

The structure of a text means how it has been put together. For example:

- the order in which ideas are expressed
- the way paragraphs work to communicate those ideas
- the order in which words or clauses are used.

For your GCSE English Language exams, you will be asked to analyse both language and structure.

1. Below is a short piece of writing that illustrates some structural features. Using the table, explain how the writer uses these features in their writing.

*She looked through the window, as she did every day at this time. Watching, watching, watching. Glancing up the road, she sighed as she observed the deserted pavement. She noticed the same things every day: sparse-leaved trees, turning to skeletons now; ragged children playing hopscotch with a stub of chalk and a pebble; lonely sparrows pecking at the frosty patches of tired grass and dusty scraps of paper fluttering across the road.*

*Turning, she felt her eyes begin to prick with the familiar tears. The pavement would always be deserted now.*

*Daddy would not return from the battlefields of Flanders.*

Structural feature	Example from extract and effect
The order of events	'Daddy would not return ...' This vital information is left until the end of the extract in order to add suspense about the character's actions and feelings.
The order of ideas or feelings	
Sentence length, structure and type	
Use of punctuation to speed up or slow down the narrative	
Repetition	
Lists	
Starting with a verb	
Change of tense	

2. Create a toolkit revision sheet with a list of structural features such as those above.

Some other features to include:

- direct speech
- reported speech
- foregrounding (to make something the most important feature by putting it first)
- dialogue and question tags ('he exclaimed', 'she demanded')
- one-sentence paragraphs
- parenthetical phrases (separated from the sentence by brackets, commas or dashes)
- parallel sentence structure
- pairings
- repetition.

3. Now try to analyse the language used in this extract.

Remember that in the exam you must analyse **both language and structure together**, as they work simultaneously to create the impact of the text.



Teacher notes and answers

*She looked through the window, as she did every day at this time. Watching, watching, watching.<sup>(1)(2)</sup> Glancing up the road,<sup>(3)</sup> she sighed<sup>(4)</sup> as she observed the deserted pavement. She noticed the same things every day: sparse-leaved trees, turning to skeletons now; ragged children playing hopscotch with a stub of chalk and a pebble; lonely sparrows pecking at the frosty patches of tired grass and dusty scraps of paper fluttering across the road.<sup>(1)(5)</sup>*

*Turning,<sup>(3)</sup> she felt her eyes begin to prick with the familiar tears.<sup>(4)</sup> The pavement would always be deserted now.<sup>(6)</sup>*

*Daddy would not return from the battlefields of Flanders.<sup>(7)</sup>*

Structural feature	Example from extract and effect
The order of events (7)	This vital information is left until the end of the extract in order to add suspense about the character's actions and feelings.
The order of ideas or feelings (4)	Her sadness is revealed gradually and is communicated implicitly.
Sentence length, structure and type (1)	A minor sentence is used to emphasise the intensity of the girl's focus. A multi-clause, complex sentence is used to list the things she can see. This suggests that she has watched like this many times and is familiar with every detail of her view.
Use of punctuation to speed up or slow down the narrative (1)	The long sentence slows the narrative as the punctuation forces the reader to pause after each item in the list.
Repetition (2)	The repetition of 'watching' communicates the strength of the girl's concentration.
Lists (5)	The list of what she can see conveys the amount of detail she has noticed.
Starting with a verb (3)	These foreground the girl's actions, placing her physical response to the situation at the beginning of the sentences, thus focussing the reader's attention firstly on her physical movements rather than her emotional reaction. This suggests that she is in control of her emotions and is able to remain self-composed despite her pain.
Change of tense (6)	Change from past to future tense to suggest that her watching will always be in vain.