The types of exam question set on **prose fiction extracts** vary according to the specification, and within each specification different kinds of question are also set for different units or modules. If the extract is from a set text, you might have to compare it with an extract from another set text, or analyse the extract in a way that shows how it relates to the novel as a whole. If the extract is unseen (i.e. you have never seen it before), you will probably have to compare it to other extracts, which may again be unseen or from texts you have studied.

**Getting started**

Whether the extract is unseen or from a set text, a good way to start is to read the extract once or twice and develop an **overview** of it. What are the **purposes** of the extract? For example, is the writer portraying **characters**, or describing a **place** or a piece of **action**? What is the **narrative viewpoint** (see below)? What kinds of **feelings** and **attitudes** does the writer seem to be encouraging in the reader? Are characters portrayed sympathetically or unsympathetically? If a setting is described, are the impressions you form of it generally positive or negative?

If the extract is from a set text, your knowledge of the rest of the book will help you answer these questions. You will also need to think about the **context** of the extract. **Where** in the set text does it occur? How is what happens here important? What aspects of the **characters** are illustrated? Are any of the novel’s **themes** evident? Do any elements in the extract **echo**, or **contrast** with, other parts of the book?

In your answer you should explore these aspects of the extract more deeply, looking closely at how the writer’s purposes and intentions are reflected in the **language** used. Listed below are some detailed aspects of style and technique that you might consider.

**Narrative viewpoint**

- Is the narration **first-person** or **third-person**?
- What kind of **narrative voice** is created (especially important with first-person narration)?
- What kind of relationship exists between **narrator and reader**? Is the reader addressed directly?

**Dialogue**

- How is the dialogue presented (direct/indirect/free direct/free indirect)?
- How close is the dialogue to **natural speech**?
- How does the speech of **individual characters** differ?
- How do characters **interact**? What does the dialogue reveal about **relationships** between characters?
- How does the author’s (or narrator’s) **accompanying commentary** influence the way we interpret the dialogue?
- Are characters’ **thoughts** presented – if so, how?
**Lexis**

- How **formal** or **informal** is the lexis used?
- Is any of the vocabulary **non-standard**?
- What are the **connotations** of individual words? Are there groups of words with similar connotations?
- Is any use made of **imagery**, including **simile, metaphor** and **personification**?
- How are the impressions we form of the **characters** influenced by the lexis used (either in their own speech, or in descriptions of them)?
- Does the lexis reflect the **period** the text was written, or the time it is set?

**Examiner’s secrets**

Remember that if you identify a language feature, you should always quote one or more **examples**, and comment on the effect or significance of the feature.

**Grammar**

- What types of word (**verbs, adjectives** etc.) are used, and to what effect?
- What types of sentence are used (**declarative, imperative, interrogative, exclamatory**)?
- Are any sentences unusually **long** or **short**?
- Is any of the grammar **non-standard**?
- Is **word order** important in any of the sentences?
- Are techniques such as **parallelism** and **repetition** used in structuring any of the sentences?
- Does the structure of any of the sentences have a **rhythmic** effect?
- Are any effects achieved by the use of **first, second** and **third person**?
- Is **tense** significant?
- Does the grammar reflect **historical period** in any way?

**Phonology**

- Are any phonological devices (**onomatopoeia, alliteration** etc.) used?

**Checkpoint 2**

**What is non-standard grammar?**

**Discourse structure**

- How is the extract **organised**, and how does it **develop**?
- Are there any particular comments you can make about how the extract **begins** and how it **ends**?
- Is **paragraphing** significant? Do changes in paragraph correspond to changes in perspective (point of view) or tone?

**Exam practice**

See the next section (pages 96–97) for some prose fiction extracts that can be used for exam practice.
What are non-literary texts?

This first section on non-literary texts considers the problematic question of how we distinguish between literary and non-literary texts. It also lists some examples of non-literary genres and outlines some general principles to bear in mind when you are analysing non-literary texts.

Literary and non-literary texts

Although some texts (a play by Shakespeare, for example) are obviously literary, while others (such as a passport application form) are equally obviously non-literary, the division between the two kinds of writing is not always so clear-cut. The private diary, for instance, is usually considered a non-literary genre, but many would argue that Samuel Pepys’s famous 17th-century diaries are a work of literature. In terms of language, many of the features we associate with literature (such as the use of simile and metaphor) can be found in non-literary texts as well. So the list below of common ways of distinguishing between literary and non-literary texts should be read with caution – many texts are hard to categorise, and no definition of what we mean by ‘literature’ is completely secure.

