

DYNAMIC ENGLISH VOCABULARY AND
GENERAL LANGUAGE COURSE

READING

Farouk Cassim

DYNAMIC ENGLISH READING SKILLS

It is one of life's great assets to be able to read a variety of texts quickly, easily and with full comprehension in order to make critical evaluations.

Anyone who pursues academic studies will need to have a substantial vocabulary and reading skills as well.

To be able to skim or scan texts, makes for effective reading. One can read a novel in a leisurely manner for enjoyment. Unfortunately, that will just not do when specific information is required in a hurry or when one needs to have an idea of the content of a book in order to plan how to study it within a certain amount of time.

This book offers the student the opportunity to understand skimming and scanning and how to use them effectively in everyday situations.

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THE VERY IMPORTANT SKILL OF SKIMMING

Skim through a book to get a 'map' of the journey to be taken.

To skim is to look at chapter headings, sub-titles, a few paragraphs here and there, pictures, graphs, tables, the blurb at the end, and whatever else stands out in a book in order to get a notion of the structure and the content.

Skimming is very useful in allowing one to grasp the main ideas of the text.

Practising Skimming

Set the clock and allow yourself five, ten or fifteen minutes to skim through the chosen text.

Have a sheet of paper ready to make a map of the ideas you encounter.

Jot down the headings and subheadings so that you get an idea of how the text has been organised.

Read the introduction if it's there. If an introduction was not provided read the first two or three paragraphs of the text.

Read the blurb which is generally found on the back cover of softcover books. This is where a brief summary of the book is generally provided.

Read the last two or three paragraphs of the text.

Look out for pictures and diagrams.

Confine yourself to reading the text that was highlighted by a teacher or facilitator to help you develop the skill of skimming. (Books bought cheaply at a sale can be used for this purpose.)

Stop reading when the alarm goes off and begin to answer the given questions.

TYPICAL QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED WHILE SCANNING AND SKIMMING A NOVEL

Every player has to warm up before a match and so too should a reader before plunging into reading a novel. Scanning and skimming will secure a bridgehead for later excursions into the novel. A set of questions, such as the following, will be very

1. Where is the novel set? Can you be more specific?
2. Can you name at least five of the characters in the novel?
3. Who is the main character?
4. Did the main character rise or fall in the course of the story?
5. Is the main character a hero or an anti hero?
6. What is the chief strength/weakness of the main character?
7. Name a character who is close to the principal character?
8. Which time period is the novel set in?
9. What appears to you to be the major theme of the novel?
10. Is the society that is being depicted stable or in transition?
11. Is the author sensitive to issues of race and gender?
12. Is the author promoting any cultural or political view?
13. Is the novel exploring any societal or personal crisis?
14. Who is telling the story? Why?
15. Is the title of the novel revealing in any way?
16. Explain whether the ending is triumphant or tragic?
17. If the book came with a blurb what did you learn from it?
18. What information did the author offer on the novel?
19. If there were any pictures what did they depict?
20. What is the main theme of the novel?

READING FOR SUCCESS WITH THE SQ3R METHOD

- Survey** Survey the title and chapter headings;
Survey introductory and concluding paragraphs;
Read the blurb on the back cover.
- Questions** Turn chapter headings into questions;
Look for any questions formulated by the author;
Answer questions on the chapter given out in class;
Ask questions beginning with: who, when, where,
what, why, so, at which point; and
Answer previous exam questions, if any.
- Read** Look for answers to the questions above;
Answer questions at the end of each chapter;
Reread chapter headings and the opening and closing
paragraph of the chapter.
Make sense of the notes you have on the chapter.
- Recite** Recall what you read and summarise its content in
your own words;
Answer orally the questions above;
Note down the names of characters and places as
well as any notable quotes.
Close your eyes and visualise the scene, character/s
and the incident that was explored and then put what
you saw in your mind's eye into words. Speak these
to yourself and later jot them down. Involve as many
senses as possible.
- Review** After having read and recited the chapter, page
through the text quickly to reacquaint yourself with
important points;
Ascertain whether the questions you asked at the
beginning were adequate and if so were they
adequately answered;
Make a mind map to check whether one thing
logically led to another.

STRATEGIES FOR READING

Predicting

Cut some 'Post-it' or similar type paper into narrow strips sufficient to cover a word or phrase temporarily. Get a friend to cover some words and phrases randomly on a page of a novel that is being studied. Now read the page of the novel and attempt to guess the words that were masked. This exercise is called 'close procedure'. It does not require answers to match exactly with the original words. Any word that is close enough is acceptable. If this exercise is done repeatedly, a learner will become skilful at predicting the next word in a sentence without seeing it. This skill is essential in speed reading.

Another very useful exercise is to stop a movie at a predetermined moment and to ask learners to predict the likely response, riposte, rejoinder or reaction that one of the actors is about to make. Anyone who has a DVD player can make this into a game for personal growth as well as for social occasions to entertain friends or family members. Where characters have a predilection for stock phrases and catchwords, the task of predicting will become relatively simple.

A slightly more taxing game is to print two pages of a play with the lines for one of the two characters being erased. Learners must then attempt to reconstruct the original dialogue.

Finally, the joy of reading or watching drama is to be able to anticipate the next scene or to fret about what turn the drama is going to take. When the mind is rolling forward and a heightened expectation exists, the reader or viewer becomes fully involved. Serial stories with cliff-hanger endings will always get readers into a tizzy and a reader will be compelled to go on reading to discover the outcome. It is a good idea for a reluctant reader to borrow books with cliff-hanger endings.

