

A level English Language Summer Independent learning

PART 1: Compulsory Tasks

Welcome to A Level English Language. Please complete the following tasks ready for your first day at New College:

1. Understanding Language Levels and the key terms within them is essential to the study of English Language. Complete the Language Levels Worksheet (Source A).
2. Read the emagazine article on 'Rhetoric Ancient and Modern: The Language of Speeches' (Source B). Then answer the following questions:
 - a. Summarise the issues with rhetoric the writer outlines in the first paragraph.
 - b. What is the meaning of describing rhetoric as, "A speech maker's armoury"?
 - c. Review the examples of contrasts given by the writer. Explain the effect of the use of contrasts in each example.
 - d. Review the examples of puzzles and rhetorical questions given by the writer. Explain the effect of the use of these features in each example.
 - e. Review the examples of three part lists given by the writer. Explain the effect of listing in each example.
 - f. What is the writer's conclusion to this article?
3. Read the speech by American President, John F Kennedy (Source C). Annotate the speech, identifying the language devices you can spot and explaining what impact these have on the audience of the speech.
4. Produce a language autobiography (writing around two sides), drawing on the above concepts and explaining different factors which have affected your language to date.

Start by researching the following language concepts:

- Sociolect
- Dialect
- Idiolect

The following video might also help: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAGgKE82034>
(copy and paste the above web address into your browser)

Below is an extract from an example:

There are a number of factors which have had influence on my speech over the course of my life. The first of these is probably the speech of my parents. My father has a moderate Yorkshire accent, but my mother has a slight Midlands accent, so my Yorkshire accent was never as strong as that of my neighbours. However, I did, as a child, speak with a definite and at times strong Yorkshire accent, especially when interacting with other children from my area.

My mother's speech has influenced me in other ways, too. She uses a number of idioms regularly, some of which I have adopted. Examples of these are 'It's black over our Bill's mother's', 'Too slow to catch a cold', and 'She's no better than she ought'. These generally sound rather old-fashioned, and perhaps humorous in tone: I would not use them in a formal situation.

My education has also had considerable effect on my idiolect – at university my social group and general surroundings were such that I lost my Yorkshire accent to a great extent, by process of convergence with those around me (who were, largely, speakers of RP or other 'prestigious' accents).

My accent and general speech behaviour change considerably according to context. In formal situations, I take care not to drop [h] sounds at the beginnings of words, and [t] sounds at the end. I am also careful that word-final [ŋ] sounds do not become [n].

PART 2: Additional Content

5. Select a story (this is called a style model) you have enjoyed reading (the more ambitious and sophisticated the better) and use it as inspiration for your own story. Aim to write around 750 words. Take the time to proof-read your work and re-draft it, considering ways that your style model can help you improve your work. The aim is to make your work sound like a professional author has written it; however, be careful not to just copy the original work.

Once you're happy with your story, answer the following questions:

- a. What audience is your style model written for? Is it for teenagers, young adults or adults? What literary genre is it? To what extent is your story the same?
- b. What language devices has the writer used in your style model to entertain the reader? In what ways are these devices effective? Comment on at least three features.
- c. Which of the language features you've listed above have you used in your writing? What effects were you aiming to achieve through their use?
- d. Have you used any different language features from your style model? Why? What effects were you trying to achieve through their use?

SOURCE A: LANGUAGE LEVELS WORKSHEET

The key to success in English Language is being able to analyse texts using specific language terminology. All language terms can be categorised into the following seven Language Levels.

Task 1: Match the Language Level to its definition.

| Language Level | Definition |
|----------------|--|
| 1. Graphology | A. The analysis of the sounds of language, including the ways that sounds are produced and how rhythm and intonation are used in speech. |
| 2. Phonology | B. The analysis of the meanings of words, including denotative and connotative meanings. |
| 3. Lexis | C. The analysis of the visual appearance of a text, including the use of images, fonts, colours, etc. |
| 4. Grammar | D. The analysis of the use of words and their functions. |
| 5. Discourse | E. The analysis of morphology (the formation of words) and syntax (the order and structure of words within phrases, clauses and sentences). |
| 6. Semantics | F. The analysis of the implied meanings of words and how language use creates meanings in interactional contexts. |
| 7. Pragmatics | G. The analysis of the ways conventions are used to create 'whole texts'. This includes discourse structure (the overall structure of a text), the use of cohesive devices and narrative structures. |

Write your answers in the boxes below.

| Language Level: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Definition: | | | | | | | |

Task 2: Complete the table below, defining each of the key language terms, providing at least one example of each and identifying which of the seven Language Levels each one belongs to.

| Language Term | Definition | Example(s) | Language Level |
|---------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| Abstract Noun | | | |
| Concrete Noun | | | |
| Proper Noun | | | |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|--|
| Material Verb | | | |
| Mental Verb | | | |
| Relational Verb | | | |
| Modal Verb | | | |
| Attributive Adjective | | | |
| Predicative Adjective | | | |
| Adverb of Degree | | | |
| Adverb of Frequency | | | |
| Adverb of Manner | | | |
| Adverb of Place | | | |
| Adverb of Time | | | |

| | | | |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| Active Voice | | | |
| Passive Voice | | | |
| Main Clause | | | |
| Coordinate Clause | | | |
| Subordinate Clause | | | |
| Relative Clause | | | |
| Declarative Sentence | | | |
| Imperative Sentence | | | |
| Interrogative Sentence | | | |
| Exclamatory Sentence | | | |
| Conditional Sentence | | | |
| Simple Sentence | | | |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Compound Sentence | | | |
| Complex Sentence | | | |
| Metaphor | | | |
| Simile | | | |
| Personification | | | |
| Idiom | | | |
| Pun | | | |
| Irony | | | |
| Challenge: What other language terms do you know that you could add to this table? | | | |
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| | | | |

SOURCE B: RHETORIC ANCIENT AND MODERN: THE LANGUAGE OF SPEECHES

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the language of speeches

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Max Atkinson compares rhetorical devices in plays by Shakespeare and in real life speeches to show how important rhetoric still is in the art of persuading.