- Literary texts can be divided into three broad genres: poetry, drama and prose fiction. This is the most useful criterion; texts that fall outside these genres can usually be described as non-literary.
- Literary texts are usually imaginative rather than factual, while the opposite is true of non-literary texts.
- Literary texts use language creatively, and compared to non-literary texts are more likely to include such features as imagery, onomatopoeia, parallelism, rhyme and so on.
- Literary texts are generally more valued than non-literary texts, and appreciation of them may be more lasting. Many non-literary texts are intended to be only of temporary use.
- Literary texts usually have an artistic purpose, while non-literary texts often have a clear practical purpose.

Types of non-literary texts

Some examples of non-literary texts are shown below. You will encounter many or even all of these during your AS/A2 course, but the list is not exhaustive. Also remember that as explained above there is not a rigid distinction between literary and non-literary texts: there are examples of travel writing, for example, that might be described as literature.

- Newspaper articles
- Magazine articles
- Advertising/promotional material
- New technology texts (websites, e-mails, text messages)
- Biographical/autobiographical writing
- Diaries and journals
- Letters

Later in this chapter there are sections on the specific features of advertisements (pages 148–149), newspaper articles (pages 150–151) and new technology texts (pages 152–153).
Informative, instructional and educational texts
Travel writing
Scientific writing
Historical writing
Leaflets, brochures
Legal documents
Spontaneous, unplanned speech (e.g. conversations)
Speeches

### Analysing non-literary texts

In many ways your approach to analysing any kind of text – whether literary or non-literary – should be the same. Essentially, you try to identify the **effects** the writer or speaker wishes to have, and then look at how **language** is used to achieve these effects. In analysing the language you can make use of five language frameworks: **lexis, grammar, phonology, graphology** and **discourse structure**.

Another key principle that applies to all text analysis answers is that a typical analytical ‘point’ will have three elements to it:

1. **Identification of a language feature**, using appropriate **terminology**.
2. **One or more examples**, in the form of **quotations** from the text.
3. **Comment on the effects** achieved or intended, or on the **reasons** for the language feature being present.

With many non-literary texts, your understanding of what writers or speakers are trying to achieve, and how they use language, will be increased if you give careful consideration to **purpose, genre** and **audience**:

- **Purpose**  As mentioned earlier, non-literary texts often have a very clear purpose. The primary purpose of advertisements, for example, is usually to persuade, while entries in dictionaries and encyclopaedias are obviously intended to inform. These purposes will influence the type of language that is used.
- **Genre**  Particular genres have specific conventions relating to language use, and you should be alert to these when analysing texts. Diaries, for instance, often have a compressed, telegraphic style, with the use of abbreviations and grammatically incomplete sentences.
- **Audience**  Many non-literary texts target very specific audiences (magazines are an obvious example), and again this will have an influence on language.

---

**Exam practice 20 minutes**  
**Text A** on page 154 is an extract from a diary kept by a soldier during the First World War. Analyse the writer’s use of language, commenting in particular on how the language of the extract reflects the fact that it is a diary.
Newspaper articles

This section outlines some of the important language features of newspaper articles, focusing in particular on the key differences between broadsheet and tabloid newspapers.

**Broadsheets and tabloids**

**Broadsheet** newspapers include such papers as *The Times* and *The Guardian*. Examples of **tabloid** newspapers are *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*. The **content** of tabloids tends to be quite lightweight, with stories about celebrities and extensive coverage of television, pop music and other forms of entertainment. In the broadsheets, serious news stories such as those involving politics and foreign affairs are covered in more detail, and there is more reporting of the arts and 'highbrow' culture (for example, there are more reviews of books and plays).

Tabloids and broadsheets have different **audiences**. Broadsheet readers tend to be educated, middle class and in professional occupations. Tabloids tend to have a mainly working-class readership.

There are important differences in the **language** that is used by broadsheets and tabloids. These can be examined more closely by looking at the following aspects of newspaper language: **headlines, lexis, grammar, discourse structure** and **graphology**.

**Headlines**

- Usually a headline **summarises** the content of the story – e.g. **SNOW CAUSES TRAFFIC CHAOS**. Broadsheet headlines are sometimes more detailed, and therefore more informative, than tabloid headlines.
- Other **purposes** of headlines can include: arousing interest by creating a sense of **drama** and **excitement**; seeking to entertain through the use of **humour**; influencing the reader's point of view by the use of a headline that is **biased**. These purposes tend to be more obviously apparent in tabloid headlines, but can also be present in broadsheet newspapers.
- **Linguistic features** of newspaper headlines include the use of **simple** and **informal** lexis: **journalese** (see *Lexis* below); **puns**; **ellipsis** (compressed, grammatically incomplete sentences); **noun phrases** (e.g. PETROL PRICE RISE SHOCK, that is a single noun phrase); **present-tense verbs** (which create a sense of immediacy, so readers feel they are reading the very latest news); **phonological** devices such as onomatopoeia and alliteration. Again most of these features occur more often in tabloid headlines.