Bringing Prior Knowledge into Play

Learning is about progressing from the known to the unknown. Anyone who has prior knowledge of a subject will be able to read new material with greater ease and comprehension. Choose, therefore, to read books on a familiar subject. If you have not got there yet, use a support group of fellow students to stimulate your interest in a subject through their own enthusiasm for it. This will give you a platform from which you can launch your own successful reading programme.

The internet is useful in helping you to become familiar with a subject and the vocabulary that goes with it. The desire for reading is in exact proportion to one's interest in a subject.

Write down two interests that you have. Choose the one that is more appealing to you and then ask a librarian to help you find books on that subject. You will find that prior subject knowledge and familiarity with the vocabulary that comes with it will make the reading easier and more enjoyable. Use this technique over an adequate period to become an avid reader.

Getting to Terms with the Vocabulary

Involving classmates in preparing a special dictionary, comprising words chosen from the novel being studied, ought to be the first step in reading a novel. Each learner should take responsibility for a proportionate number of pages. The results of the collaboration can then be collected and compiled into a special dictionary. On account of the polysemous nature of words, care has to be exercised in choosing meanings that fit the context.

It is also very useful to learn to infer the meaning of words. A reader should develop strategies to guess the meaning of a word in context. Reading is a process of hypothesis formation and verification. Context clues, within the sentence or adjacent sentences, will have to be used to infer the meaning of words.

Rereading

It is one thing to read a novel at the purely literal level for the enjoyment of the story. It is quite another thing to examine the multiple interpretations that a really good novel permits.

Novels can be interpreted using a classical, psychological, historical, or sociological approach. Some readers and critics may even opt for a feminist or Marxist interpretation of a novel. Other critics may engage in interpreting novels using deconstruction or post-structuralist theories. Every novel lends itself to rereading depending on what inferences the reader wants to make.

Rereading is also useful in allowing a reader to discover something that was missed in the first reading. The meaning of a novel will certainly become clearer when it is reread. At times the rereading can be a random exercise with the reader moving back or forth waiting for the mind to pounce on something. It's the equivalent of watching the highlights of a match or game.

At other times it can involve scanning for something specific. In the classroom and at home rereading ought to be confined to a few pages at a time.

Questions could then be asked and answered.

Reviewing

A reader who engages in reviewing material, studies it again to make certain that the key ideas and issues were correctly understood and remembered.

Reviewing involves rereading, visualising how the points or ideas were connected, defining words, formulating questions and making a summary. Reviewing is an important skill in pursuing academic studies. Reviewing texts on a daily basis enables one to become familiar with it.

QUESTIONS TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT A NOVEL

What is the character's gender, age, nationality, marital status and economic standing?

Who are the character's companions, friends and enemies?

At a first glance, is the character good, noble, evil, heroic or repulsive?

What passion, interest or necessity drives the character and what is the extent to which he or she is driven?

Is the character's name, wealth, standing, status, freedom, love or life in danger?

Is the character physically attractive, ugly, or challenged in any way?

What is the character's educational and social background?

Is the character real, historical, mythological or fictional?

Is the character relaxed, calm, agitated, stressed, moody, aggressive, passive, assertive, or violent?

What influence or power does the character wield?

Is the character the agent of an action or the victim of an action?

Are there any words or phrases that the character often uses? If so, what are they and how often are they used? Why?

Is any character involved in narrating the story and, if so, how objective is the narrator?

Does anyone in the novel provide any judgment of the character and, if so, how reliable is it?

CREATIVE READING

People read for enjoyment and for information. There are also those who read to improve their own writing. Every learner can draw on a novel for ideas to reshape a character or an existing scene in order to fit a local setting. Here are some exercises to be undertaken after reading and rereading a novel or a short story.

Rewrite a part of the story where you yourself are now the main character. Change the setting of the story to make it resemble the place where you live and include some characters from your neighbourhood to replace those in the novel.

Rewrite a section of the story so that a part which you considered was boring and irrelevant is now altered to your liking.

Rewrite the last two pages of the story to substantially alter the end of the story.

Choose a section in the novel where the central character has reached a point of crisis and has to resort to a friend for advice, assistance, and support. Rewrite this section so that you are the friend to whom the character turns for support.

Change the first chapter of the novel into a film script with the appropriate dialogue, for a company that produces movies.

Write a short story based on one of the minor figures in the novel. Make sure that you begin at an intriguing point and allow the character to be portrayed through his / her actions, reactions and interactions. Use the flashback technique to fill in some necessary history. Finally, you must ensure that the ending is both believable and logical in respect of the story.

FINDING INFORMATION ON A TOPIC

Organising a Search Strategy:

A search strategy is required to find information in a swift, efficient and logical manner. The first part of the strategy is to find appropriate books and internet resources. The second part will involve the formulation of a plan to extract the information.

Preparing a Table of Contents

Preparing a table of contents upfront is like having a plan prior to building a house. It helps one to proceed with the task in hand in an organised and efficient way. If the topic for research was 'Nutrition for Health' the table of contents could be:

Essential amino acids;

Dietary fibre, fresh fruits and vegetables;

Vitamins, minerals & trace elements; and

Fatty acids / Carbohydrates and sugars

Reading in Detail

It saves a lot of time, when reading a book in detail, to highlight, underline or annotate text that has a bearing on each topic listed in the table of contents. If the book has been borrowed, however, it should certainly not be defaced in this way. A practical alternative for the reader would be to slip in a piece of paper between the pages of the book, with a note for later reference.

Writing up the Information

Where the information has been gathered in keeping with a table of contents, the writing up will naturally be greatly facilitated and quickened.

INFERRING MEANINGS OF WORDS AND PHRASES

Reading is a complex activity. It usually communicates a surface meaning, which is easy to grasp, and an underlying meaning which one has to infer with some effort. Some words have a normal denotative as well as a connotative meaning.

