

DESCRIPTORS FOR LANGUAGE

KEY POINT

Learning the technical terms for descriptive effects will allow you to express yourself more precisely in your analysis of writing.

Many students find it difficult to think of ways to describe the effects of language and tend to overuse words like 'descriptive' when it is not strictly accurate, or rely on vague phrases such as 'draws the reader in'. Try using some of the following alternatives.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Alliteration and assonance | Makes language more emphatic/more rhythmic/more memorable. |
| Onomatopoeia | Makes phrases more vivid and powerful. |
| Descriptive phrasing | Makes the reader imagine the scene. |
| Verbs of motion and action | Make the language more dynamic and energetic. |
| Wordplay, exaggeration | Makes writing light-hearted, amusing. |
| Abstract nouns | Make writing more intellectual or more to do with ideas. |
| Repetition | Emphasises a particular point or word. |
| A mixture of techniques | Makes language varied or lively. |

Other techniques include:

- anaphora
- balanced phrases
- allusions
- juxtaposition.

Look these technical terms up in a dictionary and see if you can find examples in the texts in this book.

USING SENTENCE TYPES FOR EFFECT

HINT

Help yourself to learn these different types of sentence by thinking of and writing an example of each one.

There are two obvious ways of classifying sentence types: by their function and by their grammatical complexity.

SENTENCE FUNCTION

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Statements | Dominant in informative writing and narrative in stories. |
| Questions | Common in dialogue and in explorative articles. They can be used in speeches to engage the audience, particularly in the form of rhetorical questions. |
| Exclamations | Mainly found in dialogue, but also in first-person accounts of adventures, real-life experiences and so on. |
| Commands | Usually found in dialogue and instructions. They use the imperative form of the verb (for example, 'Come on, let's move.') |
| Wishes | Expressions of thoughts and feelings often found in diaries, letters and dialogue (for example, 'If only I hadn't done that'). |

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Simple sentences | Consist of only one main clause. |
| Compound sentences | Two or more main clauses joined by 'and', 'but', 'so' or 'or'. |
| Complex sentences | Contain at least one subordinate clause. |
| Incomplete sentences | Do not have a complete main clause; used frequently in conversation and in writing for effect or emphasis or in one-word sentences such as, 'He stopped. Silence.' |