## The National 5 Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation Exam

The exam tests your ability to **understand** the writer's ideas, and to **analyse and evaluate** the language he/she uses to put those ideas across. You will earn marks for everything you get right.

1. You will be tested on this by sitting an exam in May of your National 5 year.

2. Try to read regularly a quality newspaper such as the Guardian, Scotsman, Herald, Independent or The Times.

3. Do not just read the news stories near the front, but also the feature articles and opinion pieces in the later pages.

4. Expand your knowledge of language, and of how people debate and argue about their ideas, by watching television programmes such as Question Time and Newsnight.

5. Listen to radio programmes such as Radio Scotland's morning news programme.

6. If you encounter unfamiliar words, see if you can work them out from the context, or look them up.

7. You will not be able to take a dictionary into the exam, so it is important to work on building up your vocabulary, and your command of ideas.

8. You will be given a non-fiction passage, perhaps a piece of journalism or an extract from a book.

9. You will have 1 hour to read the passage and answer 30 marks' worth of questions about it.

10. Each question will probably be worth 2, 3 or 4 marks.

# Learn how to do types of questions:

## Using your own words

Many of the exam questions will ask you to use your own words.  It is the most key and basic skill in all of close reading.  If you can put something in your own words, you have understood it; if you do not understand something, you will not be able to express it in your own words.

Using your own words means you may have to:

Explain what a word or expression in the passage means

Explain the main point the writer is making

Give the reason for something that happens in the passage

Show that you understand a piece of information the passage gives

## Context Questions

You may be asked to work out from the context what a word or expression means.  In these cases, the examiners think that you may not know the given word, but that you should be able to work it out from what surrounds it in the passage.

Context questions might be worded like this:

Explain in your own words what is meant by '_____' in this context.

How does the context of lines xx-xx help you to work out what is meant by '_____'?

Work out from the context what is meant by "_____' in line xx.

Context questions are usually worth 2 marks.  You earn one mark showing what the word means, and the second for showing how you could work this out from the context.

Your answer should therefore be in 2 sentences, with the 2nd including short quotations from the context.

Use this pattern to structure your answers:

The word/expression "_____" as used here means "_____'.  I can work this from the context because…

## Imagery Questions

Writers use images to strengthen what they say by putting all sorts of pictures in the reader's mind. Imagery is not the same as description. A description tells us what something is like. An image shows that one thing is somehow like another. The comparison tells us more about the thing that is being compared. Similes, metaphors and personification are all different sorts of image, though most of the images you will be asked about will be metaphors.

There is a method for analysing images. You begin with what the image literally is like, or literally means.

Then you go on to the metaphorical meaning, showing how that image applies to and adds meaning to the subject under discussion.

## Use this structure for your analysis:

Just as…(explain the literal meaning), so …(explain the metaphorical meaning).

Example: He has a mountain of work to do.

## You could analyse the image like this:

**Just as a** mountain is large and is challenging to climb, **so the** amount of work he has to do is enormous and will be really difficult.

## Link Questions

You may be asked a link question. These often ask you to say how a sentence creates an effective link between one paragraph and another. These questions are usually worth 2 marks and you usually need to answer them in 2 parts:

1. Show how one part of the sentence links back to the previous paragraph
2. Show how another part of it refers forward to the new paragraph.

Formula for link questions:


The word/expression '_____' links back to
_____

which was discussed in paragraph _____.

The word/expression '_____' introduces the idea of
_____, which is going to be
discussed in paragraph _____.

## Tone

It is easy to understand what we mean by tone if we think of a speaking voice. When you hear someone speaking, you can tell if he/she is angry, confused, excited or afraid. Skilled writers can create a tone by word choice. Some of the most common tones that crop up in exam questions are humorous, matter –of-fact, critical, angry, conversational, formal, informal, etc.

