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FICTION AND TRANSACTIONAL WRITING

In section A of your exam you will need to be able to meet these assessment objectives:

A01

Read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and interpreting information, ideas and perspectives

A02

Understand and analyse how writers use linguistic and structural devices to achieve their effects

A03

Explore links and connections between writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed

This chapter focuses on Paper 1: Non-fiction and Transactional Writing of the English Language A course. Working through these lessons and activities will help you develop the reading and writing skills you will need for the Paper 1 exam.

The chapter is split into the following sections:

- Non-fiction texts
- Text anthology: non-fiction
- Comparing texts
- Transactional writing

Paper 1 is worth 60% of the total marks for the course and is split into two sections:

- Section A: Non-fiction
- Section B: Transactional writing

In section B of your exam you will need to be able to meet these assessment objectives:

A04

Communicate effectively and imaginatively, adapting form, tone and register of writing for specific purposes and audiences

A05

Write clearly, using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, with appropriate paragraphing and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation

In Paper 1 the assessment objectives are worth following amounts:

- A01 – 7%
- A02 – 8%
- A03 – 15%
- A04 – 18%
- A05 – 12%

LESSON OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand some of the features of these genres or types of text and prepare you to answer exam questions on them.

TYPES OF TEXT

The specification lists examples of the possible types of text that may appear in the examination paper:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| ■ biography / autobiography | ■ travel writing |
| ■ obituaries | ■ diaries / letters |
| ■ speeches | ■ reviews |
| ■ newspaper or magazine articles | ■ reference books |

The texts you'll be writing about in Paper 1 will be non-fiction. Fiction describes scenes imagined (at least partly) by the writer; non-fiction writing does just the opposite: it is about things that actually happened, about real incidents, though we cannot rely on all non-fiction to be accurate. The main types or genres you will come across for the purposes of the exam are as follows:

In an **autobiography**, the writer describes his or her own life. However, some events may not have been remembered accurately, or some events may be exaggerated for effect, perhaps to show the writer in as good a light as possible. There are some so-called autobiographies that readers may well feel are, in reality, largely works of fiction.

A **biography** is the life story of a famous or interesting person, whether past or contemporary. Today, there are what are known as 'authorised biographies', in which the well-known subject has given specific legal permission to the writer for producing the content. The person who is the subject can control what events are included or omitted and how the writer describes them.

Another form of autobiographical writing is the **diary** or **journal**, or the modern equivalent, the **blog** (short for 'web log'). *Anne Frank's Diary*, for example, contains important factual material about her daily life under German occupation. It is therefore more than just a personal account. (However, not all diaries set out to be accurate or truthful and many diaries have other purposes: to entertain; to give personal views; to communicate with friends.)

News reports may appear in newspapers or magazines. News should be objective, or unbiased, and based on clear evidence. As readers, we need to be sure that the reporter is not trying to put a 'slant' on the material, or seeing it from their own personal perspective. However, some newspaper and magazine articles are undoubtedly biased. In all forms of non-fiction text, therefore, the question of truth and accuracy really matters. This means that part of the reader's analysis should include looking for any examples of bias, or opinion that is not supported by evidence.

Feature articles are about a topic of interest to a large number of readers: they can be about almost anything from family matters to matters of global concern. They are usually based on research. Opinion or comment pieces will contain factual evidence and explanation, but aim to argue a case about a topic of general interest.

An **obituary** is a newspaper article, found most frequently in the broadsheet newspapers such as *The Times*, about a remarkable or well-known person who has just died. Its length depends on the fame or significance of the subject.

ACTIVITY 1

Which of the types of text described above do you think the following extracts come from? Give reasons. Explain which one is more objective and why you think so.

▼ FROM *THE INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER*:

Even the keenest gamers generally suffer nothing more than sore thumbs or tired eyes from their hobby. But scientists looking into the health effects of video game consoles have linked overplaying to dozens of injuries – some even life-threatening. The cases were uncovered after a team of Dutch researchers gathered all reported cases of Nintendo-related injuries, spanning 30 years.

▼ FROM *BEYOND THE SKY AND EARTH*, BY JAMIE ZEPPA

On a low stool stood a mountainous plate of sheep parts, with the favoured cut, the great fatty tail, like a grey glacier on its summit. Younger sisters hustled in and out making last-minute preparations. While we were at breakfast the first lookouts were posted to watch for the return of the truck bearing the wedding party from the bride's camp.

BIOGRAPHY, AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND OBITUARIES



jib a small sail

foredeck the deck near the bows of the yacht

forestay another sail

knot a nautical mile per hour

Read the extract from an autobiography that tells Ellen MacArthur's account of her extraordinary life as a lone yachtswoman. While reading, think about what she is writing about and the way she writes the account.

