



English Language Paper 1 – Creative Writing Y9 self-isolation work for Spring Term 1

Objective: to explore descriptive and narrative writing techniques and employ them in our own writing.

These tasks are designed to get you reading more, considering writers' craft, and practising your own creative writing. This section of the English Language exam is worth 25% of your whole grade.

Tasks

- Week 1 - Lesson 1** – Narrative Hooks
- Week 2 - Lesson 2** – Setting and Atmosphere – [UPLOAD TO CLASSCHARTS: TASK 4 \(p8\)](#)

How could you extend your learning?

Read the openings to some classic modern novels and complete your own creative writing based on a powerful image.

- [Sylvia Plath- The Bell Jar](#)
- [F. Scott Fitzgerald- The Great Gatsby](#)
- [Chimamanda Adichie- Americanah](#)

LESSON 1. TITLE – Narrative Hooks

A strong, captivating opening sentence is paramount (very important) for any piece of writing.

Below are some descriptions of various narrative hooks and their definitions. (Please note that these are not the only strategies that writers use for their opening sentence).

Read through the definitions.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| A) The puzzling hook | This immediately makes a reader asks questions of the story, the characters or the events because ideas presented by the writer could be unfamiliar or out of the ordinary. |
| B) The direct address hook | The reader is addressed by the narrator; it can create a more conversational tone and involves the reader from the beginning. |
| C) The atmospheric hook | This is usually descriptive, and aims to evoke a particular mood within the reader (such as tension). |
| D) The visual hook | This is heavily descriptive, appeals to the reader’s sense of sight, and can provide clear imagery about setting or character(s). |

Task 1: Identify the type of narrative hook used in the examples below.

| Story opening | A, B, C, or D? |
|---|-----------------------|
| Lyra and her daemon moved through the darkening Hall, taking care to keep to one side, out of sight of the kitchen. <i>Pullman, Northern Lights.</i> | |
| If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book. <i>Snicket, A Series of Unfortunate Events</i> | |
| The Boulevard du Cange was a broad, quiet street that marked the eastern flank of the city of Amiens. <i>Faulks, Birdsong.</i> | |
| It was the day my grandmother exploded. <i>Banks, The Crow Road</i> | |
| ‘A cold, wet day in December. The worst kind of day for the back lands. The clouds were so low they seemed to trail their mists in the treetops and already, at half past three it was dark within the forest.’ <i>Gordon, The Giant Under the Snow</i> | |
| My earliest memories are a confusion of hilly fields and dark, damp stables, and rats that scampered along the beams above my head. <i>Morpurgo, War Horse</i> | |

Answers can be found at the end of the document.

Task 2: Reflect

- These are all the opening sentences taken from various novels. Which opening sentence did you find the most engaging for a reader, and why? Which one did you find the least engaging, and why?

Task 3: Challenge

Repeat the same task but with these more challenging opening sentences.

| Story opening | A, B, C, or D? |
|--|-----------------------|
| Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours, that they had meant to murder him. With his inky fingers and his bitten nails, his manner cynical and nervous, anybody could tell he didn't belong – <i>Greene, Brighton Rock</i> | |
| It was snowing again. Gentle six-pointed flakes from a picture book were settling on her jacket sleeve. The mountain air pricked with ice and the smell of pine resin. Several hundred metres below lay the dark outline of Saint-Bernard-en-Haut, their Pyrenean resort village; across to the west, the irregular peaks of the mountain range. <i>Joyce, The Silent Land</i> | |
| What's it going to be then, eh? There was me, that is Alex, and my three droogs, that is Pete, Georgie, and Dim, Dim being really dim, and we sat in the Korova Milkbar making up our rassoodocks what to do with the evening, a flip dark chill winter bastard though dry. <i>Burgess, A Clockwork Orange</i> | |
| May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees. Red bananas ripen. Jackfruits burst. Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in the fruity air. Then they stun themselves against clear windowpanes and die, fatly baffled in the sun. <i>Roy, The God of Small Things</i> | |
| The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn. <i>Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> | |
| We slept in what had once been the gymnasium. The floor was of varnished wood, with stripes and circles painted on it, for the games that were formally played there; the hoops for the basketball nets were still in place, though the nets were gone. <i>Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale</i> | |

Answers can be found at the end of the document.

Aim Higher: Read one of the novels listed above.

Task 4: What do 'good' openings look like?

Read the following example (printed on the next page), all written by students in the English Language exam. Consider how they hook the reader in and how they achieve the following:

- Are there examples of ambitious vocabulary? Could you improve any words?
- Have they used any linguistic techniques? (imagery, metaphor, simile, personification)
- Are sentence starters varied? Are the first words of sentences beginning differently?
- Are sentence types varied? (simple, compound, complex, short sentence, minor sentence, interrogative, exclamatory etc.)

