

## UNIT 1 EXPLORING LANGUAGE

### Section A

#### Analysing Language

#### Response 2

Each of these texts focuses on avalanches, but they all have different audiences and purposes. Text A is a regional news article so it aims to inform readers in Wales about some specific incidents on Snowden. There are many proper nouns such as “Anglesey”, “Llanberis”, “Pyg Track” and “Cwm Glas”. These locate the events in Wales and will engage readers who are familiar with the places. The description of avalanches is therefore designed to be factual, but also to have some elements of drama to hook readers in to the story. This is similar in Text B which is published in a magazine for people who are interested in extreme outdoor activities. It is a personal account of the terrifying side of avalanches. The news report is more positive because it doesn’t involve death, but Text B is on the line because it looks like the writer’s friend won’t be alive even though they have a lot of experience. These descriptive accounts are completely different to Text C which is informative. It is a warning to people using the mountains to take care because of the risks. Because it’s posted on Facebook, however, the tenor is quite chatty. This is very different to Text A and B where the approach is more formal.

Establishing a sense of fear of avalanches through a semantic field of danger is prominent in each text. Text A features words such as the dynamic verb “fell”, the abstract nouns “death”, “pain” and “risk”, and the adjectives “unstable” and “unconscious”. The noun phrase “appalling whiteout conditions” is very emotive because the pre-modifiers emphasise the extreme circumstances. These allow the journalist to highlight the severity of the avalanche. The emphasis is on the extent of the snow with adjectives like “huge” “loaded” and “extreme” dramatising the situation. Rhys makes sure readers are not upset, however, by repetition of the adjective “lucky” and the verb “managed” which draw attention to the fact that these incidents were not as bad as they could have been. This is similar in Text B where verbs like “shout”, abstract nouns like “nightmare”, “fear” and “panic”, the adjective “panic-struck” and the adverb “frantically” establish the danger. These lexical choices illustrate the writer’s own fear and help him to warn readers to avoid experiencing the same terrifying situation because of poor judgement. Text C also works as a warning by giving readers advice before they set out. The semantic field of fear in Text C is evident through the abstract nouns “hazard” and “consequences”, the verb “avoid” and the capitalised noun “Warning” which focuses attention on the headline “Special Public Avalanche Warning” with its key pre-modifier (underlined).

The approach to writing about the avalanches also plays a part in how readers react. Text A uses eye-witness accounts to dramatise the events. The journalist quotes rescue workers like Phil Benbow. The quoting clause “he warned” is like Text C because he is giving advice to other walkers who could avoid the problems by being sensible and we trust him because he can give expert advice. Text B is more like narrative because the writer wants to recreate the experience for the reader. There are lots of time adverbials to create tension such as the prepositional phrase “In seconds” and the adverbs “immediately” and “quickly”. This tension is reinforced by juxtaposition of simple clauses: “I was safe”/“Mike was gone” and tripling of negative noun phrases such as “no warning, no noise, no crack ...”. The drama of the moment the avalanche happened is made more intense by the simple sentence “There was silence.” This break in the drama is dramatic and plays on the reader’s emotions.

Text C is more to the point because it is a Facebook update but it has a higher register than the stereotypical update because it is for a public group. This shows in the lexical choice of subject specific nouns like “cornices” and “terrain traps”. It still follows social media conventions though: it is short, uses chatty language such as the idiomatic subordinate

clause “In case you missed it” , and direct address in the second person pronoun “you” to make it more personal. Where the other texts use declarative sentences to develop the story of specific avalanches, Text C uses imperatives to warn readers about potential avalanches (“make ... Avoid ... stay away”). The people looking at this Facebook page will be local, so they don’t need to put the full proper noun but can use the initialism of BC. Their tagline explains their purpose in the imperative “Know more” and the noun phrases “forecasts, training and awareness”. Texts A and B show reflection on events that have happened such as when John Stone looks back and realises their mistakes. The syndetic listing of the main clauses “grown complacent ... not paid enough attention ... and fallen into the trap” starting with a fronted contrastive conjunction makes it clear that they had taken risks like the walkers in Text A who didn’t have a map or an ice axe. But Text C is all about providing information before anything happens.

All three texts show avalanches to be very powerful and consuming for the people involved. Figurative language like “a sea of avalanche debris” (Text B) and “ugly weak layer” (Text C) dramatise the avalanches making them seem destructive and unpleasant while Text A uses the negative connotations of the word “buried” in the headline to catch our attention.