

Language features and their effects

Use this checklist:

- to understand the ways in which writers gain impact in their writing
- to use various features in your own writing (creative and transactional, as well as for your oral presentations) in order to craft your writing and gain impact
- to help you achieve unit standards which require you to explore language and think critically about poetic / transactional / oral texts

Language feature	Definition or explanation	Example	General effect (you <u>must</u> decide on the specific effect relative to the text)
Rhyme	The ends of words have the same sound. Usually at the ends of lines in poetry, but may be <u>internal</u> (within a line).	That second day they hunted <u>me</u> From hill to plain, from shore to <u>sea</u> . <i>Then <u>Billy</u> who was <u>silly</u></i> <i>Almost every other day...</i>	Makes the text memorable and can make poems amusing. Can tie together the middle and end of verses.
Rhythm	A <u>regular</u> pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.	<i>I <u>went</u> to <u>town</u> to <u>buy</u> a <u>phone</u>.</i> <i>On the <u>road</u> there's a <u>girl</u> with a <u>bike</u>.</i>	Makes the text as a whole more memorable and makes it flow better.
Alliteration	Repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of words – usually close in succession.	H aving h eard the s ong, h e s ang it softly. <i>There came a ghost to Mary's door</i> <i>With many a grievous groan.</i>	Makes small sections of the text hang together and flow better. Draws our attention to this phrase. Creates a harder or softer mood in line with the meaning (hard consonants are <i>b d k p q t</i> , soft are <i>f h j l m n r s v w y z</i> , while <i>c</i> and <i>g</i> can be either hard or soft)
Assonance	Vowel sounds are repeated at the beginning or middle of nearby words.	H er e arly leaf's a flower But o nly so an hour. <i>There were excited urbursts and urbursts</i> <i>swuerves as the cattle stamped.</i>	Makes small sections of the text hang together and flow better. Draws our attention to this phrase. Repetition of vowels generally gives a soft, quiet, calm mood unless the sounds are the short vowels, eg in <i>cat, pet, pin, off, cup</i> .
Sound clusters	A group of sounds is repeated throughout a sentence or a group of lines in a poem, not just at the beginnings of words.	Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness... <i>I love to see the cottage smoke curl upwards through the trees.</i>	These create a "wall of sound" with a number of repeated sounds, not just one type. They usually create a particular mood by using a number of hard or soft sounds, rather than a combination of the two.
Onomatopoeia	Words sound like the sounds they name.	There came a furious woofing from the seals. <i>The brrrring of the alarm woke him.</i>	This helps us hear the actual sound being named and therefore we understand it properly or it transports us to the place of the sound.
Repetition	Repeating the same or nearly the same words for effect.	"Come on, Come on!" she shouted. "We're late!"	This is used to emphasize whatever is being said or written, or to mimic repetition in nature.
Parallel construction	Using the same word class order twice (in same or two sentences)	Into the valley, through the marsh, rode the hunting pair.	Parallel construction provides rhythm while it expands the detail of the description and creates balance.
Triple construction	Repeating three times a group of words which have the same pattern of word classes. Each group may or may not start with the same word/s.	...that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the face of the earth. <i>Then leaf subsides to leaf,</i> <i>So Eden sank to grief,</i> <i>So dawn goes down to day...</i>	Same as for parallelism, but the triplet provides closure or finality along with that sense of balance.

