

AS ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Unit 2

Language Issues and Original & Critical Writing

Writing the commentary

Part (c)



Advice for writing the commentary

Candidates need to remember that part (c), the commentary question, asks them to explore the linguistic and grammatical choices of their writing—the focus is on **language features**, and their link to the **context** of the piece of writing.

It would be useful for them to consider the following—examples are linked to the part (b) task in the sample question on punctuation:

- focus clearly on the **target audience** and **specific examples** which demonstrate how this audience is being addressed/engaged
 - e.g. in a speech to 11-14 year olds: use of a semi-informal tenor to engage (short sentences, fronted conjunctions, comment clauses, discourse markers – showing the influence of spoken features); language used to make the topic seem exciting (creative use of language, analogies, modifiers)
- focus clearly on the **purpose** and the **stylistic features** chosen to reflect this
 - e.g. in a speech to 11-14 year olds: the semantic field of punctuation; subject specific terminology to provide information; persuasive modifiers to engage
- focus clearly on **language features** using **appropriate terminology** (instead of ‘word’, try to find a more precise linguistic term)
 - e.g. in a speech to 11-14 year olds: basic sentence analysis terminology to explain comma splices i.e. two tensed verb phrases—need for punctuation or coordinating conjunction; fronted prepositional phrases or subordinate *If*-clauses—need for comma before subject
- aim to develop **interpretative comment** which considers **specific effects in context**
 - e.g. in a speech to 11-14 year olds: using personification to bring punctuation to life; using imperatives/direct address/humour to engage
- always try to provide an **example** to underpin each point made
- where referencing the content, try to make sure points are linked to audience and purpose—try to **comment** rather than just make basic statements of fact
 - e.g. in a speech to 11-14 year olds: ‘I have shown punctuation is important in school work’ i.e. ‘By using evaluative modifiers in the predicative position (‘Punctuation is crucial’) and prepositional phrases (‘above all’), I have emphasised the importance of punctuation in school work.’
- avoid general comments which do not interpret meaning explicitly
- avoid spending too long on broad features like paragraph length and punctuation unless there is something of particular note that shapes meaning
- try to make sure that paragraphs in the commentary don’t end up very short and list-like.