

ACTIVITY 2

A01

SKILLS ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ THEMES AND IDEAS

Copy and complete the following table. Find evidence of each theme in the article and discuss your findings.

THEME	▼ COMMENT	▼ EVIDENCE
Failed schooling	Zephaniah describes his poor start in life, which contrasts with what he achieves later despite the difficulties faced at school.	
Challenging teachers		
Things not being what they seemed / what people would expect them to be		
Escaping, avoiding things and coping		
Turning things round		
Creativity		

EXPLORING LANGUAGE

KEY POINT

Sometimes, non-fiction writers hold back from giving their full reaction to create a space in which the reader can fill with their own reaction.

An even tone is maintained in the opening paragraphs, despite the fact that Zephaniah is describing events that troubled him at the time. He reports events without reacting to them. In this way, readers are encouraged to draw their own conclusions, and this makes Zephaniah's points more convincing. On two occasions, he simply tells readers what he thought when faced with a teacher whose comments troubled him. This shows the reader an example of his reacting without making things worse. Zephaniah shows his self-restraint when provoked. In his final two paragraphs, he provides encouragement and a challenge with the striking phrases, 'creativity muscle' and 'Bloody nondyslexics ... who do they think they are?'.

A short, introductory paragraph conveys Zephaniah's conclusion from the outset and engages with the reader: 'We are the architects, we are the designers'. The writing is matter-of-fact and lacks self-pity. From being thrown out of schools to his appointment as a professor of poetry at a university, he presents important events in his life in chronological order, to show how he came to see beyond his troubles as a teenager and turned them into something positive, from which both he and the reader can learn.