

HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD IN ENGLISH

Reading and analysing

Encourage your child to read and discuss what they have discovered (even better share what you have been reading!) Surveys suggest that 25 minutes reading daily can have a significant impact. With the support of the English teacher and the Library staff, help your child to make interesting choices that are appropriately challenging (please see the recommended reading list). Suggest a wide selection of reading material: newspapers, blogs, magazines, fiction and non-fiction.

Discuss class and homework. Below is an example of how we often analyse language and literature.

When we analyse what we've read in English we often use PEAR paragraphs. This stands for Point, Evidence, Analysis, Reader Response.

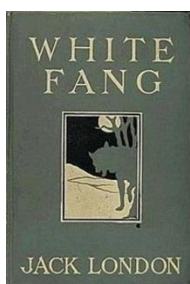
Here's an example of a process we can use. Imagine you have to answer the following question: How does the writer create a sense of unease in this extract?

1. First we annotate the extract by picking out key words and exploring their connotations / associated meanings. We also identify word classes (adjectives, verbs, nouns etc) and language techniques (personification, alliteration, emotive vocabulary etc).

Choice of adjective suggests mystery or fear

Personification of "frowned", plus alliteration emphasises the "discontent" of the forest

Choice of verb is aggressive, conveying a sense of the wind's violence and cruelty of the wind



Dark spruce **forest frowned** on either side of the frozen waterway. The trees had been **stripped** by a recent wind of their white covering of frost, and they seemed to lean toward each other, **black and ominous**, in the fading light. A **vast** silence **reigned** over the land.

Emotive adjective stresses epic scale of the environment

Choice of verb gives silence a "regal" authority. Perhaps oppressive?

Two adjectives convey sinister feeling about the trees

Now we're ready to write up our ideas using the PEAR (Point, Evidence, Analysis, Reader Response) paragraph structure with appropriate terminology:

Basic

P Jack London creates a scary feeling at the start of his novel.

E For example he describes how the "forest frowned".

E This makes the forest sound unhappy. The reader might feel worried about what might happen.

More detailed

P Jack London presents a fearful landscape at the start of his novel:

E "The forest frowned".

E This use of alliteration combined with personification emphasises the discontent of the forest. The reader might predict that the landscape will play a role in the novel.

Advanced

Jack London describes the setting for his novel at the outset, suggesting that it may play a significant role in the narrative. Indeed, the emphasis on personification – the "forest frowned" – further emphasised, by alliteration foregrounds the landscape as a key "character" in the narrative. The landscape is described in terms designed to chill and disconcert the reader – the "black and ominous" trees stand guard over a "white covering of frost". These stark, contrasting images evoke a harsh and inhospitable environment. Furthermore, London emphasises the epic scale of his setting: a "vast silence reigned over the land". The verb "reigned" conveys an imperious sense, as if it is a regal, perhaps oppressive, monarch asserting its authority.

Notice how once students have achieved the basic structure, they can use it more flexibly, eg using more than one quote. To express themselves in an appropriately literary style, students need to deliberately practise using key terminology.

Some key terms

To signal the direction of ideas: furthermore, in addition, moreover, building on this, in contrast, on the other hand, an alternative viewpoint ...

More sophisticated alternatives for shows or suggests: conveys, communicates, demonstrates, evokes, manipulates, implies, reveals, illustrates, indicates, explores, reinforces, emphasises ...

Aim to develop an exploratory stance, teasing out alternative interpretations: perhaps ... may ... might ... the reader might consider ... here the writer could be indicating ... the reader may infer