

Question A4: Forming opinions

This question will ask you what you think and feel about an aspect of the text or how successful the writer is in describing a particular event or experience. You will need to consider how the writer conveys information and analyse how successful he or she is in doing this by looking at the techniques that are used.

This question is worth 10 marks.

What exactly must I do?

Re-read the section of the extract that the question refers to. There are 10 marks for this question so aim to spend about 12 minutes answering it. You should show an understanding of the writer's feelings or views or account of an experience and give your opinion on these. Discuss the writer's use of language and techniques and explain the effects of these. Support what you say by selecting evidence from the text.

The main thing is to show an understanding of what a text says and the content. However, you may also want to discuss how a writer uses techniques and language.



ACTIVITY 1

The techniques in the table below are useful ones to look out for. Describe each one and provide an example.

Technique	Description	Example
Emotive language		
Facts and figures		
Personal experience		
Personal pronouns		
Dramatic punctuation		
Parallel structure		
Comparatives		
Superlatives		
Imperatives		

**ACTIVITY 2**

In the following extract, Charles Dickens writes a letter to *The Times* newspaper remarking on the behaviour of the crowd at a public hanging he witnessed in Newgate, London.

I believe that a sight so inconceivably awful as the wickedness and levity of the immense crowd collected at that execution this morning could be imagined by no man, and could be presented in no heathen land under the sun. The horrors of the gibbet and of the crime which brought the wretched murderers to it, faded in my mind before the atrocious bearing, looks and language, of the assembled spectators. When I came upon the scene at midnight, the shrillness of the cries and howls that were raised from time to time, denoting that they came from a concourse of boys and girls already assembled in the best places, made my blood run cold. As the night went on, screeching, and laughing, and yelling in strong chorus ... were added to these. When the day dawned, thieves, low prostitutes, ruffians and vagabonds of every kind, flocked on to the ground, with every variety of offensive and foul behaviour. Fightings, faintings, whistlings, imitations of Punch, brutal jokes, tumultuous demonstrations of indecent delight when swooning women were dragged out of the crowd by the police with their dresses disordered, gave a new zest to the general entertainment.

From Charles Dickens, 13 November 1849

How successful do you think Dickens is in trying to persuade his readers that public gatherings for hangings should be banned?

[10]

Read this student's response to the question:

I think Dickens writes emotively in order to persuade his readers that public gatherings for hangings should be banned. In those days hangings were public and big crowds would gather to watch people being hanged. He is obviously against this as and he writes about a personal experience he has had to get his point across. He has strong opinions about the crowd and mentions what they are doing to paint a bad picture. He uses words like thieves, low prostitutes, ruffians and vagabonds and lots of techniques. Overall, I think he does a good job.

1 There are many things this student could improve. What advice would you give?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

ACTIVITY CONTINUES ➞

Extended practice

The following extract is travel writing taken from a book Charles Dickens wrote following a visit to America.

The scenery as we approached the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, was not at all inspiring in its influence. The trees were stunted in their growth; the banks were low and flat; the settlements and log cabins fewer in number; their inhabitants more wan and wretched than any we had encountered yet.

No songs of birds were in the air, no pleasant scents, no moving lights and shadows from swift-passing clouds. Hour after hour, the changeless glare of the hot, unwinking sky shone upon the same monotonous objects. Hour after hour, the river rolled along as wearily and slowly as the time itself.

At length, upon the morning of the third day, we arrived at a spot so much more desolate than any we had yet beheld that the forlornest places we had passed were, in comparison with it, full of interest.

At the junction of the two rivers, on ground so flat and low that at certain seasons of the year it is inundated to the housetops, lies a breeding place of fever, ague, and death.

A dismal swamp, on which the half-built houses rot away; cleared here and there for the space of a few yards; and teeming then with rank, unwholesome vegetation, in whose baleful shade the wretched wanderers who are tempted hither droop, and die, and lay their bones.

The hateful Mississippi circling and eddying before it, and turning off upon its southern course, a slimy monster hideous to behold; a hotbed of disease, an ugly sepulchre, a grave uncheered by any gleam of promise: a place without one single quality, in earth or air or water to commend it: such is this dismal Cairo.

Extracts from *American Notes for General Circulation* by Charles Dickens

How successful is Charles Dickens in painting a negative portrayal of this part of America?

[10]

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Extended practice continues ➡

Handwriting practice area with 25 sets of dotted lines on a light blue background.