

# Teaching Writing in the Classroom

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## Abstract:

Students often find that the feedback they receive on their written work can be vague or generic. In many cases, they struggle to understand how to present their writing and ideas in a manner that will attain the results they are after. This workshop is designed to train teachers on how to elevate their students' essay writing skills quickly and effectively, giving them methods to improve sophistication and present their analysis in a concise, clear manner. The workshop skills include the simple application of sophisticated vocabulary in comprehension and essays, written analysis of language techniques and quote integration into sentences.

## STUDENT WORK BEFORE EDITING

### **Peter Skrzynecki**

*Q. In your view, how have the poetic techniques been used to reveal memorable ideas of the poet you have studied.*

Skrzynecki's poems show us a personal insight into the migrant experience through the eyes of a child. The hardship and displacement faced by migrants as they struggle to find stability in a new country are just some of the themes expressed. In the poem Migrant Hostel (Skrzynecki, 2002) you can see the sense of displacement and uncertainty migrants are forced to endure through the figurative language. This is shown through an effective simile e.g "like birds of passage- Always sensing a change in the weather". This shows how the immigrants don't know what the future holds. This also has the reader ask, what does the future hold for them? Another concept in "Migrant Hostel" is the obstacles preventing migrants from discovering a sense of belonging in the new world. Skrzynecki's symbolism successfully emphasised the separation between the migrants and the outside world. This is conveyed through the quote "A barrier at the main gate/ Sealed off the highway/ From our doorstep".

## DECONSTRUCTING THE QUESTION

1. Underline or highlight the individual key words from the question
2. Think of synonyms for each key word
3. Link the key words from the question to the ideas you want to discuss for each paragraph
4. Write topic sentences from scratch - remember to include words from the question in your sentences
5. Write the introduction from scratch - engage with all aspects of the question throughout

## WRITING RULES

- Do not repeat words
- No contractions - do not write 'doesn't', write 'does not'
- No abbreviations - do not write etc, e.g.
- Analyse texts in present tense - for example, 'This metaphor illustrates' as opposed to 'this metaphor illustrated' (use verbs ending in -s)
- Do not repeat or paraphrase what the quotes says, analyse the effect of the technique instead or explain the idea being conveyed
- Do not use metaphors or similes in your formal writing to explain ideas. For examples, use 'perspective' instead of 'through their eyes'
- Do not use the word 'like', use 'such as'
- Do not use conjunctions (but, and) at the beginning of sentences. For example, use connectives such as 'in addition'
- Do not include questions (rhetorical or otherwise) in your writing
- Do not use more than two commas per sentence. If you have, it's too long and you need to start a new sentence
- Do not use the words 'but' or 'because'. Elevate your language and use 'however' or 'as'/'due to the fact'
- Do not to use first person such as 'we', 'I', 'us.' For example, instead of saying 'in this scene we learn about...' you could say 'This scene demonstrates...'
- Do not use second person, such as 'you' or 'your'
- Do not end sentences with connectives or prepositions such as but, with, to
- Do not use adverbs in essays as it reduces the clarity of the writing, for example 'specifically evident' or 'boldly established'
- Never have a quote in your topic sentence and do not use quotes as the topic sentence
- Never end a paragraph with a quote. If you have, then write a sentence to link back to the question
- Do not use the word 'quote' in your analysis. Work to introduce where the quote came from in the text to integrate it into a full sentence
- Ensure you only tell the details of the story that relate to the concept or idea you are discussing (this will ensure you are not telling the story, but not assuming the marker has prior knowledge of the text)

## VOCABULARY

### Connectives to build ideas

- Conversely
- However
- On the other hand
- As a result
- In addition
- Furthermore
- Moreover
- Correspondingly
- Similarly

### Connectives to summarise ideas

- Thus
- Therefore
- Hence
- Clearly
- Consequently

### Words to use instead of “show”

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Illustrate</li> <li>● Exemplify</li> <li>● Reflect</li> <li>● Demonstrate</li> <li>● Convey</li> <li>● Portray</li> <li>● Typify</li> <li>● Highlight</li> <li>● Exhibit</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Depict</li> <li>● Explored</li> <li>● Crystallise</li> <li>● Illuminate</li> <li>● Encapsulate</li> <li>● Apparent through</li> <li>● Echoed</li> <li>● Reveals</li> </ul> |
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### Senior Vocabulary