**Lexis**

- In tabloids, the lexis tends to be **simple** and direct. Vocabulary in broadsheets is more **complex** and sophisticated, with greater use of **polysyllabic** words.
- Tabloid lexis also tends to be **less formal**. Conversational expressions are often present, and individuals who feature in stories may be referred to familiarly (for example, by their first names).
Journalese is more common in tabloids. These are newspaper clichés - words that occur repeatedly in newspapers, such as storm, soar, row, probe, boost.

Lexis in tabloids is often more obviously emotive, dramatic and sensational. Modifiers often have an emotional impact (e.g. tragic, brave). Broadsheets tend to be more factual and informative.

Bias tends to be more obvious in tabloids. Words often have connotations that are clearly positive or negative. In broadsheets the tone may be more neutral, or bias may be expressed more subtly.

**Grammar**

Tabloids use a large number of short sentences, which are often simple or compound. In broadsheets sentences tend to be longer, making more demands upon the reader. Complex sentences, often with two or more subordinate clauses, occur more frequently.

Fronted conjunctions (which occur when sentences begin with a conjunction such as And or But) are more common in tabloids.

Tabloids often rely on simple connectives (especially and, but, now) to achieve cohesion. In broadsheets a wider range of cohesive devices is employed.

**Discourse structure**

The opening paragraphs of news reports usually summarise the key facts.

In tabloids, paragraphs are generally short and often only one sentence long. In broadsheets, paragraphs tend to be longer, and articles as a whole tend to be more detailed.

Closing paragraphs are often used to provide background information or to give the latest available news.

**Graphology**

In tabloids there is more extensive use of graphological features, to make the text eye-catching and accessible.

Tabloids avoid too much dense text. Articles are usually short and paragraphs are also brief.

In tabloids there is more typographical variation, with the use of bold print, italics etc.
Here is a checklist of terms it would be useful for you to know, arranged into categories such as lexis, grammar, phonology etc. These terms are all explained elsewhere in the book (use the Index to find the relevant pages), and many are also in the Glossary that begins on page 194.

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adjacency pair
In conversation, a two-part exchange (e.g. a question followed by an answer).

adjective
A word used to describe a noun.

adverb
Usually a word that gives more information about a verb. Many adverbs end in -ly (e.g. slowly, carefully).

adverbial
An element in a sentence that usually indicates when, where or how something happened.

alliteration
When two or more words begin with the same sound.

ambiguity
Having more than one possible meaning.

anaphoric reference
A reference back to something mentioned earlier in a text.

antithesis
When words, ideas etc. are directly opposite in meaning.

archaism
A word or expression that has fallen out of use.

assonance
The rhyming of vowel sounds within two or more words.

asynthetic listing
A list that does not use conjunctions.

auxiliary verb
A 'helping' verb placed in front of a main verb (e.g. I will see you).

blank verse
Unrhymed poetry based on the iambic pentameter.

cataphoric reference
A reference forward to something mentioned later in a text.

cohesion
The techniques used to link together different parts of a text.

comparative
An adjective that makes a comparison, such as bigger, worse, better.

complex sentence
A sentence with a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses.

compound sentence
Two simple sentences combined to form a single sentence by the use of a co-ordinating conjunction (and, but or so).

conjunction
A word that joins together parts of a sentence (e.g. and, but).

connotations
The associations that a word has.

decorative sentence
A sentence that makes a statement or gives information.

deuexis
'Pointing' words (deictic expressions), often referring to place (e.g. over there) or time (e.g. yesterday).

denotation
The straightforward, objective dictionary meaning of a word.

determiner
A word placed in front of a noun to indicate quantity or identify the noun in some way. The most common determiners are a, an and the.

dialect
A form of language with distinctive features of vocabulary, grammar etc. Usually the term refers to regional dialect (e.g. Geordie, Cockney).

discourse marker
Words that indicate links or divisions between parts of (usually spoken) discourse (e.g. well, anyway).

dramatic irony
In drama, when something said by a character has an additional meaning or significance, apparent to the audience but not to the character.

dissision
The omission of a sound or syllable (e.g. o'er instead of over).

eclipsis
When elements are missing from a clause or a sentence.

emotive language
Language intended to produce an emotional response in the reader or listener.
enjambement
In poetry, when the sense of one line continues into the next, and the end of the first line has no punctuation mark.

