

Question A3: Creating an impression

One of the questions (A3 or A4) will ask what impression you get of a person, place or event in the text. This may also be presented as a 'How does the writer ... ?' question. You will need to look at what is being said or done in the text and what you can work out from this. You also need to look at the language choices the writer makes and how this adds to your impression. You will be reminded to refer to the text for your answer and to use subject terminology.

What exactly must I do?

Re-read the specific lines that the question asks about and clearly state what your impression is, quoting evidence from the text. Explain the effect of any language that promotes this impression.



ACTIVITY 1

Read the following extract. A father is attacked by his daughters and their dog, Snort.

The two girls, staggering with laughter, threw themselves upon their father. 'Paleface Robert. Kill him. Scalp him.' They tore at the man and suddenly he was frightened. It seemed to him that the children had gone completely mad, vindictive. They were hurting him and he did not know how to defend himself without hurting them. Snort, suddenly recovering confidence, rushed from her cover and seized this new victim by the sleeve. He shouted, 'Call her off, Kate.' But they battered at him. Kate was jumping on his stomach. Jenny had seized him by the collar as if to strangle him. Her face was that of a homicidal maniac; her eyes wide and glaring, her lips curled back to show her teeth. And he really was being strangled. He made a violent effort to throw the child off then suddenly the chair gave way and all three fell with a crash. Snort, startled and perhaps alarmed, snapped at his face.

From 'Growing Up' by Joyce Cary

How does the writer present the daughters Kate and Jenny?

[5]

Fill in the table to break down what you need to do and ensure coverage in your answer.

Things the characters say and do	The impression this creates of the young people
'staggering with laughter'	The verb 'staggering' suggests they are out of control.
'threw themselves upon their father'	
'Paleface Robert. Kill him. Scalp him.'	
'suddenly he was frightened.'	

**ACTIVITY 2**

Now pick some language points that back up the impressions made of the young people.

Language evidence	How this backs up the impression
'vindictive'	<i>The adjective 'vindictive' suggests a deliberate lack of care and an unpleasant effect, as if the young people are out to do harm or get some sort of revenge.</i>
'Her face was that of a homicidal maniac'	
'eyes wide and glaring'	

**ACTIVITY 3**

Once you've filled in the table, write up the contents into a full answer to the question in Activity 1.

Some of the following phrases may help you structure your answer:

- The writer says ..., Also, another detail is ..., Furthermore, we are told ...
- This clearly gives the impression ..., This suggests ..., This is effective because ...

Try to think of others of your own.

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ACTIVITY CONTINUES





ACTIVITY 4

Read the following extract:

Anwar was sitting on a bed in the living room, which wasn't his normal bed in its normal place. He was wearing a frayed and mouldy looking pyjama jacket, and I noticed that his toenails rather resembled cashew nuts. For some reason his mouth was hanging open and he was panting, though he couldn't have run for a bus in the last five minutes. He was unshaven, and thinner than I'd ever seen him. His lips were dry and flaking. His skin looked yellow and his eyes were sunken, each of them seeming to lie in a bruise. Next to the bed was a dirty encrusted pot with a pool of urine in it. I'd never seen anyone dying before, but I was sure Anwar qualified. Anwar was staring at my steaming kebab as though it were a torture instrument. I chewed speedily to get rid of it.

From *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi

What impressions of Anwar do you get from the passage?

[5]

1 Here is part of a student's response to this question. Fill in the gaps.

It is clear that there is something wrong with Anwar from the opening lines which mentions that he is not in his '.....' bed (quotation). This makes it sound as if
(explanation).

The adjectives '.....' and '.....'
are used to describe his pyjamas which gives me the impression that
..... (explanation).

Physical details back up the impression that Anwar is sick. The simile that his toenails '.....' is
.....

ACTIVITY CONTINUES ➔

2 Now make further points in a similar way in order to fully answer the question.

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ACTIVITY 5

Read the description below of the strange creature, Gollum.

Deep down here by the dark water lived old Gollum, a small slimy creature. I don't know where he came from, nor who or what he was. He was Gollum – as dark as darkness, except for two big round pale eyes in his thin face. He had a little boat, and he rowed about quite quietly on the lake; for lake it was, wide and deep and deadly cold. He paddled it with large feet dangling over the side, but never a ripple did he make. Not he. He was looking out of his pale lamp-like eyes for blind fish, which he grabbed with his long fingers as quick as thinking. He liked meat too. Goblin he thought good, when he could get it; but he took care they never found him out. He just throttled them from behind, if they ever came down alone anywhere near the edge of the water, while he was prowling about. They very seldom did, for they had a feeling that something unpleasant was lurking down there, down at the very roots of the mountain.

From *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien

Read this student response to the question:

What impressions of Gollum do you get from the passage?

[10]

Gollum in this passage is a horrible creature who is different to anything we might expect on earth. Words like small and slimy give me this. He rides around on a boat and some of the things he does are horrible and show he's sly. He eats fish. He's unpleasant.

ACTIVITY CONTINUES ➔

1 It would not get a very good mark! What advice would you give this student?

2 Provide a better response to the question.

Extended practice

Read the following description of the narrator's grandmother.

In the last years she continued to settle and began to shrink. Her mouth bowed forward and her brow sloped back, and her skull shone pink and speckled within a mere haze of hair, which hovered about her head like the remembered shape of an altered thing. She looked as if the nimbus of humanity were fading away and she were turning monkey. Tendrils grew from her eyebrows and coarse white hairs sprouted on her lip and chin. When she put on an old dress the bosom hung empty and the hem swept the floor. Old hats fell down over her eyes. Sometimes she put her hand over her mouth and laughed, her eyes closed and her shoulder shaking.

From *Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson

[10]