, consonance, sibilance, polysyndeton, onomatopoeia, exaggeration (hyperbole), direct speech, direct address (pronoun ‘you’), verbs, adjectives, adverbs. Make sure you **explain** what these features are designed to do. If you can’t ‘see’ or name a technique as such then focus on **key words** and explain why they are used and what makes them effective
- For **pictures/photographs**: look out for – colour, who/what is in the picture and why s/he/it is important to the text, how close to the camera the person/subject is, gestures, facial expressions, what they are doing, what they are holding, what is around the main subject (the background or setting). Be alert to small details and **comment on their effects**.

### How do I get a good mark for Q3?



#### **Skill: INTERPRET MEANING (thoughts/feelings/attitudes)**

- This question is likely to be connected with a writer’s thoughts and feelings
- You may be required to **read between the lines** of the text in working out what these thoughts and feelings are
- As with Q1, read through the text carefully, identifying the thoughts/feelings as you go along
- Be sensitive to **key words/phrases** that create the writer’s feelings/thoughts. Use the term ‘**tone**’ to describe how the text feels or the mood to the text
- It is very important that you use **quotations**. Keep them very short (one word or short phrase) and use them to show that the language creates the tone/feeling/thought you have identified
- Some words to describe feeling/mood/tone (but the list is endless!): angry, sad, depressed, annoyed, irritated, frustrated, alarmed, surprised, appalled, excited, positive, romantic, peaceful, dreamy, contemplative, reflective, tranquil, and so on and so on
- As you write your answer it is very important that you comment on what it is that has made the writer think or feel in a certain way. In other words, remember the writer’s subject matter.

### How do I get a good mark for Q4?

#### **Skill: COMPARE EFFECTIVENESS OF LANGUAGE**



- This is the trickiest question and it carries the most marks by far so you need to give yourself time to write a good answer

- Remember that you have responded to all the texts on the paper in previous questions and you should, therefore, know them well
- ‘Compare’ means commenting on what is both similar and different about the texts in terms of the language that they use
- Remember the markers used to show *similarity* (one similarity is...also...too...as well...) and *difference* (however...yet...in contrast...one difference is...)
- Once again, focus on **key words and phrases** that you think make the texts effective in some way or other. You are looking at language. Words, words, words.
- There are many things to look out for. It might be a good idea to start thinking generally about the texts overall and how they work. Use the **GAP** approach to get a sense of language fit for *genre, audience and purpose*. Make sure you also use Title, Speaker, Audience, Content, Style, Tone, Form (THE SILLY ASS CAN’T STATE THE FORMAT).
- Be sensitive to the overall ‘*feel*’ or ‘*tone*’ of the text (we looked at this re Q3). Then look at the details.
- You may notice a *pattern* to the way that the language works. You can comment on this. It could be a series of verbs or adjectives. Or two or three metaphors. You may be drawn to language which creates a particular tone, whether it be negative or positive.
- Look at the table below for an idea of the kind of *terms* you might use to describe use of language. If you don’t know what they mean, look them up. Practise using them when you do your revision.

Formal	Prosaic	Figurative/metaphorical
Informal	Informative	Emotive
Colloquial	Descriptive	Factual
Elevated	Persuasive	Explanatory
Expressive	Analytical	Entertaining

- Look out for any **techniques** the writers have used and explain what makes them effective (see the list given above when answering Q2 ).
- In terms of structuring your answer, there is no one approach that is fit for all. However, bear in mind that you must provide a *comparative* response.
- If you feel you *need* a structure, start with a section on similarities, then move on to differences.

# WRITING

## What about section B?

If you have studied non-fiction texts and taken on board all of the above suggestions, then you are ready to write your own non-fiction texts in this section.

Remember GAP (GENRE, AUDIENCE, PURPOSE) when you are reading the tasks and planning your response. **Clarify what you have to write, who you need to write it for and why you are writing.**

Remember the buzz words for this section: *content, organisation, accuracy and developing vocabulary.*

Make sure you also use THE SILLY ASS CAN'T STATE THE FORMAT.

- Title – make it eye-catching.
- Speaker – from what perspective are you writing?
- Audience – who are you writing for?
- Content – make sure you are specific rather than general or it won't be interesting
- Style – show that you can make use of literary devices
- Tone – show you understand how to manipulate mood
- Format – think about structure



Remember to use sophisticated punctuation – if you can include colons and semi colons somewhere that would be useful – but don't overdo them!



Keep one eye on the clock