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Culmination</li> <li>● Epitomised</li> <li>● Envisaged</li> <li>● Enmeshed</li> <li>● Shrouded</li> <li>● Embedded</li> <li>● Paramount</li> <li>● Permeates</li> <li>● Elicits</li> <li>● Entrenched</li> <li>● Pervade</li> <li>● Ramifications</li> <li>● Asserts</li> <li>● Purview</li> <li>● Encompass</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Proliferate</li> <li>● Crystallised</li> <li>● Salient</li> <li>● Resonates</li> <li>● Pertinent</li> <li>● Manifest</li> <li>● Generate</li> <li>● Expound</li> <li>● Canvass</li> <li>● Compounded</li> <li>● Facilitates</li> <li>● Poignancy</li> <li>● Clarify</li> <li>● Collaborate</li> <li>● Augmented</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pontificate</li> <li>● Forged</li> <li>● Punctuated</li> <li>● Demarcate</li> <li>● Spawn</li> <li>● Suggests</li> <li>● Renders</li> <li>● Infuses</li> <li>● Exalt</li> <li>● Perplexed</li> <li>● Cultivate</li> <li>● Sustained</li> </ul> |
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## QUOTE INTEGRATION

Rules for quotations:

- Integrate quotes into the sentence to make them grammatically correct - the aim is to integrate them so that if you take out the quotation marks, the sentence still makes sense
- Never start a sentence with a quote
- Never make a quote its own sentence
- Do not repeat quotes
- Do not put quotes back to back - identify the technique in each and analyse the effect
- Do not quote in clumps. Quotes should only be 1½ lines of handwriting at the most
- Do not use quotes to say your points
- In order to integrate quotes, often just adding a bit of context before the quote will help you introduce it

Different ways to quote in sentences:

Quote:

“His limbs were nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated with fatigue and suffering”

1. Shelley uses wretched imagery to describe how Victor’s “limbs were nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated”. This illustrates the harmful ramifications of scientific endeavour on an individual who so recklessly attempts to ‘play god’.
2. Shelley uses wretched imagery to manifest a representation of Victor, as “his limbs were nearly frozen”, after having endured significant “fatigue and suffering”. This illustrates ....

NB: it is more effective to stop a quote, add some of your own detail, and then re-start it later on rather than using ellipses (...) as seen in example #2



### WRITING ANALYTICAL SENTENCES

To easily structure an analytical sentence, which provides sufficient detail, use the following structure:

Location in Text or Plot	Composer	Working Verb	Technique	Example/Quote	'Showing' Verb	Effect of Technique	Link to topic sentence / idea
In the first stanza,	Maya Angelou	uses the	diction	'leaps' and 'floats'	to show	the movement	which reflects an individual's desire for freedom.
During the scenes at the circus,	Weigel	employs	a high angle shot	of Will in the 'freakshow'	to suggest	his sense of inferiority	as he is mocked as a "perversion of nature."
In the opening of the short story,	Haggard	uses	visual imagery	of a hot volcano, which 'took their breath away'	to emphasise	the persona's realisation	that individuals can be distracted from a necessary discovery.

## ANALYSING TECHNIQUES EFFECTIVELY

You need to follow these steps to use quotes effectively:

1. Identify the technique
2. Using the **definition** of the technique, analyse the *effect* it has
3. Link the effect of the technique to the idea it conveys

Below are the definitions of techniques, an example and the effect of the technique.

**Simile – method of comparison. Likening one thing to another using the words ‘like’ or ‘as’.**

Example: “like birds of passage- Always sensing a change in the weather”

Effect: By **comparing** the migrants to “birds of passage”, the composer generates an image of their instability and transience.