▼ *TAKING ON THE WORLD*

The wind continued to rise during the first few days, and by the third I was changing down to the storm jib on the foredeck, and was thrown off my feet before cracking my head hard against the inner forestay rod, resulting in an instant lump and a strange nausea. Soon afterwards, the weather front passed, only to bring even stronger 55-knot gusts in a steady 45-knot wind. It was an unreal, crazy situation: just trying to hang on inside the boat took every ounce of strength. Food was hurled around the cabin along with water containers and spares, while I tried to scrape things up and put them back in the boxes. My hands stung, my eye was swollen, and my wrists were already covered in open sores.

Dawn brought some respite. My body temperature warmed after the freezing night, but if I sweated through the physical exertion of a sail change, when I stopped, I'd once again cool to a shiver. Sleep proved virtually impossible – just snatched ten-minute bursts ended by the cold.

Just two days later conditions began to worsen again. Doing anything was not only difficult but painful. My hands were red-raw and swollen, and my head was aching – even more so when the freezing water washed breathtakingly over it each time I went forward to change sails. Shifting the sails was hard, brutal work. Whenever it was time to change one I would pull it forward, clipping myself on and hanging on for dear life. Waves would continuously power down the side-decks, often washing me and the sail back a couple of metres, and I had to hang on and tighten my grip on the sail tie



HINT

You will need to analyse techniques to meet Assessment Objective 2. Think about the following:

- The focus throughout on the story or narrative – what actually happened
- Use of precise detail
- Frequent use of personal pronoun
- First person perspective maintained throughout
- Use of emotive language
- Use of descriptive language

even further. I would often cry out loud as I dragged the sail along; it was one way of letting out some of that frustration and of finding the strength to do it...

After a week things finally began to calm, and with my legs red-hot and sore, and my wrists and fingers swollen, I finally enjoyed the first opportunity to remove my survival suit. Though the relief was wonderful, the smell was not!

ACTIVITY 2

Question 1 in the exam will be in three parts, requiring short answers, each one usually worth between 2 and 5 marks. The number of marks on offer will give you a good idea how many points you should make and how much you should write.

Some questions will say that you should answer 'in your own words': remember that copying phrases and sentences straight from the text is not a good idea, unless the question specifically says that it is acceptable to do so.

- ▶ **In your own words, explain clearly the injury Ellen MacArthur suffered at the start of the passage. (2 marks)**

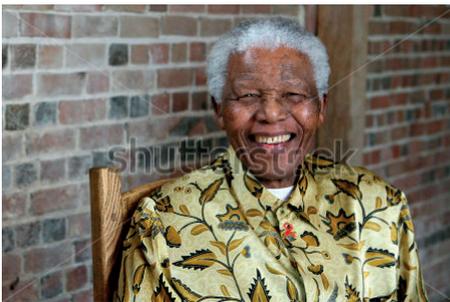
Possible opening to an answer: *Ellen was thrown by the storm against*
....

- ▶ **Look again at the last paragraph (paragraph 4). In your own words, say what impressions you get of Ellen MacArthur's feelings at the end of the passage and why she felt like this. (3 marks).**

Choose two or three of the techniques in the 'Hint' box on the right, find an example or two and describe what you think the effects are.

OBITUARIES

An obituary is a very abbreviated biographical sketch of a remarkable person in the form of a newspaper article published, most frequently, in the broadsheet newspapers such as *The Times*, just after their death has been announced. For a major figure it is likely to be a full page. Here are extracts from two examples, the subjects of both being very famous men: Nelson Mandela, who after years of imprisonment eventually became President of the new South Africa, and David Bowie, the famous rock star. Both are taken from *The Guardian* newspaper.



Mandela greatly enjoyed university, particularly boxing and athletics, and, on the strength of his first-year studies in English, anthropology, politics, native administration and Roman-Dutch law, nursed an ambition to become a civil servant and interpreter – about as high a position as a black man might aspire to in those days. But his ambition seemed to be crushed when, in 1940, in his second year, as a member of the student representative council he was expelled for his part in a rebellion over poor quality food. He returned to Mqhekezweni to find another potential disaster – an arranged marriage was being planned for him.



In July 1969 Bowie released *Space Oddity*, the song that would give him his initial commercial breakthrough. Timed to coincide with the Apollo 11 moon landing, it was a top five UK hit. The accompanying album was originally called *Man of Words / Man of Music*, but was later reissued as *Space Oddity*.