It is important, therefore, not to take a word at its face value. A reader who has some knowledge of the author and is conversant with the conventions of social communication will be able to work out the author's tone and intention. This is important in inferring context and discovering the unstated meanings and implications of statements. Thus reading is not about finding the meanings of words but rather of inferring their meaning.

Consider the following paragraph:

"Some intuition told me I shouldn't see Mr Mandela behind bars," Coetsee explained later about that initial meeting. It was an act of historic tact. With the geniality of royalty, Mandela introduced his "warder" to his nurses and chided him for not having come to see him sooner. To Coetsee, Mandela came across as a "man of Old World values".

"Though I acted as though this was the most normal thing in the world, I was amazed," Mandela wrote later of that first visit.

Obituary: Kobie Coetsee by Paul Trehwela in The Independent. London, Aug 7, 2000.

At the surface level we learn of the first meeting between Kobie Coetsee, the then Minister of Justice, and Mr. Nelson Mandela..

who was at that time still a political prisoner. We are informed that this was their initial meeting and that the National Party Minister regarded Mr Mandela as being a man of ‘Old World’ values. He was appreciative of that because it enabled him to be received with great civility. We are also left in no doubt that there was no open hostility between the two men, and that for both of them this rare meeting was important.

As we unpack the meaning of the text we understand why the words ‘intuition’, and ‘historic tact’ are placed in inverted commas.

If a meeting with Mr. Mandela was to take place it would have to be on an equal footing, not behind prison bars. The fact that the word “warder” is also in inverted commas indicates that Mr. Mandela, for his part, also did not strictly regard Mr. Coetsee as his warder. Both of them were acting at an intuitive level and comprehending the significant issues of the day in a strange meeting of the minds. They were reaching out to each other. There was no sullenness and hostility.

Later events confirmed for Mr. Coetsee’s that his ‘intuition’ and ‘tact’ had guided him correctly in choosing an appropriate time and place for his visit. Mr. Mandela felt that his intuition had likewise guided him correctly.

As it happened, the hospital ward proved to be the perfect venue for the breaking of the ice between the arch rivals. It gave the Minister a good human reason for meeting the most famous prisoner in South Africa (we know this from prior knowledge) and it allowed Mr. Mandela to receive him as a fellow human being solicitous of his welfare. The prisoner met his chief warder with the ‘geniality of royalty’. Not only that. Mr Mandela took it

upon himself to introduce his “warder” to the nurses as a gentleman with a sense of humour and good manners would. He also jokingly chided Mr. Coetsee for not having come to see him sooner.

He showed grace, good breeding and forbearance in receiving his visitor. These were the ‘old world values’ that made such an indelible impression on the visitor.

Implications of learning how to make inferences

Reading does not take place in a vacuum. A person will bring prior, current and ancillary knowledge to bear on the text and give it context. The reader, as such, is not just a passive recipient of information; but its active interrogator and expander: one who looks at words but simultaneously looks beneath them and beyond them.

With habit the discerning reader will take account of what is said and what is omitted to construct a proper meaning and thereby absorb its lessons and truth.

To infer is to comprehend at a deeper level. Yet it is more than that. It is to arrive at broader judgments and conclusions. It is the process through which one becomes the repository of knowledge. Reading and inferring should go together as you and your cell phone or the Sunday skaters and their boards – inseparable!

The reader who learns how to make inferences will be able to use contexts to infer the meaning of unfamiliar or unknown words and understand both the literal and figurative meanings of other words. Such a reader will also infer the wider and deeper meanings inherent in a text. What a skill to possess!

Implications For Writing

Critical readers will go to great lengths to interpret the words, thoughts, techniques, and integrity of writers. This is as it should be. They are reading for ideas after all.

The onus is therefore on writers to make their meaning clear and their purpose plain. To do so they must select vocabulary that is appropriate, and examples that convincingly illustrate the point that they want to make. It is common cause that everything which is written and published will be interpreted differently.

It is therefore important to safeguard the message. Even so, the words in print will be treated in a manner that is either friendly or hostile, factual or biased and informed or ignorant. Writers have no other recourse but to be exact and truthful. The words they use and the examples they give must withstand rigorous scrutiny.

Writers who are in search of precision also turn to figurative language to evoke images which help them to portray an experience as realistically and faithfully as possible. Word economy is as important as word selection. Terms that become overused lose their potency and are like ghosts. Images too also become hackneyed and forfeit their effect. Everything has to be made anew to be taken seriously. Novelty arouses interest.

What then is the lesson for writers? It is simply that critical readers are not interested in what is laid out on the surface. They wish to burrow beneath to see what is lurking there. They wish to make inferences; explore the nuances; relish the images, consider the examples and evaluate the writer's art, honesty and purpose.

Whatever is bogus will get short shrift. Whatever writing is without layers will get discarded.

On the other hand where there is value the writer will get engagement. Writers will therefore need to say things at the literal and the inferential level. They will need to challenge the mind and also touch the heart.

INFERRING THE MEANING OF UNKNOWN WORDS

You can begin by determining whether the word is a noun, verb or adjective. The adjective will generally pose fewer difficulties than the verb or noun because it can be more readily substituted or understood as an intensifier of some kind or the other.

To guess the meaning of a verb intelligently one will have to keep in mind how a particular sentence is constructed. In a compound sentence there are two verbs. The one could therefore throw light on the other.

With complex sentences, it is the subordinating conjunctions which provide clues relating to time, place, cause, condition, manner and concession. Furthermore, the subordinate clause itself modifies the verb in the main clause and therefore will clarify the meaning of the main verb from the reverse end.

In a well constructed paragraph the sentences are all linked. By examining the relationship between the clause in which an unknown verb appears and the other verbs in the other sentences, one will be able to decipher its meaning. If a difficulty still persists the learner must examine the root, prefix and suffix.