**Metaphor – another method of comparison. Saying something IS something else.**

Example: “A barrier at the main gate/ Sealed off the highway/ From our doorstep”.

Effect: By **likening** the family’s gate to a metaphorical “barrier”, the composer establishes their isolation from society.

Tip for effectively analysing metaphors and similes. Follow these three steps:

1. What is being compared to what?
  - Answer: The migrants are being compared to “birds of passage”
2. What are the qualities of the comparative object?
  - Answer: A “bird of passage” is a migratory/transient/nomadic bird. (Looking the object up in the dictionary can provide excellent vocabulary to use in analysis)
3. How does this create an image of the initial object or person?
  - Answer: It creates an image of the migrants as unstable and transient.



## MARKING ESSAYS

### **Criteria 1: Writes a sustained and cohesively structured essay which responds to the question.**

- Does the length of the essay allow for the ideas to be fully explored? (around 2-3 body paragraphs)
- Are the ideas communicated in a logical structure? (normally chronologically as they appear in the text)
- Does each body paragraph prove a different point, or build on the previous idea from a new perspective?
- Does the essay have an introduction?
  - Does it answer the question? Can you see the words or the ideas from the question in the introduction?
  - Is the thesis argument clear?
  - Are the key points to support the thesis statement outlined?
  - Is the text introduced with a brief overview of how the plot links to the question?
- Does the essay have clear body paragraphs?
  - Is there a topic sentence? Are words from the question present? Is the argument clear?
  - Are there supporting examples, quotes, or pieces of evidence? Do they relate to the argument? Is the context of the quote clear?
  - Is the technique within the quote identified? Is the effect of the technique outlined? Is the analysis linked to the ideas in the topic sentence?
  - Is there a linking sentence at the end of the paragraph? Does it summarise the argument made in the paragraph, and link back to the question?
- Is there a conclusion?
  - Are the main points summarised?
  - Is the thesis reiterated?
  - Does the argument answer the given question?

### **Criteria 2: Demonstrates, through a close analysis of text, an understanding of how literary features shape ideas.**

- Are there a range of examples or quotes from throughout the text?
- Are there a range of techniques or literary features identified?
- Is there analysis of the quote and/or the technique?

- Are there a range of ideas discussed?
- Do examples help to explain the ideas?

**Criteria 3: Uses language in a controlled, insightful and fluent manner.**

- Is a range of vocabulary used?
  - Different connectives (similarly, further, however) or sequencing words (initially, following, finally)
  - Different words for 'shows' (illustrates, highlights, conveys, etc.)
  - Different words for 'uses' (utilises, employs, etc.)
- Is the writer's argument, or analysis, clear? Are there metaphors or euphemisms being used to analyse where the idea could be directly stated (e.g. changing 'through a child's eyes' to 'a child's perspective')?
- Are there more than two commas in a sentence? If so, rephrase to take some out
- Is the text analysed in present tense (suggests)?
- Are there areas where repetition could be taken out?
- Are words used in the right context to convey meaning? (there aren't any big words which are used incorrectly)
- Is the language formal? No colloquial language or slang (use 'children' instead of 'kid'), no contractions (don't, couldn't), no abbreviations (e.g., etc. &)
- Is the composer addressed formally? They need to be referred to using their full name first, then their surname (never their first name – you are not friends!)
- Are apostrophes used correctly? In essays, there should only be apostrophes used to show ownership
- Is the response written in third person? Second person (you) should be avoided, and first person (I, we) only needs to be used when the question asks for your perspective
- Are quotes integrated fluently into the sentence? No quote should be in a sentence on its own, and the word 'quote' shouldn't be in the sentence. Rather than this: *This is shown in the quote "It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen."* It would be better to integrate the quote using context from where it comes from, for example: *Orwell commences the novel by describing that "It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen."*

## The Grammar of Sentences

### The grammar of sentences

Video: Steven Pinker

<http://bigthink.com/videos/how-children-learn-language>

#### SENTENCES IN THE SYLLABUS

Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6 standard
Analyse and examine how effective authors control and use a variety of clause structures, including clauses embedded within the structure of a noun group/phrase or clause (ACELA1534, ACELA1545)	Analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of a wide range of sentence and clause structures as authors design and craft texts (ACELA1557, ACELA1569)	Explore the ways text structures, language features and stylistic choices are used in different types of texts (ACEEN005)