Language feature	Definition or explanation	Example	Effect (you <u>must</u> decide on the specific effect relative to the text)
Simile	An image which compares two things using <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>	The black smoke rose like a wizard's tower spiralling into the sky . <i>The playground was as empty as a ghost town.</i>	All imagery gives the person/animal/thing being described the characteristics of something else. It therefore enlivens descriptions by helping us to see these people/animals/things in a new light – in a way we may have never seen them or thought about them before. Metaphors are more compact and tighter in their comparative description than similes.
Metaphor	An image which compares two things <u>without</u> using <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>	We emerged from the cool dark of the hut into the blast furnace heat of a Central Otago summer afternoon. <i>The fireworks were sparkling flowers exploding in the night sky.</i>	
Personification	An image which gives human qualities to non-human things.	The night hung out a multitude of lanterns to guide the travellers. <i>Raindrops danced on the pavement.</i>	In addition to the above, personification makes inanimate objects seem lively and lifelike while it also contributes to our sense of oneness with these inanimate objects.
Choice of words (vocabulary)	Using more unusual or specialized or technical words	The wind moaned, a low-pitched, unutterably eerie threnody (<i>sad song</i>). <i>He died of a myocardial infarction.</i>	Sometimes, more unusual words provide more specific meaning than common ones. Specialized or technical words make it seem like the writer/speaker really knows the topic.
Use of slang	Most likely used in direct speech.	"Hey, you guys, let's cut loose tonight and paint the town red."	Grounds the text in informality as well as a certain social group and period of time.
Use of direct or indirect speech	Quoting or reporting spoken words.	"Come over here!" Jack yelled, then proceeded to tell us all how he'd won the Melbourne Cup pool in his office.	Makes the character come alive. We can "hear" the way s/he speaks – the actual vocab, grammar and tones.
Use of incorrect grammar	Generally used in direct speech but may also be used in autobiography for particular effect.	"Let's have ourselves a few beers." <i>"I sure do hate them direct marketers always calling at dinner time."</i>	Creates an image of the character – helps to define personality and place him/her in a particular educational or social class. Provides authenticity in your writing.
Pun	Word play involving the use of a word with two different meanings or two words that sound the same but mean different things. <i>Often used in advertising.</i>	An advert for an omega-3 margarine has this statement: <i>The way to a man's heart is through his stomach.</i> This gives new <u>literal</u> meaning to an old figurative phrase which involved romance rather than health.	Provokes amusement and therefore a tendency for the reader to feel good about the company / product and possibly to buy the product. If used by a character, shows that that character is rather clever and witty.

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Hyperbole	Deliberate exaggeration	I've told you thousands of times to clean up your bedroom.	Used for emphasis to get a point across. Also illustrates something of the mood of the speaker/writer.
Litotes	Deliberate understatement	"Well, I was sure was brassed off when he walked out on me."	Shows just how strong the emotion is and illustrates something of the character of the speaker/writer.
Use of multiple adjectives or adverbs	The adjectives give more information about the noun and the adverbs about the verb.	The air was full of driving, needle-pointed ice spicules... <i>Slowly, stealthily, the wind was lifting a swell.</i>	Builds up a very full picture of the object/animal/person or the activity so that it becomes very clear in the reader's mind – the reader feels s/he can picture it or see it happening very precisely.
Simple sentences	These have only one complete verb, though there may be one or more incomplete verbs.	Passing the school, we saw the flames <u>pouring</u> out of the office.	Used to establish one idea. Often used as topic sentences, making clear what the paragraph is about or marking a change of place/topic/etc
Compound sentences	These have a minimum of two complete verbs and each part of the sentence can stand on its own.	We danced all night, then climbed the hill to see the sun rise.	Used to get across two main ideas with some supporting detail.
Complex sentences	These have a minimum of two complete verbs; the part of the sentence which has one of those verbs, but <u>cannot</u> stand on its own, is called a subordinate clause.	We left the party <i>because the level of violence was getting way over the top.</i> <i>Although the sky was overcast, no snow fell that night.</i>	Used to provide explanations and other more detailed information about the idea expressed in the main clause.
Rhetorical question	A question that does not expect an answer from the reader or audience	<i>So what would result from such a plan? Chaos, that's what.</i>	To get the readers' / audience's attention and make them think about the answer before giving it.
Use of command	This is the verb used alone (without a noun or pronoun). Can be used with adverbs or other word classes.	Stop! Come here and sit down while I talk to you.	To catch people's attention, whether it's another character in a narrative or the audience listening to a speaker. We are socially conditioned to obey commands so the advertiser or speaker may get some affirmative response.
Use of first and second person pronoun	1 st person singular = <i>I, me, my, mine</i> , plural = <i>We, us, our, ours</i> 2 nd person singular and plural = <i>You, your, yours</i> Mostly used in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • autobiography • 1st person narrative • direct speech • oral presentations. 	I would like you to think hard about what I'm going to tell you next. <i>"You wouldn't dream what happened to him. I can't believe it myself!"</i> I opened the door wide, then opened my eyes wider when I saw a small black dog sitting on the step. <i>I was born on a grey winter's day in Dunedin. My mother tells me that the nurse bathed me in cold water by an open window so that's probably why I enjoy the cold southern winters....</i>	<u>First person</u> : Gives immediacy to the text – the author or character makes a direct connection with the reader / audience. The emotional qualities of the text / character are more available also – the internal life of the author or character. "We" in a speech involves the audience with the speaker ("We all know that violence is wrong"). <u>Second person</u> : <i>In speeches and adverts, this direct address to the listeners/viewers involves them and may challenge them to respond, even if only mentally. In narrative, the use shows interaction between characters.</i>