When it comes to nouns a learner must establish whether it is a product, mineral, plant, animal, group, idea, feeling or quality. One must use the category it belongs to and existing linguistic and general knowledge to figure out novel and unknown nouns.

EMOTIVE & MANIPULATIVE LANGUAGE

The purpose of an advertisement is to grab people's attention and arouse their desire to possess an article, object or service. This is done by harnessing psychology to suggest to people that physical beauty, comfort, happiness, health, pleasure, prosperity, success, strength, vigour, youthfulness and well-being are easily attainable by using certain products. By using the 'feel good factor' or by tugging at one's emotions, an advertisement hopes to create a bandwagon effect. The search for an elixir of youth, or an Aladdin's magic lamp, or the alchemy that could change base metals into gold, is as enduring a dream today as it has ever been. Advertisers work hard to keep that dream consistently nourished.

In striving to brand their products and persuade people to develop favourable attitudes to them, advertisers use logos and special vocabulary. Food products, for instance, will always be farm fresh, crisp, juicy, healthy and tasty. Technical devices will be described as improved, new, and revolutionary. Health products and cosmetics will carry the tag 'new' and 'tested'.

Advertisements are aimed at a target audience which is identified by age, race, income and locality. Children, for example, will be enticed to buy toys, families to acquire cars, and women to possess jewellery. Learners must examine television commercials and print advertisements to ascertain the target audience.

All advertisements make subjective assertions and learners will need to understand how language is employed to strengthen those claims. Advertisers will carefully use words to give the impression that their particular brands of food, watches, shoes or equipment are superior to all others. Consumers are often persuaded to buy a more expensive variation of a product in the belief that expensive has to be superior. More expensive is not always better! Bottled water is not always safer than tap water.

Look at the following examples - taken from the December 2005 edition of the *Oprah* magazine - to understand the techniques that advertisers use:

Advertisement by Defy

It's never easy to achieve simplicity, but the rewards are significant. The Defy Automaid and Autobody are efficient, quiet and easy to operate.

Sterling results are achieved without fail.

Exemplary water consumption means the washing machine is economical as well as environmentally friendly. The Autodry reduces creasing. The classic design of these appliances belies a long list of timesaving functions at your fingertips.

A two-year guarantee is now standard. The after-sales service and parts availability are legendary. So go ahead and let the drudgery of chores wash right over you.

Advertisement by Momentum Health

There was a boy with a protective mum,
she did things most people thought were dumb.

She dressed her kid in a chemical suit,
keeping him covered from head to boot.

She padded the house – walls and all,
just in case he had a fall.

Now this lady we'd like to meet,
her thinking is just up our street.

Because prevention's the best cure,
and of this we're pretty sure.

But inoculations and check-ups are the key,
which is why we'll give them to your kids for free.

Advertisement by Consol Glass

There's no gift like a gift in glass.

Christmas is a magical time. It awakens an array of inspirations and ideas. It is a time to conjure up surprises, to make mystery and magic. Glass is the perfect way to create gleaming gifts, uniquely and stylishly crafted for anyone truly special. No wonder a gift in glass always adds 2,1 cm sparkle to the festive season.

Advertisement by Samsung:

imagine a TV that makes any room come alive.

Imagine cinematic sound, DNLe™ picture enhancement and 10,000:1 contrast ratio. A television whose design and picture are equally arresting. With the Samsung 42" Plasma TV, it's not that hard to imagine. To learn more, visit www.samsung.co.za

Advertisement by the makers of Dove Soap

THE SUMMER HEAT CAN EASILY wilt your enthusiasm for the season if you don't feel fresh and cool – **DOVE** Fresh Touch with refreshing cucumber extract and calming green tea extract is just what you need for bracing coolness you can feel.

As you use the cleansing bar, the light, fresh scented moisture is gently absorbed, leaving you with the clean, cool feeling of hydrated skin.

The key ingredients of green tea and cucumber extracts, a 1/4 hydrating cream and an invigorating new fragrance, will cleanse and moisturize your skin, leaving you with a just showered freshness all day long. Give your skin the care it deserves this summer with **DOVE** Fresh Touch. You'll feel the difference.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

Select at least twenty more advertisements from two or three different magazines and look for examples of the following:

- Generalisation - using words such as: ‘always’, ‘everybody’, ‘nobody’, to avoid having to provide a reputable or legitimate source of information;
- Similes and metaphors - using comparisons of one kind or another to make exaggerated claims. See the section on similes and metaphors in this book;
- Promises of ease and well-being - using words such as: comfort, health, luxury, relief, relaxation, strength, well-being;
- Emotive language: using phrases such as blood diamonds, environmentally friendly, ozone friendly, proudly South African;
- Endorsement - using someone famous to endorse a product;
- Wordplay and slogans - Yebo Gogo; A diamond is forever; you have an uncle in the furniture business; let your fingers do the walking; simply ahead of its time;
- Psychological appeal to arouse interest in a product: individual worth, ego, status, success, sophistication, uniqueness, confidence, and power;
- Using images of danger, fear, loss, harm, vulnerability, prejudices and weakness to arouse interest in a product;
- Using a combination of adjectives and verbs to promote an exotic holiday destination or a luxury product;
- Exaggeration - using words and phrases such as: revolutionary, breakthrough, the ultimate, the greatest to promote a product.

