

TECHNIQUES USED IN TRAVEL WRITING

The following techniques are used in many pieces of travel writing, and in many pieces of writing whose aim is to inform/explain and describe. By considering why and how these techniques are used by Ffiona Campbell, you will become a more reflective and analytical reader of this type of text. By carefully selecting and using these techniques effectively yourself, you will be able to engage and entertain the reader.

- **De – detail** – a tiny detail can reveal far more about a situation or a character than you might think. Think of the situation as a literary jigsaw. The details are the main pieces; let the reader fill in the rest for her/himself.
- **H – (understated) humour** – it can entertain your reader and there is humour in most situations, even ones that did not seem very funny at the time.
- **P – poetic techniques** – powerful images using similes, metaphors and personification add colour to your description and give a more vivid picture for the reader.
- **S – senses** – description using the senses is more immediate and atmospheric for the reader.
- **Di – dialogue** – like the use of the senses, carefully selected dialogue, used sparingly, can add a feeling of realism for the reader.
- **V – variety of sentence structures and paragraph lengths.** Think critically about how you structure your work as this can add to its effectiveness. For example, short sentences can make prose sound breathless and tense.
- **R – reflection** – try to take a step back and analyse the situation you are writing about. This can help to put a personal event into some sort of universal context, helping your reader to empathise more easily.

All these techniques have been used carefully in the Ffiona Campbell extract. In pairs you will now identify examples of them (use quotations and line numbers). For each example, you will then write down why you think that technique is effective. Try to relate this back to the writing triplet, inform, explain, describe. An example of a **poetic technique** has been done for you:

Example – “Sometimes they hollered like Red Indians...” (l. 52)

Effectiveness – This helps to underline the intimidating, threatening and “disorientating” nature of the experience. Descriptive.

N.B. This example could equally have been used for the senses. Do not be afraid to combine techniques in your own writing e.g. a short sentence can also be humorous.

FIRST TECHNIQUE

Example

Effectiveness

SECOND TECHNIQUE

Example

Effectiveness

Inform, Explain, Describe Writing Triplet – GCSE Scheme of Work

Teacher's notes

This mini scheme of work takes as its focus an extract from Ffiona Campbell's *On Foot Through Africa*, a piece of travel writing which combines the triple purposes of informing, explaining and describing in an engaging and entertaining way. In addition, it adds to pupils' appreciation of other cultures, fulfilling elements of Citizenship. This is obviously also beneficial when pupils look at the writing from other cultures part of the course. The extract has been taken from *Real People, Real Places*, A New Windmill Selection of Non-Fiction. Many schools will have these, and if not, they are worth ordering. Most of the extracts could be said to inform, explain and describe, so pupils could easily take further the work they complete in this mini scheme of work.

The unit was produced with the OCR syllabus in mind. This gives pupils about 35 minutes on this section of the examination. Other syllabuses may require pupils to spend slightly longer on this task. Some syllabuses (AQA A) give pupils choices in this section and enable pupils to focus on either of inform, explain or describe with different questions. If this is the case, I would suggest that this extract is used primarily for the describe task, but this will need some thought!

Careful analysis and discussion of carefully chosen texts is of great importance when pupils are learning to become better writers. By imitating techniques and thinking about the process of writing, pupils can learn greater control and can begin to make conscious choices. This is the philosophy behind the NLS Framework which can be built upon at this level. For OCR, English Paper 1, this task follows the analysis of unseen non-fiction material, so it would seem sensible to practise the skills needed for the earlier part of this exam in order to improve this last section.

There is flexibility over the number of lessons the unit can take and the integration of homework.

The practice writing task can be done in stages. I would suggest that pupils write their opening only to begin with, and at the same time write a short commentary saying how they have used the techniques they have learnt. A good way to review these openings would be to get them to word-process them at point 16 and double-spaced. You can then transfer a sample onto OHTs and pupils can use their commentaries to "talk through" what they have done. Whilst this is not an En1 activity, there is opportunity here for you to assess any pupils who have previously missed this type of S+L activity.