Levels 5, 6 and 7 - moving through the gears!

Moving through levels 5/6 and level 7 is often the extent to which you can:

**comment on a writer’s choice of language and techniques, saying how and why you think a language feature has an emotional effect on the reader**

You need a critical vocabulary which prompts you to comment analytically.
Use linking phrases like these:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a well-chosen example from the text</th>
<th>suggests implies gives us the impression that shows highlights indicates</th>
<th>your comment / analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If you want to make the same point using a different example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>another well-chosen example</th>
<th>furthers emphasises reinforces</th>
<th>your comment / analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The following is a question from a trial Reading Paper entitled ‘Decisions, Decisions’. The first extract is part of an autobiographical account, set in the 1930s called *Shooting an Elephant* by George Orwell. The writer is a young police inspector in a small town in Burma. He has been told that a tame elephant, which is used for heavy work, has gone mad, broken free and attacked some people’s homes and a van. Orwell goes to investigate. This is just one paragraph:

‘I halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant – it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery – and one obviously should not do it if it can be avoided.’

How might we use the critical vocabulary to answer the following question, worth two marks?

**Explain how this choice of language emphasises the seriousness of shooting a working elephant.**

You need to develop your answer sufficiently to earn both the marks, but try to adopt the strategy of using linking phrases to avoid the tendency to waffle.

**An example:**

At first, the writer gives us an impression of his reluctance to shoot the elephant. He uses an image of the elephant as a ‘machine’ which reinforces a sense of value and usefulness. The adjectives ‘huge and costly’ emphasise a sense of power; the elephant can keep on working and can carry out heavy tasks that would take considerable manpower, and this makes it seem worse.

*Shooting an Elephant* copyright © George Orwell
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Now read the paragraph below, which describes the death of the elephant:

‘When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick – one never does when a shot goes home – but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time – it might have been five seconds, I dare say – he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.’

A 5 mark question on this fairly long paragraph might read:

How does the writer’s use of language make the reader feel sympathy for the elephant?

Discuss how the writer uses language to describe:

- the immediate change in the elephant when the first bullet hits it
- the way the elephant reacts after the second shot
- the description of the elephant after the third shot.

Aim to write a two point paragraph for each bullet. Use quotations to support your writing.

Example: tackling the first bullet point

How does the writer’s use of language make the reader feel sympathy for the elephant?

Discuss how the writer uses language to describe:

- the immediate change in the elephant when the first bullet hits it.

In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time – it might have been five seconds, I dare say – he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old.
There is almost too much text to choose from! (I have underlined useful bits.) As this is timed writing, I have decided I want to focus on 2 main points. I could write:

‘The writer describes the change in the elephant as ‘mysterious’ and ‘terrible’, giving the impression that the change is awful, but unexpected. ‘Every line of his body had altered’ conveys the enormity of the change. Orwell uses alliteration and the power of three to emphasise the appearance of the elephant, he is ‘suddenly stricken, shrunken, and immensely old’. ‘An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him’ reinforces the idea that the elephant has aged decades in moments. Emotive language, ‘his mouth slobbered’, ‘he sagged flabbily’ highlights the distress and loss of control the elephant is suffering.’

Notice how the quotations are embedded into the text. Each point is also explained fully, with the effect of the writing discussed.

What else is effective about the above example?

Now, using the hints and ideas from page 1, and the example paragraph here, write a paragraph for the second and third bullet points or prompts.