Readers are generally given pseudo information in advertisements backed up by pseudo-scientific claims. Food products are frequently advertised as being ‘balanced’, ‘germ-free’, ‘fortified’ or ‘enriched’. Creams and lotions are supposed to ‘moisten’, ‘keep the skin young’ or ‘prevent wrinkling and ageing’. Toothpastes are promoted as being capable of ‘fighting’ tooth decay or ‘preventing’ dental caries. Hot and cold drinks are advertised as being able to ‘refresh’, ‘energise’ or ‘revitalise’. Hair care products, it is claimed, can ‘control dandruff’ or help to ‘give lustre and strength’ to hair. Everything promises to work successfully, harmlessly and beneficially. Does each item indeed live up to its claims? What do you think? What proof do you have? Find advertisements for products that promise to-

fight something or the other with unequalled success;

clean something spotlessly and hygienically;

taste the freshest or the best;

help you gain strength, energy, freedom from care, etc.;

give you instant relief;

help prevent something; and

last the longest.

Find advertisements of products that are supposed to-

give you **twice** the strength or power of something else;

give you **more** flavour, crispness or freshness;

give you **longer** warranties (note – not guarantees);

give you **better** performance; and

absorb **twice** as fast or **twice** as much.

Find advertisements where words such as the following are used:

only - no one else

exclusive to - no other

unique

if it doesn't say

nobody makes

the original - the classic

the ultimate

Find advertisements where phrasing of the following type is found:

you could say ...

if **you** are to ...

if **one** feels adventurous enough ...

if **you** want the best ...

... for **those** who aren't afraid to make a bold statement.

once **you're** happy ...

You will know exactly how much you can spoil yourself.

if **you** want to live a fulfilled life ...

before **you** swirl and sip ...

you'll realise why ... it's a lot more than your average ...

If **you** are looking for an energy and immunity booster ...

can **you** say this / that ...

you deserve ...

Find advertisements in which the company represents itself as a group of very smart individuals with words such as:

we're **thinking** ahead ...

we **can help** you with sound financial solutions ...

we **know** your property is more than a home ...

Find advertisements in which adjectives are featured prominently:

slick curves / **smart** interior;

crisp cotton sheets;

striking interior design;

indulgent weekend getaway;

fast acting;

improved formula;

new advanced formula;

outstanding value; and

proven track record.

Find advertisements in which verbs are featured prominently:

simply **demand**s attention;

oozes style;

reflects the poise of that elusive ...; and

reveals a passion for

Find advertisements in which conjunctions feature prominently:

when it comes to ...

when you have something as revolutionary as ...

Find advertisements in which everything is better than it was:

early mornings have **never been** so ...

cooking **has never been** easier ...

driving **will now forever be** ...

Find advertisements beginning with:

at last you can ...

if only everything you wore was ...

just because no one's ever heard of it, doesn't mean ...

tests have proved that ...

Find advertisements in which craftsmanship features prominently:

designed with a ...

crafted with utmost ...

engineered to the highest / most exacting specification/s

Find advertisements in which the reader is encouraged to do something:

reach for ... / **subscribe** to ...

discover an experience ...

imagine a destination blessed with magnificent ...

buy now while the offer lasts ...

Find advertisements in which rhetorical questions are asked:

why do so many people trust ...

when last have you been to ...

wouldn't it be great to ...

FIGURES OF SPEECH

A figure of speech is a sophisticated mode of expression in which words acquire a meaning beyond and above their literal and ordinary representation. Poets, through the use of figurative language, strive to achieve an emotional and sensual intensity that the ordinary meaning of words would not convey. At other times they try to communicate impressions, thoughts and ideas through the use of novel comparisons, credible mimicry and an

Figures of speech are used to create special effects and very often to convey two ideas in one freshly minted expression. **Similes** are used to show direct or implicit relationships between things while all implied comparisons are encapsulated in **metaphors**. A poet may sometimes use a **personification** to attribute distinctive human characteristics such as sincerity, wisdom or feeling to an animal, object or thing. Comparisons may also be made using a **metonymy** or a **synecdoche**. Here an object, institution, person or a trait associated with an institution or profession is made to represent a group of people. When the captain of a ship, therefore, orders ‘all **hands** on deck’, he is in fact summoning all the sailors to come on deck. When ‘**school** is out’ it is the learners and educators who are out of school.

Special effects in poetry are also achieved through sound devices such as **onomatopoeia**, **alliteration** and **assonance**. Words such as ‘crack’ and ‘whirr’ are imitative of the sounds they represent and their use gives realism to an expression containing them. Alliteration and assonance are two other devices which use repetition of sounds to evoke mood, beauty or feeling. They also subtly create a connection between keywords that are in proximity to one another to illuminate the meaning.

Figures of speech have a persuasive effect and are likely to imprint images, sounds and emotions in a reader’s mind.

ALLITERATION

Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound or sounds as in Tennyson's:

The splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story;

Add contemporary or South African examples from poetry, songs, lyrics and advertisements to the following:

I caught this morning morning's minion,
kingdom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn
Falcon, in his riding ...

***The Windhover* : Gerard Manley Hopkins**

Wild, wild the storm, and the sea high running
Steady the roar of the gale, with incessant undertone
muttering, ...

***Patrolling Barnegat*: Walt Whitman**

I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.

***The Cloud*: P. B. Shelley**

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste.

***Sonnet*: W. Shakespeare**

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king –
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn – mud from a muddy spring

***England in 1819*: P. B. Shelley**

ANTITHESIS

In an antithesis the writer juxtaposes two clauses with opposing meaning or sharply contrasting ideas to emphasize the contrast between them. To achieve the proper effect the writer must carefully balance the one clause with the other.

Look at the section on Antonyms to learn how to create new examples of antithesis.

Many poets have skilfully balanced phrases in a sentence to juxtapose opposite ideas. Study the following:

A bliss in proof; and prov'd, a very woe;
Before, a joy propos'd; behind a dream.