Example 1:

Every town has its heart. Every town has a pinpoint of life and community, and in this small town the marketplace was exactly that. Dozens of brightly decorated, organized stalls were scattered along the streets, smothering the town centre with colour and life. People bounced contently from stall to stall, never more than a couple of yards apart, but completely distant in character. Butchers, greengrocers, fishmongers alike all hustling in an attempt to sell their finest produce; causing a scene of mass mayhem, yet somehow the sense of community really thrived amongst the carnage.

Example 2:

Autumn. How could Billy sleep?

It wasn't so cold but the noise over the top and beyond was incessant, pernicious and nerve-racking. At least it was to the rest of the men. The constant thump of distant shells dropping behind the German lines, the inescapable crack of sniper fire, the pitiful cries of wounded men stuck in No Man's Land; they all added up to a cacophony that should keep any soul awake and shaking in their boots.

Example 3:

Through the haze of the window, the city burned before her in a cacophony of neon laser lights, blazing across the world of darkness like stars across a night sky.

Upon the great stone and metal monoliths, the stars danced and flashed, swirled and sparkled in proud shades of red, green, yellow, blue; every colour that could be imagined was roaring in the silent symphony. These lights played and twinkled in her wide eyes. The city rose within her, a feeling long forgotten: one of wonder, beauty, adventure, one subdued by the monotony of life, one that had been sorely missed.

In the exam, you will be expected to sustain your creative writing for around 45 minutes. You will have a choice of two tasks and one of the tasks will be accompanied by an image. The image is for inspiration only.

The next task encourages you to create some writing based on an image.

TASK 5: The opening paragraph

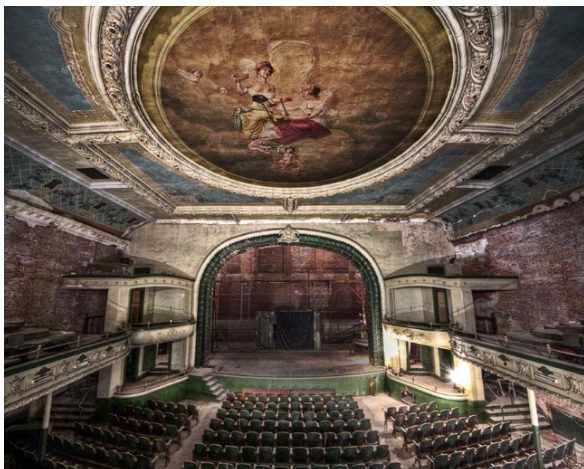
Choose one of the images below to inspire the opening to a piece of creative writing.

You are advised to plan your writing first. Consider:

- The type of hook that you will use
- Vocabulary (ambitious words)
- Linguistic techniques
- Varied sentence starters
- Varied sentence types

Spend approximately ten minutes on your creative writing.

Note: It's fine to make improvements as you go along – writing is a conscious process and you will need to craft the language carefully.



LESSON 2. TITLE – Setting and Atmosphere

The setting of a story gives readers a sense of place. Including various different elements of setting can help create a clear, vivid picture in readers' minds and can help provide a rich background to develop plot and characters. A good setting builds a framework that brings other narrative elements into play. It can create a mood and establish the context (like time period or universe) where your story is unfolding.

TASK 1: Guess the atmosphere...

Look at the examples below. Consider the underlined words in each of the paragraphs. Guess the atmosphere created in each setting.

Example 1:

From the top of the soft (adj) hill, the chocolate box (adj) town appeared quaint (adj).
Down a street, a child (V) skipped (adv) joyfully. The day was warm (adj) and summery (adj). The child headed towards a gate; it was open (adj). Beyond the gate grew many wildflowers (N) and the farmhouse (N) warmly emerged (V- synonym appeared) behind them.

Example 2:

From the top of the jagged (adj) hill, the crooked (adj) town appeared shadowed (adj). Down a street, a child (V) hid (adv) unsuccessfully. The day was icy (adj) and dark (adj). The child headed towards a gate; it was rotting (adj). Beyond the gate grew many brambles (N) and the castle (N) loomed over the village (V- synonym appeared) behind them.

Answers at the end of the document.

TASK 2: Create the atmosphere

Now you try. Identify the atmosphere that you want to create for the setting before you begin and think consciously about your vocabulary choice.

