

# Precise choices, stronger responses

How do word choices and withheld information create unease? Learn the move, practise it, write independently, then use feedback to improve.

**60 minutes now + 15 minutes after personal feedback**

Our ambition is Grade 9. This lesson builds the habits that support that aim: close attention to evidence, precise explanation and thoughtful interpretation. Use the prompts for support, then make the independent response your own.

**YOUR ROUTE THROUGH THE LESSON**

|               |                                          |           |
|---------------|------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>5 min</b>  | Retrieve and read                        | Page 1    |
| <b>10 min</b> | Learn from explicit teaching and a model | Page 2    |
| <b>10 min</b> | Complete guided practice                 | Page 3    |
| <b>5 min</b>  | Plan your interpretation                 | Page 4    |
| <b>25 min</b> | Write an independent response            | Pages 4-5 |
| <b>5 min</b>  | Review and make one useful correction    | Page 5    |

**1 / RETRIEVE AND READ - 5 MINUTES**

**Before reading:** explain aloud the difference between what a text states and what you infer. What makes an inference convincing? Then read the original passage twice and circle one word that makes the scene feel unsettling.

The station clock had stopped at six. Rain needled through the broken roof, striking the bench where Mara had left her bag. Far down the platform, a door clicked shut. She reached for the strap. Behind her, footsteps slowed.

**You need:** a pen and a timer. Write in this pack or in a separate document. This is an original teaching task, not an official exam question or a full mock paper. Paid programme tasks are matched to your child’s exam board.

# Explain the choice, not just the technique

Read the teaching, then study the worked example. Its passage is different from the one you will analyse.

## FOUR MOVES TOWARDS A CONVINCING INTERPRETATION

- 1. Make a claim.** Explain what kind of unease is created: vulnerability, uncertainty, loss of control or a possible threat.
- 2. Choose a precise detail.** Quote a word or short phrase. Explain what that particular choice suggests here.
- 3. Follow the information.** Notice what the reader learns, when they learn it, and what remains unknown. Explain how that changes the situation.
- 4. Keep the inference proportionate.** Use “suggests” or “may imply” when the text allows uncertainty. Do not turn a possibility into a fact.

## A DIFFERENT ORIGINAL PASSAGE

The lift coughed and stopped. Leah pressed the button again. Above her, the floor numbers went dark. Her phone lit up with a message from an unknown number: Still here?

## WORKED EXAMPLE

The writer turns an ordinary lift failure into the possibility of being watched. The verb “coughed” makes the mechanism sound unhealthy and unreliable, so Leah’s enclosed space no longer feels secure. The final message, “Still here?”, changes the nature of the uncertainty: it implies that someone may know where she is, yet the “unknown number” withholds their identity. The reader cannot tell whether the message is a coincidence or a threat. That unresolved connection makes the ending more unsettling than a simple mechanical breakdown.

## READ THE MODEL ACTIVELY

Underline the main claim. Circle where a single word is explained. Draw an arrow to the sentence that connects the ending to the earlier event. Finally, identify wording that keeps an uncertain interpretation open.

### Precision check

“This makes the reader want to read on” is too general on its own. Say what the reader is uncertain about and which detail creates that uncertainty.

# Build the explanation yourself

Return to the station passage on page 1. Make brief notes or write short answers. Keep your ideas grounded in the actual wording.

**A. Test a word choice.** Replace “needled” with “fell”. What is lost? Explain what “needled” suggests about the rain and how the “broken roof” develops the sense of exposure.

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**B. Track a change in attention.** Move from the distant “door” to the final “footsteps”. Where is the reader’s attention directed at each point? What information about the footsteps is withheld?

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**C. Weigh an inference.** Does the ending prove that Mara is in danger? Explain one threatening possibility, then identify what the passage leaves uncertain. Use the exact wording to justify your judgement.

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**If you need a start:** “The word ... suggests ... because ...” / “At first the reader notices ..., but by the end ...”

**Push further:** how might an ordinary action feel different because of the details placed around it?

Use pages 4 and 5 for the same 25-minute response. Aim for two or three developed paragraphs, with a clear interpretation running through them.

How does the writer use word choices and the arrangement of information to create unease in the station passage?

## PLAN - 5 MINUTES

My main interpretation: what kind of unease develops, and how?

Two or three details to analyse, in a useful order:

### INDEPENDENT RESPONSE - START YOUR 25-MINUTE TIMER

Continue the same response. Connect each detail to your interpretation. Explaining a few details carefully is more useful than listing many techniques.

[illegible]

- ☐ My opening answers the question with an interpretation.
- ☐ I explain precise words in their context.
- ☐ I explain what changes, or remains unknown, as the passage develops.
- ☐ I distinguish supported inference from certainty.
- ☐ My sentences and quotations are accurate.

AFTER PERSONAL FEEDBACK | A SEPARATE 15 MINUTES

# Use the feedback. Make the next answer stronger.

Complete this after your tutor returns your feedback. If trying the sample independently, use the demonstration on page 7 to choose a useful target yourself.

## 1 / UNDERSTAND YOUR TARGET - 2 MINUTES

State the one action that will most improve your writing. For example: “explain the change in information” or “show why this word matters here”.

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## 2 / IMPROVE A PARAGRAPH - 8 MINUTES

Rewrite one paragraph from your independent response. Apply the target and underline your new or changed explanation. Keep the original for comparison.

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## 3 / TRANSFER THE SKILL - 4 MINUTES

**Fresh original text:** “Jon slid the bolt across. On the other side of the door, the humming stopped.” In three or four sentences, explain how the change in sound may unsettle the reader. Apply the same target to this new passage.

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**4 / Explain - 1 minute:** star your strongest new sentence. Explain aloud what you changed and why it makes your interpretation more convincing.

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# What personal feedback can change

An illustrative demonstration using another original passage. These are fictional responses, not a real student's work, a testimonial or evidence of a particular grade.

At the river, the warning sign leaned into the reeds. Sam stepped around it. A red trainer turned slowly in the current.

## FIRST RESPONSE

The writer makes the river scary. "Red trainer" is imagery and red shows danger. It makes the reader want to find out what happens.

## SPECIFIC FEEDBACK AND AN ACTION

You select a relevant detail, but explain why a trainer in the river is unsettling in this context. Connect it to Sam stepping around the warning. Do not rely only on a general association with the colour red. **Action:** add two sentences explaining how the final detail changes our view of Sam's choice, while keeping its uncertain meaning open.

## IMPROVED RESPONSE

The writer makes Sam's decision seem increasingly risky. Stepping "around" the warning shows Sam passing it without responding to its purpose. The final image of a single trainer in the current then gives the warning a possible human consequence: the reader may wonder whether someone has already come to harm. Yet the passage shows only the shoe, not its owner, so that possibility remains unresolved. The uncertainty makes the river feel more threatening than the ignored sign alone.

**What changed?** The explanation connects two details, develops a specific inference and recognises what the text cannot establish. A technique label has become an evidence-based interpretation.

## RETRIEVAL CHECK FROM PAGE 1

A stated detail is directly given in the text. An inference is a conclusion drawn from details. A convincing inference fits the wording and context; it does not invent facts or ignore uncertainty.

## YOUR CHILD'S EXAM BOARD. THEIR NEXT STEP.

In the paid programme, select your child's English Language exam board when joining. Weekly work combines clear instruction, worked models, structured practice and personal feedback from your tutor. Reading analysis, creative writing and non-fiction argument can each be taught through this cycle. This pack demonstrates the reading-analysis route.

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