Sonnet 129: Shakespeare

Hee for God only, shee for God in him:

Paradise Lost: John Milton

See how the world its veterans rewards!
A youth of frolics, an old age of cards;
Fair to no purpose, artful to no end,
Young without lovers, old without a friend;
A fop their passion, but their prize a sot,
Alive, ridiculous, and dead, forgot!

Moral Essays: A. Pope

Tragedy ends in death; comedy, in marriage.

Don Juan: George Gordon Byron

The world forgetting, by the world forgot.

Eloisa to Abelard: Alexander Pope

APOSTROPHE

An apostrophe is the direct address that a poet makes either to an imaginary person or an inanimate entity which is thereby personified. It is usually done in the form of a digression.

Its effect is to heighten the poet's appeal or to reveal the emotional closeness of the poet to the person or object being addressed. Here are some examples:-

Hail divinest Melancholy, whose saintly visage
Is too bright to hit the sense of human sight.

Il Penseroso: John Milton

O Star (the fairest one in sight),
We grant your loftiness the right
To some obscurity of light
Take Something Like A Star.

O Star: Robert Frost

Tree at my window, window tree,
My sash is lowered when night comes on;
But let there never be a curtain drawn
Between you and me.

Tree At My Window: Robert Frost

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: Lord Byron

Milton! Thou shouldst be living in this hour;
England hath need of thee . . .

Sonnet -William Wordsworth

ASSONANCE

An assonance is a figure of speech in which a vowel sound is repeated in several words that are close together to create an effect similar to that of the alliteration. The impact of the device is keenly felt when the poem is read aloud and the vowel sounds accumulate to create the desired effect. For example:-

Those images that yet
Fresh images beget,
That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

Byzantium: William Butler Yeats

The bows glided down, and the coast
Blackened with birds took a last look
At his thrashing hair and whale-blue eye
The trodden town rang its cobbles for luck.

Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait: Dylan Thomas

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

To Autumn: John Keats

Thou still unravished bride of quietness
Thou foster child of silence and slow time ...

Ode to a Grecian Urn: John Keats

Do not go gentle into that good night
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light

Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night: Dylan Thomas

Our echoes roll from soul to soul
And grow for ever and for ever.

The Splendour Falls: Alfred Lord Tennyson

EPIGRAM

An epigram is usually a pithy, witty and polished short poem expressing a single idea or observation. Some poets who composed epigrams were John Donne, Ben Jonson, William Blake, Alexander Pope, S T Coleridge, W B Yeats, Oscar Wilde and Ogden Nash. An epigram usually ends with a paradoxical twist, or an ingenious turn of satiric thought. An epigram can also be any witty saying or paradoxical remark such as Oscar Wilde's: 'I can resist everything except temptation'.

Does the Eagle know what is in the pit?
Or wilt thou go ask the Mole?
Can wisdom be put in a silver rod?
Or Love in a golden bowl?

Thel's Motto: William Blake

A truth that's told with bad intent
Beats all the Lies you can invent.

Auguries of Innocence: William Blake

Swans sing before they die - 'twere no bad thing
should certain people die before they sing!

On a Volunteer Singer: S. T. Coleridge

Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

Essay on Criticism: Alexander Pope

A wonderful time - the War:
when money rolled in
and blood rolled out.

Green Memory: Langston Hughes

HYPERBOLE

A hyperbole is a figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect. When this is done skilfully the hyperbole becomes memorable as may be seen in the following classical examples:

And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger
sextillions of infidels.

Song of Myself: Walt Whitman

There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.

After Apple Picking: Robert Frost

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand?
No. This my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

Macbeth: W. Shakespeare (Lady Macbeth)

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space.
Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike
Feeds beast as man.

Antony & Cleopatra: W. Shakespeare (Antony)

An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast;
But thirty thousand to the rest ...

To His Coy Mistress: Andrew Marvell

METAPHOR

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used by a poet to describe something else that is only analogous or comparable through an extension of thought. Study the following examples: -

Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.

Ulysses: Alfred Tennyson

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.

Dover Beach: Matthew Arnold

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind.

Frost at Midnight: S. T. Coleridge

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar, (*death*)
When I put out to sea.

Crossing the Bar: Alfred Tennyson

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the
window-panes
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the
window-panes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains ...

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock: T. S. Eliot

METONYMY

A metonymy is a figure of speech in which an attribute or trait of something is used to stand for the thing or object itself. Thus, it may be said that **Washington** (USA government) cannot impose its will on Africa and **Buckingham Palace (The Queen)** must continue to win the hearts of the people.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To the reed is as the oak;
The **sceptre, learning, physic**, must
All follow this and come to dust.

Fear No More: W. Shakespeare

Sceptre and Crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor **crookèd scythe and spade**.

Death the Leveller: James Shirley

Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves; ...

Measure for Measure: W Shakespeare

The **pen** is mightier than the **sword**.

Oration: Benjamin Franklin

The **hand** that signed the treaty bred a fever,
And famine grew, and locusts came;
Great is the **hand** that holds dominion over
Man by a scribbled name.

The Hand that Signed the Paper: Dylan Thomas

ONOMATOPOEIA

An onomatopoeia is a figure of speech in which words are used to imitate the very sounds they refer to or are associated with. Poets use onomatopoeia to transfer sound impressions to their readers as in the examples below:-

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

Come Down , O Maid: Tennyson

Thistles spike the summer air
Or crackle open under the blue-black pressure.

Thistles: Ted Hughes

The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves...

Ode To a Nightingale: John Keats

A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match.

Meeting at Night: Robert Browning

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed
in the dark inn yard.

Highwayman: Alfred Noyes

Dot a dot dot dot a dot dot
Spotting the windowpane.
Spack a spack speck flick a flack fleck
Freckling the windowpane.