Chosen atmosphere _____

From the top of the [insert adj.] _____ hill,
the [insert adj.] _____ town appeared [insert adj.] _____.
Down a street, a child [insert V.] _____ [insert adv.] _____ly.
The day was [insert adj.] _____ and [insert adj.] _____.
The child headed towards a gate; it was [insert adj.] _____.
Beyond the gate grew many [insert N.] _____ and the [insert N.] _____
[insert synonym for 'appeared'] _____ behind them.

TASK 3: Using vocabulary to dictate atmosphere

Think of ten adjectives for each picture. Five should describe the image in a positive way and five should describe the image in a negative way.

i) for picture 1 you aren't allowed peaceful, old, stony, crooked

ii) for picture 2 you aren't allowed snowy, big, tall, jagged



Now, have a go at writing two different opening descriptions. You aim is to use a *similar woodland setting* but create two *different atmospheres*.

Think about how you could use a hook to begin your writing.



TASK 3: How do writers use vocabulary to create setting and atmosphere?

Read the opening description:

An old brick house, so dingy as to be all but black, was standing by itself within a gateway. Before it lay a square courtyard where a shrub or two and a patch of grass were as rank as the iron railings enclosing them were rusty. Many years ago it had it in its mind to slide down sideways; it had been propped up, however, and was leaning on some half-dozen gigantic crutches. This gymnasium for the neighbouring cats, weather-stained, smoke-blackened, and overgrown with weeds, appeared to be no very sure reliance.

Answer the question:

What sort of atmosphere do you think is created? What words lead you to believe this?

TASK 4 – UPLOAD TO CLASSCHARTS

Creative Writing

Once you have completed this task, upload it to ClassCharts or hand a written copy to your teacher on your return to school so that they can provide you with feedback.

See the next page for instructions.



Based on the image, write the opening paragraph and the first paragraph of a piece of creative writing.

You are encouraged to plan your writing first.

Think carefully about:

- How to hook your reader
- The vocabulary you use to create a specific atmosphere
- The detail you include to build a clear sense of setting for the reader
- Linguistic techniques
- Varied sentences

Spend approximately 15 minutes of writing time on this task.

ANSWERS

Lesson 1

Task 1:

| Story opening | A, B, C, or D? |
|---|----------------|
| Lyra and her daemon moved through the darkening Hall, taking care to keep to one side, out of sight of the kitchen. <i>Pullman, Northern Lights.</i> | C |
| If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book. <i>Snicket, A Series of Unfortunate Events</i> | B |
| The Boulevard du Cange was a broad, quiet street that marked the eastern flank of the city of Amiens. | D |
| It was the day my grandmother exploded. <i>Banks, The Crow Road</i> | A |
| 'A cold, wet day in December. The worst kind of day for the back lands. The clouds were so low they seemed to trail their mists in the treetops and already, at half past three it was dark within the forest.' <i>Gordon, The Giant Under the Snow</i> | C |
| My earliest memories are a confusion of hilly fields and dark, damp stables, and rats that scampered along the beams above my head. <i>Morpurgo, War Horse</i> | A/D |

Task 3:

| Story opening | A, B, C, or D? |
|--|----------------|
| Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours, that they had meant to murder him. With his inky fingers and his bitten nails, his manner cynical and nervous, anybody could tell he didn't belong – <i>Greene, Brighton Rock</i> | A |
| It was snowing again. Gentle six-pointed flakes from a picture book were settling on her jacket sleeve. The mountain air pricked with ice and the smell of pine resin. Several hundred metres below lay the dark outline of Saint-Bernard-en-Haut, their Pyrenean resort village; across to the west, the irregular peaks of the mountain range. <i>Joyce, The Silent Land</i> | D |
| What's it going to be then, eh? There was me, that is Alex, and my three droogs, that is Pete, Georgie, and Dim, Dim being really dim, and we sat in the Korova Milkbar making up our rassoodocks what to do with the evening, a flip dark chill winter bastard though dry. <i>Burgess, A Clockwork Orange</i> | B |
| May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees. Red bananas ripen. Jackfruits burst. Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in the fruity air. Then they stun themselves against clear windowpanes and die, fatly baffled in the sun. <i>Roy, The God of Small Things</i> | C |
| The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn. <i>Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> | D |
| We slept in what had once been the gymnasium. The floor was of varnished wood, with stripes and circles painted on it, for the games that were formally played there; the hoops for the basketball nets were still in place, though the nets were gone. <i>Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale</i> | A |

ANSWERS

Lesson 2

Task 1:

Example 1: positive atmosphere - gentle, innocent, peaceful, pleasant.

Example 2: negative atmosphere – ominous.