#### DEFINING SENTENCE TYPES

Type	Definition	Example	Sophisticated example
<b>Simple</b>	A sentence with one finite verb	He takes a deep breath.	Troubled and anxious, he takes a deep breath from deep within his chest.
<b>Compound</b>	Two or more sentences / clauses each containing a finite verb and joined by a conjunction: <i>For And Nor But Or Yet So</i>	He takes a deep breath but still feels breathless	Troubled and anxious, he takes a deep breath from deep within his chest but still feels breathless choking on his fear.
<b>Complex</b>	Two or more sentences / clauses each containing a finite verb and joined by something other than a conjunction placing the one sentence into a subordinate position to the other	<b>When</b> he takes a deep breath He still feels breathless	<b>When</b> , troubled and anxious, he takes a deep breath from deep within his chest  he still feels breathless, choking on his fear.

#### Activity 3: Determine what kind of sentences the following may be:

Simple (S) compound (CO) complex (CX) or combinations – indicate if they are sophisticated

Sentences	Type	Sophisticated?
The simplest way to make sure that we raise literate children is to teach them to read, and to show them that reading is a pleasurable activity.		
For about 30 years I have been earning my living through my words, mostly by making things up and writing them down.		
I was once in New York, and I listened to a talk about the building of private prisons		
I don't think there is such a thing as a bad book for children.		
Empathy is a tool for building people into groups, for allowing us to function as more than self-obsessed individuals.		
They liked books and they liked the books being read.		

## The Grammar of Sentences

A library is a place that is a repository of information and gives every citizen equal access to it.		
England will fall behind other developed nations because it will lack a skilled workforce.		

Sentences from Neil Gaiman 'Why our future depends on libraries reading and daydreaming', *The Guardian*  
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/15/neil-gaiman-future-libraries-reading-daydreaming>

### Activity4: Understanding sentences: Divide extracts into separate sentences

If writing is becoming its own kind of mass movement, using both new technology and global platforms, then writers with well-earned reputations should be involved.	<i>writing is becoming its own kind of mass movement, using both new technology and global platforms</i>
	<i>writers with well-earned reputations should be involved</i>

If we are not readers we cannot be writers.	.....
	.....
	.....

### REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING: see conference app

#### SENTENCE COMBINING WEBSITES

<http://www.towson.edu/ows/sentencestruct.htm>

Ottawa Writing Centre: Hypergrammar

<http://www.writingcentre.uottawa.ca/hypergrammar/sntstrct.html>

UTS Sentence Structure: Clear definitions with PDF download

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/grammar/sentence-structures.html>

Editing and proofreading

[http://school.judsonisd.org/webpages/posio/files/editandproof\\_g9\\_nc.pdf](http://school.judsonisd.org/webpages/posio/files/editandproof_g9_nc.pdf)

Purdue owl

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/01/>

Paragraph writing with activity

<http://learninghub.une.edu.au/tlc/aso/aso-online/academic-writing/beginner-paragraphs.php>

[https://www.une.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/12313/WE\\_Paragraphs\\_Academic-writing.pdf](https://www.une.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/12313/WE_Paragraphs_Academic-writing.pdf)

Ottawa Writing Centre: Hypergrammar

<http://www.writingcentre.uottawa.ca/hypergrammar/sntstrct.html>

UTS Sentence Structure

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/grammar/sentence-structures.html>

RMIT Learning Lab

<http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/sentence-construction-0>

Monash language and learning online

<http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/business-economics/commercial-law/2.2.2.xml>

Comma queen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwsanKHRkOg&list=PLo1TdazaYsoryZnM39HXDB4I9wHBGevy9&index=6>

Corrections - TED talk with comma queen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rToBZSrxjgM&t=373s>

Texting and David Crystal

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h79V\\_qUp91M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h79V_qUp91M)