Weather: Eve Merriam

OXYMORON

An oxymoron is a figure of speech where two words of contradictory meaning are placed side by side for special effect as in 'dark light' or 'cold fire'. Study the examples below to understand how poets use oxymoron to make a telling, bitter, or sarcastic point.

His honour rooted in dishonour stood
And **faith unfaithful** kept him **falsely true**.

Lancelot and Elaine: Alfred Tennyson

The **bookful blockhead, ignorantly read**,
With loads of learned lumber in his head ...

An Essay on Criticism: Alexander Pope

Beautiful tyrant! Fiend angelical ...

Romeo & Juliet: W. Shakespeare

O anything of nothing first create!
O **heavy lightness, serious vanity!**
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!

Romeo & Juliet: W. Shakespeare

O **miserable abundance, O beggarly riches!**

Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions: John Donne

As one great furnace flam'd; yet from those flames
No light, but rather **darkness visible ...**

Paradise Lost: John Milton

PARADOX

A paradox is a figure of speech in which two different ideas are juxtaposed next to each other. Its opposing parts, though clearly contradictory, strangely make sense when carefully thought about. Here are some examples:-

Thou still **unravished** bride of quietness!

Ode On a Grecian Urn: John Keats

My glass is **full**, and now my glass is **run**,

And now I **live**, and now my life is **done**.

Tichborne's Elegy: C. Tichborne

The **Child** is **father** of the Man;

My Heart Leaps Up: William Wordsworth

I had seen birth and death,

But had thought they were different; this **Birth** was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like **Death**, our death.

Journey of the Magi: T. S. Eliot

“Men work together,” I told him from the heart,

“Whether they work **together** or **apart**.”

The Tuft Of Flowers: Robert Frost

Cowards **die** many times **before their deaths**

Julius Caesar: William Shakespeare

PATHOS

The function of pathos is to arouse an emotional reaction in the reader because of the perpetration of an injustice or tragedy that leads to someone's misfortune. This was a rhetorical device much used by Greek dramatists such as Aeschylus in his play *Oedipus*. Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Othello* also cause an audience to evince pathos.

I gin to be aweary of the sun,
And wish th' estate o' th' world were now undone.

***Macbeth*: W. Shakespeare (Macbeth)**

Then cried I to my heart: If thou wilt, break,
Be thou still; no moaning will I make,
Nor ask man's help, nor kneel that he may bless,
So I kept silence in my haughtiness ...

***Sonnet*: Christina Rossetti**

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on
thee;
Not untwist-slack they may be—these last strands
of man
In me or, most weary, cry I can no more. I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose
not to be.

***Carrion Comfort* : Gerard Manley Hopkins**

There's a stake in your fat black heart
And the villagers never liked you.
They are dancing and stamping on you.
They always knew it was you.
Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.

***Daddy*: Sylvia Plath**

PERSONIFICATION

Personification is a figure of speech in which the attributes of human qualities are assigned to objects or abstract notions. Personification can also refer to a person typifying a certain quality or idea as in, 'Hitler was the very personification of evil.' Study the following examples:-

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams;

The Cloud: P. B. Shelley

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

The Convergence of the Twain: Thomas Hardy

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:
Something else is alive
Beside the clock's loneliness
And this blank page where my fingers move.

The Thought-Fox: Ted Hughes

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;

Sonnet: John Donne

Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountaintops.

From Romeo & Juliet: W. Shakespeare

Because I could not stop for Death --
He kindly stopped for me --

Because I could not stop for death: Emily Dickinson

SYNECDOCHE

In both synecdoche and metonymy a quality, part, or trait of something is made to represent the whole. In metonymy, a thing is associated with a concept, and in synecdoche a part with its whole. Thus Pretoria, for example, is shorthand for the South African government. That is a metonymy. When a captain commands: ‘All hands on deck’, he is using a synecdoche. Here hands are part of the whole man.

Was this the **face** that launched a thousand ships, And
burnt the topless towers of Ilium?”

Faust: C. Marlowe

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your **ears**.

Julius Caesar: Shakespeare (Mark Antony)

My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me-
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads- you and I are old;

Ulysses: A. Tennyson

If truth in **hearts** that perish
Could move the powers on high,
I think the love I bear you
Should make you not to die

A Shropshire Lad: A.E. Housman

Shoot, if you must, this old gray **head** (English: grey)
But spare your country's flag.

Barbara Frietche: John Greenleaf Whittier

SYMBOLISM

A symbol is an object, character, animal, figure, landscape, colour or thing that stands for something else. T. S. Eliot in the **Wasteland** uses 'garden', 'water', 'city', and 'stairs' collectively to symbolise the circle of time, death and rebirth. Keats, in his **Ode to a Nightingale**, uses the 'nightingale' as a symbol for a life of joy. Study the following:-

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot.

***Lady of Shalott:* Alfred Lord Tennyson**

The winter's evening settles down
With smells of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock. The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves across your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On empty blinds and chimney-pots, ...

***Preludes:* T. S. Eliot**

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst ...

***The Second Coming:* W. B. Yeats**

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

The Tyger: William Blake

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down. I could say "Elves" to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbours."

Mending Wall: Robert Frost

THE apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough. - -

IN A STATION OF THE METRO Ezra Pound

SYMBOLISM BRIEFLY EXPLAINED

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

The mirror in Tennyson's poem is a symbol of reflected life - not life itself. At that very moment when the Lady looks out of the window, at life as it is, she confronts the harsh realities that make up life and the mirror has to crack. Reality overpowers those who live in a world of pleasant dreams. Apart from the mirror, the Lady also serves as a symbol. At the most basic level she is the symbol of a chaste and pure woman. Her purity and her innocence, however, are both destroyed when she sets eyes on the handsome knight and is suddenly overcome by an uncontrollable physical desire. The mirror and her innocence are both shattered.