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Symbolism	Use of an object (concrete noun) to represent some emotion or belief system or other abstract noun	Simple symbols are widely accepted, eg. heart / love, dove with an olive branch / peace. Others are more complex and individual to an author / character, eg. neon lights / urban sophistication	These are a form of shorthand to emotions – an author can use a symbol so that the reader / audience understands the emotions invested in the object without describing those emotions every time the object is used. Provides the reader with a visual (actual or mental) <i>aide-memoire</i> – something that conjures up certain memories and/or emotions or qualities when s/he sees the symbol.
Euphemism	Use of a less objectionable or harsh expression to avoid upsetting or offending people	His wife <u>passed away</u> (died). The firm was <u>restructuring</u> (sacking workers). She is <u>vertically challenged</u> (short).	Amusement in the reader, or revealing of the character of the person using it (kindhearted or sarcastic or squeamish, for example)
Neologism	New word – an invented word	nylon, radar, Thermos	Newness / novelty / difference from “ordinary” words makes it stand out – make the reader/viewer remember them
Listing	Objects/reasons/parts of a whole, etc. are listed – in text, usually with commas separating them; in adverts/web pages or text, can be with bullet points	We give him access to the biomechanics, conditioning, nutrition, physiology and psychology he needs to be the best.	Shows the extent of or emphasizes the topic/object/event being discussed/described; shows the author’s wide knowledge of the topic
Emotive language	Choice of words which have specifically intended emotional effects or are intended to evoke an emotional response in the reader	There was a <u>clammy</u> self-congratulating <u>illiteracy</u> of the heart <u>drooling</u> from every word.	The attitude and emotions of the author are transferred or made clear to the reader
Sarcasm	Unkind humour directed against what the writer / speaker doesn’t like	...fluff-filled catalogues..	(as above – the emotions and attitudes are ones of disdain or contempt or revulsion or dislike or bitterness)
Irony	saying the opposite of what you mean	..cultural icons like McDonald’s carpark..	(as above – the intent and effect are less offensive than in sarcasm, but the author may still feel strongly on the subject)
Contrast	Using word of opposite meaning close together	In a city that never sleeps, she seems to be trying to keep us awake. The sun warms on a bitterly cold day	Strengthens each aspect of the contrast by showing up the differences To emphasize a change or difference or idea
Use of numbers / statistics	-	Thousands died and hundreds of thousands are homeless	A specific number or statistic gives the impression that the speaker/writer is authoritative and knowledgeable
Use of authority figures	The words (or image) of a famous person or celebrity are used	(Paris Hilton wears only Versace). (Daniel Carter loves Jockeys).	The reader / viewer aspires to share the goals of (and use the product promoted by) the personality
Allusion	A reference to another work	Wagner’s <i>Ride of the Valkyries</i> plays during <i>Apocalypse Now</i> “It’ll be just like Coral Island.”	Adds another dimension to the text by introducing material from our external knowledge (if we get the allusion)
Quotation	Direct use of another’s words (spoken or written)	Churchill famously said, “We will fight them on the beaches....”	A quotation will add some of the authority of the original author to the current speaker/writer