The following year was a momentous one for Bowie. His brother Terry was committed to a psychiatric institution (and would kill himself in 1985), and his father died. In March, Bowie married Angela Barnett, an art student. He dumped Pitt and recruited the driven and aggressive Tony DeFries, prompting Pitt to sue successfully for compensation. Artistically, Bowie was powering ahead. *The Man Who Sold the World* was released in the US in late 1970 and in the UK the following year under Bowie's new deal with RCA Victor, and with its daring songwriting and broody, hard-rock sound, it was the first album to do full justice to his writing and performing gifts.

ACTIVITY 3

Obituaries are very often sympathetic accounts of someone's achievements.

- ▶ **How does the writer of the Mandela paragraph begin to influence the reader's sympathies?**
- ▶ **What makes these extracts more appropriate for an obituary than for a biography?**

Copy and complete the following table, finding examples of the methods and techniques in the two extracts and commenting on their effect.

▼ METHOD OR TECHNIQUE	▼ EXAMPLE	▼ COMMENT ON EFFECT
Formal register		
Focus on factual information		
Conciseness of writing		

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

register the type or style of vocabulary used

SPEECHES

Speeches can be given for many different reasons. For example, lawyers make speeches in court for the defence or the prosecution. People make speeches as part of debates, or after dinner to entertain an audience. However, the most famous speeches are those made by politicians as part of campaigns. The purpose of such speeches is often to rally supporters and give the listeners a sense of purpose and inspiration. This is certainly true of the following speech. It was made by the American civil rights campaigner, Martin Luther King Junior, who was later assassinated for his beliefs and his work on behalf of black Americans.



As you read the speech, think about how Martin Luther King shows his listeners that he is fighting for a better and fairer society in America, using techniques such as:

- repetition of key words
- repetition of the beginning of sentences
- reference to particular individuals
- use of geographical references (different parts of the United States)
- describing the difficulties black people have faced over the years
- the idea of bringing all people together
- the use of words from a patriotic song.

The following words are taken from Martin Luther King's famous speech before large crowds of his followers at a rally in Washington DC, in August 1963.

I have a dream...

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today!

And this will be the day – this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning:

My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.

Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride,

From every mountainside, let freedom ring!

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.....

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi.

From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last! Free at last!

Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!

equal A quotation from the Declaration of Independence, written just before the start of the war against Great Britain.

Georgia Southern slave-owning state before the Civil War

colour of their skin but by the content of their character Note the alliteration and the balance of these two phrases

ring part of the American National Anthem

New York New York State, which is very large

Alleghenies range of hills

spiritual traditional hymn-like song of the Afro-Caribbeans, often originating during the era of slavery

HINT

Although you will be given credit for knowing and identifying techniques, many more marks go to good explanations of their **effects**, of **why they are used**, than to mere technique-spotting.

HINT

Some people find acronyms like the following helpful in remembering lists of terms: 'HER CRASH FACTOR'S L' (try to find a more meaningful one if you like!)

- H Hyperbole or exaggeration
- E Emotive language
- R Register
- C Contrast
- R Repetition
- A Alliteration [or assonance]
- S Structure
- H Humour
- F Figurative language (similes etc.)
- A Antithesis
- C Contrast
- T Tripling
- O Onomatopoeia
- R Rhetorical questions (and other rhetorical devices)
- S Short sentences or paragraphs
- L Lists

HINT

One of the key methods in building up a feeling or an argument is **structure**: see if you can say something about this.

The art of persuasive writing and speaking is called rhetoric (which is where the term 'rhetorical question' comes from). Rhetorical devices include many poetic techniques, since they are used to make all kinds of writing more memorable – for example, alliteration, onomatopoeia, figurative language (similes, metaphors and personification), emotive language, word choices, etc

ACTIVITY 4

Look again at the list of techniques above the extract. Copy and complete the table, adding the techniques giving an example or two of each.

METHOD OR TECHNIQUE	EFFECT
Repetition of key words	
Geographical names	

- ▶ Pick out two quotations from the passage which give you the idea that Martin Luther King believes strongly in a fair society for people of all kinds. In each case, say why the language is so successful.
- ▶ The art of persuasive writing and speaking is called rhetoric (which is where the term 'rhetorical question' comes from). Give three examples of rhetoric and explain why they are effective.

ACTIVITY 5

Effective speeches will nearly always have a strong appeal to the listeners' feelings. Copy and complete the table to help you to analyse how Luther King achieves this.

APPEALS TO	QUOTATION	COMMENT
Love of justice and fairness	'they will not be judged by the colour of their skin'	
Patriotism		
Idealism		

- ▶ How does Luther King build up strong feeling in the rightness of his cause in this extract?