At a more advanced level the lady is a symbol of the artist who captures life by experiencing it vicariously and at a distance. The moment that the artist becomes directly and personally involved in the reality of life, the magic web that she had been weaving flies out of the window and the world of the imagination shatters.

T. S. ELIOT

The 'grimy scraps', discarded newspapers, 'empty blinds' and a frustrated 'lonely-horse' are symbols of the harshness of winter, and of life, in the run down parts of a European city. The conditions on the street are miserable and the prospect of going up to rooms with empty blinds is distinctly unappealing. The chimney pots suggests that many fires would have to be lit to warm the cold rooms and that, in turn, would add to the misery of city life on account of the pollution.

W. B. YEATS

The main symbol in Yeats's poem is that of a gyre or of a coil that grows wider and wider as it goes up and outward.

Control diminishes as the coil expands at its outer limits. For that reason the falcon that ascends in a gyre-like spiral ceases to hear the falconer the higher it flies. In a similar manner the world has moved away from the centre point of what Christ taught and has become anarchic and violent. There is no longer any conviction and hatred has become the order of the day.

WILLIAM BLAKE

The fact that Blake spells tiger with a 'y' is clue enough that he intended the tiger to be a symbol of power. Blake's tiger evokes both wonderment and dread. The 'tyger' is juxtaposed with the 'lamb' in Blake's poetry to signify that life and God manifest cruelty and love, darkness and light, punishment and forgiveness. In this way the 'tyger' and the 'lamb' represent the duality of life.

ROBERT FROST

What is the 'wall' a symbol of? For the poet's neighbour the wall symbolises the protection of a tradition that was established by his father. That tradition has therefore to be preserved even if the practical circumstances dictate otherwise. The maintenance of the wall allows the neighbour to assert his individuality and privacy. He does not see the irony of his strongly stated assertion that walls make for good neighbourliness.

The wall is also a symbol of different ideas that will not be given an opportunity to intermingle or converge. People all over the world are excluded by other people on account of race, class, culture and belief. .

The practice of maintaining every wall of tradition, long beyond its original purpose, achieves nothing. Though nature would like to see walls come crumbling down, human beings stubbornly and even pointlessly insist on keeping the walls intact.

PROPAGANDA

Propaganda is any deceptive, exaggerated or purposely distorted information that is systematically spread to promote a doctrine or cause. It works by exploiting one group's sense of insecurity and agitation by highlighting the other group's growing threat to them. On the face of it, the viewpoint that is being emotively asserted will appear to be well argued and of immediate benefit to the group. On closer inspection one will observe that the people are being fed party line, half-truths, and cant (clichéd talk). The purpose of the propagandist is to indoctrinate people. They do this by taking liberties with both logic and the true facts. Their appeal is to the emotions, not to reason.

Every single day people are bombarded with propaganda of one kind or another. Virtue words, beliefs, history, interests, safety, cultural affiliation and emotions are all crassly manipulated by those who seek to advance themselves, their agenda, their products or their beliefs. All of this without any debate of any kind! Propaganda, as such, is information that cannot stand up to scrutiny and debate. It is fully self serving and denies the people it is aimed at, the right to have the real facts.

Facts enable people to be independent and to do the right thing for the right reason. Facts educate and uplift people. Propaganda seeks to keep people ignorant so that they can be exploited. Often enough those who would save and protect the people - from their enemies - are the most to be feared. They conveniently point elsewhere, at a scapegoat, while they themselves pillage and destroy with abandon. Has there ever been a dictator or a tyrant who did **not**, at first, ride to power on the backs of the people?

Tragically people do not rally around good and worthy causes in adequate number for any length of time. They certainly do so to exploit people, perpetrate violence, commit crimes and damage society. Propaganda works. Propaganda has a vast number of adherents. It pays. That is why it flourishes in our society.

COMMON TECHNIQUES

In order to sway people, propagandists rely on a number of techniques. Amongst other things they use:

1. Giving a Bad Label to Damage an Opponent

Name Calling and Demonising

alcoholic, communist, fascist, terrorist, savages, barbarians, racist, pig, miser, rapist, murderer, cowardly murderers, reactionaries, subversives, lackeys

2. Appealing to Righteousness to Corrupt the Good

Religious Appeal in a War

holy, sacred, sacrifice, civilization, moral duty, crusade, commandment, apostle, God, sacraments, holy book

atheist, Satanist

3. Using a Good Name to Alter a Bad Image

Euphemism

defence, security, collateral damage, collateral civilian casualties, post traumatic syndrome, crusade for peace, interest of humanity, redeployment,

4. Appealing to Prestige to Sway People

Testimonial

science, doctors, experts, renowned authors, professors, champions, millionaires, judges

5. Appealing to Values

Glittering Generalities

patriotism, public duty, democracy, human rights, liberty, honour, freedom, prosperity, empowerment, righteousness, glory cause of humanity

6. Reducing Complex Issues to Bare Basics

Narrowing the Discourse to Make Issues Black and White

fundamentalist, life is sacred, an eye for an eye, iron fist

7. Creating Dichotomy To Heighten Division

Us and Them

the minority, the privileged, the illegal immigrants, you are either with us or against us, the monopolists, the colonialists, the traitors, the sell-outs, the collaborators

8. Appealing to the Herd Instinct

Bandwagon

everyone, all successful people, happy wives,

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Propaganda does not deceive people; it merely helps them to deceive themselves.

Eric Hoffer

2. Why is propaganda so much more successful when it stirs up hatred than when it tries to stir up friendly feeling?

Bertrand Russell

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