**Sentence structure questions:** Sentence structure is how a sentence is made and built up. A number of smaller techniques contribute to sentence structure:

a. **Length:** Look at whether a sentence is noticeably long, or noticeably short, especially if its length contrasts with the length of other sentences nearby.
b. **Listing:** what is being listed and what does the list suggest?
c. **Repetition:** what is being repeated, and what does this repetition suggest?
d. **Parenthesis:** what is the extra information inside the parenthesis and what is the effect of this?
e. **Word order**: have any words been put in a position in the sentence that creates emphasis? What is the impact of this?
f. **Colons or semicolons**: what do these divide the sentence into? What do colons introduce?
g. **Minor sentences:** these ungrammatical (usually short) sentences are used to create some kind of impact, so what is the impact?
h. **Rhetorical questions:** what is the effect of these on the reader?

## MORE TIPS to help you succeed:

## Tick off when you have completed/understood the following:

- Study all the notes issued.
- Learn how to answer types of questions (context/ imagery/ sentence structure/link/summary)
- Bullet point wherever possible: Use a clear, logical layout.
- Understand that paraphrase in 'Understanding' questions is essential: Key points…Main ideas…Good/Bad points…Before/After …Similarities/Differences…etc means using your own words. Do not 'lift' key words from the passage.

- WORD CHOICE questions (select key word/words)
  - 'Hounded' (1 mark) suggests 'pestered'/pursue
  - "A threatening cloud lurked on the horizon". Lurked has connotations of something hiding out of view, waiting to make its move.
  - "Infuriate" has connotations of extreme outrage.

- Quote an expression (select a few key words)

  "circled the globe"/'around the world"

- For sentence structure questions you must be able to comment on (explain the impact) what you identify
  - Length of sentences (short or long)
  - Short, simple sentences: abrupt/concise/suggestion of uncertainty
  - Long sentence: To convey complexity
  - One word sentence?
  - Separated sentence?
  - Positioning of sentence (at beginning of paragraph/end of paragraph)
  - Look at beginning and end of paragraph
  - Beginning – Look at topic sentence at beginning to set up paragraph
  - End – It often sums up/concludes
  - Look for repetition:  Of a word? A parallel structure?
  - Look at items in a list (do they have anything in common?)
  - Look for parallel sentence structure (He said…He said.)
  - Look at word order:
  - "Practised, she did."  The positioning of "practised" at the beginning of the sentence inverts (changes the usual word order of) the sentence.  This draws attention to/emphasises how often/frequently they had to rehearse/practise.  It puts the emphasis on 'practised' to show how often they had to do it.

- PUNCTUATION:  Identify and explain why the following are used :

  - COLON (introduces a list)
  - SEMI – COLON
  - DASHES (are used to add additional information about a specific thing)
  - INVERTED COMMAS  ('autopilot' highlights it is jargon/used figuratively – it is not literally the case)
  - PARENTHESIS (double dashes, brackets and double commas)
  - LISTS (purpose of colons & semi colons )
  - EXCLAMATION MARKS
  - QUESTION MARKS

- Look at tenses used:   Has the writer used PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE?
  - PAST: previous/nostalgia/reflection/already happened)
  - PRESENT: current/immediate/involving and engaging reader/happening now – ending in 'ing' suggests ongoing activity
  - FUTURE: intention/hope/prediction/not definite

- For technique questions you must explain the use /effect of:
    - SIMILE – A comparison using like or as ('The boy is greedy like a pig') to describe something
    - METAPHOR – Saying something is something else ('The boy is a pig') that it cannot be
    - ALLITERATION – Repetition of consonant letters (Peter Piper picked a peck…)
    - ONOMATOPOEIA – A word which describes the sound it makes ('whizz', 'whisper', 'whistling')
    - PERSONIFICATION – Giving an object a human quality ('The wind whistled')

Extended metaphor: 'swamped', 'tidal wave', 'trickle'.  The extended metaphor of "swamped", "tidal wave" and 'trickle`' helps to illustrate the point the writer is making: that there are few immigrants or refugees.  The connotations of 'tidal wave' and 'swamped 'suggest a mass of water rushing with unstoppable force onto the land and drowning it. 'Trickle' suggests a small amount of water.  It shows contrast.