exclamatory sentence
An emphatic sentence ending in an exclamation mark.

false start
In speech, a change from one grammatical construction to another.

field-specific lexis
Words associated with a particular topic or field.

filled pause
A voiced hesitation (e.g. um, er).

filler
A word or expression with little meaning inserted into speech (e.g. like, you know).

first person
Use of first person pronouns such as I, me, we, us.

foregrounding
Using word order to highlight part of a sentence.

genre
A type of text (e.g. short story, newspaper article).

hyperbole
Intentional exaggeration.

iambic pentameter
A poetic metre in which a line has five pairs of syllables, with the stress falling on the second syllable in each pair.

idiolect
The way language is used by a particular individual.

imagery
Any aspect of a text that appeals to the reader’s senses. Also used more specifically to refer to the use in literature of similes and metaphors.

imperative sentence
A sentence that gives a command or instruction.

intensifier
A word that increases or decreases the strength of another word (e.g. very, scarcely).

interrogative sentence
A sentence that asks a question.

intonation
Tone of voice.

irony
Saying the opposite of what is meant. Can also refer to an event having consequences that are the opposite of those expected or intended. See also dramatic irony.

metaphor
A comparison that is not literally true because it refers to something as if it were something else.

monologue
An extended utterance spoken by one person.

monosyllabic
Having one syllable.

neologism
A new word or expression.

non-fluency features
Features that interrupt the flow of a person’s speech.

noun
A word that names an object, person, feeling etc.

omniscient narrator
In prose fiction, an ‘all seeing, all knowing’ narrator.

onomatopoeia
When words imitate the sounds they describe (e.g. splash, buzz).

oral signal
An expressive sound such as mmm or a laugh, sigh etc.

parallelism
When parts of sentences (or complete sentences) have a similar pattern or structure.

passive voice
Using a verb in a way that emphasises the object of an action rather than the person or thing performing the action (e.g. The man was questioned by the police instead of The police questioned the man).

pathetic fallacy
A literary technique that uses natural elements (such as the weather) to reflect human moods and emotions.

persona
In a literary work, a narrator who is a character created by the author.

personification
When something not human is described as if it were.
phatic utterances
‘Small talk’ – utterances that mean little but serve a social purpose.

polysyllabic
Having three or more syllables.

post-modifiers
Words that follow other words or phrases, giving us more information (e.g. the house across the road).

pre-modifiers
Words placed in front of other words or phrases, giving us more information (e.g. the bright red door).

preposition
A word that indicates how one thing is related to something else (e.g. The book is on the table).

pronoun
A word that takes the place of a noun (e.g. he, it).

prosodic features
Phonological aspects of speech such as intonation, pitch and volume.

pun
A humorous play on words, dependent on a word or phrase having a double meaning.

Received Pronunciation (RP)
The accent associated with upper-class speakers of English.

register
The form of language appropriate to a particular situation.

repair
An utterance that resolves a problem in a conversation (e.g. a speaker correcting themselves).

rhetorical features
Traditional devices and techniques used to make speech or writing more powerful and persuasive.

rhetorical question
A question that does not require an answer.

second person
Use of second person pronouns such as you and your.

semantic field
A group of words with linked or associated meanings.

sibilance
The repetition of s, soft c, sh and z sounds.

simile
A comparison that uses the words like or as.

grammatically correct
A sentence that has one clause.

soliloquy
In drama, an extended speech by a character, heard by the audience but not by the other characters.

sonnet
A poem of 14 lines, usually with a traditional rhyme scheme and a rhythm based on the iambic pentameter.

Standard English
The ‘standard’, formally correct variety of English, used in most written texts and taught in schools.

subordinate clause
A clause in a sentence that is of less importance than the main clause, and which cannot stand on its own and make sense.

sub-plot
A secondary plot running alongside the main plot of a play or a novel.

superlative
An adjective meaning ‘the most’ of something (e.g. biggest, worst, best).

syndetic listing
A list with one or more conjunctions.

syntax
An aspect of grammar, referring to the ways in which words are put together to form sentences.

taboo language
Words that are avoided because they are considered offensive or obscene.

tag question
A question attached to the end of a statement (e.g. It’s hot, isn’t it?).

third person
Grammatical constructions that do not use the first or second person. This may involve nouns (e.g. The house is a ruin) or third person pronouns (e.g. It is a ruin).

topic
In spoken language, the subject being talked about. A topic marker is an utterance introducing a topic. A topic shift is a change of topic. A topic loop occurs when there is a return to an earlier topic.

unvoiced pause
A silent pause.

verb
A word that refers to a physical or mental action (e.g. run, think) or to a ‘state’ (e.g. seems, is).