Some years ago, a new M.P. asked one of my colleagues for help in writing speeches. He wanted to be persuasive, he explained, but didn't want to use any rhetoric. By so doing, he was reflecting the fact that rhetoric has had a bad press in recent years, and the word has come to be used mainly as a term of abuse. It is now more likely to be used to dismiss some statement as hollow, inaccurate or lacking in substance than to refer to a set of linguistic techniques that have been with us for thousands of years. It's a change of meaning that has almost certainly been spurred on by the virtual disappearance of classics from the curriculum, one result of which is that as a student today, you will have received little or no exposure to the study and appreciation of rhetoric.

A speech maker's armoury

The trouble with deriding rhetoric is that it risks ignoring techniques that are part and parcel of the language of persuasion, and are essential weapons in the armoury of all great speakers. One way of exploring the enduring role of rhetoric in effective communication is to focus on the similarities between the techniques used by contemporary politicians and those found in the most famous examples of oratory in Shakespeare's plays.

The Internet has made finding modern examples of rhetoric much easier: you can locate and download the full text of almost any recent speech. Some websites (e.g. www.americanrhetoric.com) even allow you access to both the script and an audio recording of the speech, which make it possible to listen to it being delivered while reading the original text: in the most ideal way of exploring the workings of rhetoric is to use video clips and transcripts from live speeches recorded from television.

Contrasts

One of the most important rhetorical techniques is the contrast, famous twentieth-century examples of which are:

- [A] Ask not what your country can do for you.
[B] Ask what you can do for your country.
John F. Kennedy
- [A] You turn if you want to.
[B] The lady's not for turning.
Margaret Thatcher

Examples of contrasts are just as easy to find in speeches by more recent political leaders:

- [A] There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured
[B] by what is right with America.
Bill Clinton
- [A] September 11th was not an isolated event
[B] but a tragic prologue.
Tony Blair
- People will look to the resurrection of New York City and they will say:
[A] 'Here buildings fell;
[B] here a nation rose.'
George W. Bush

If you look at Shakespearean speeches you will quickly discover that many of the most famous lines have the same rhetorical structure, as in the case of this powerful contrast between peace and war from *Henry V*:

- [A] In peace there's nothing so becomes a man as modest stillness and humility;
[B] But when the blast of war blows in our ears, then imitate the action of the tiger.

Some of the most famous lines in the forum speech in *Julius Caesar* are also constructed as simple contrasts:

- [A] I come to bury Caesar,
[B] not to praise him;
- [A] The evil that men do lives after them,
[B] The good is oft interred with their bones,
- [A] I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
[B] But here I am to speak what I do know.



Mark Antony also uses the same rhetorical device to express his own rhetorical limitations:

[A] I am no orator, as Brutus is;
[B] But, as you know me, all, a plain blunt man.

More generally, much of the force of the forum speech hinges on the recurring contrast between what Mark Antony has to say about Caesar and Brutus's version of Caesar ('Yet Brutus says he was ambitious; And Brutus is, an honourable man.').

Puzzles and rhetorical questions

Rhetorical questions and puzzling lines [P] are other important rhetorical devices. They have the effect of getting audiences to focus closely on what's coming next, and either draw their own conclusions or respond positively to the solution [S] provided by the speaker.

[P] This is a moment of quite some mixed emotion for me.
[S] I haven't been on prime time television for quite a while.
Ronald Reagan

[P] On my way here I passed a local cinema and it turned out you were expecting me after all.
[S] for the billboards read: 'The Mummy Returns.'
Margaret Thatcher

[P] And why did they vote for change?
[S] Because we had the courage of our convictions and we dared to change.
Tony Blair

In the Forum speech, Mark Antony uses rhetorical questions to invite the crowd to reach their own opinion about Caesar – which just happens, of course, to coincide with the one he is putting across.

He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
[Q] Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
You all did love him once, not without cause:
[Q] What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?

And Hamlet begins his soliloquy with two questions about contrasting alternatives:

[Q] [A] To be or
[B] not to be?
[Q] [A] Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
[B] Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?

Three part lists

It is very easy to find plenty of examples of three part lists in recent and contemporary speeches. These can made up of three words, as in:

Education, education and education.
Tony Blair

Or three phrases:

I stand before you today the representative of a family in grief, in a country in mourning before a world in shock.
Earl Spencer

Or three sentences:

We have led. Many have joined. And America and the world are safer.
George W. Bush

Nor does one have to look very far into Shakespearian speeches to find examples of this device. The troops in *Henry V* are urged to do three things:

Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage.

And Mark Antony not only starts the Forum speech by addressing three categories of people, 'Friends, Romans and Countrymen', but deploys two consecutive lists of three to elaborate on his claim to be an ineffective orator:

For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,
To stir men's blood ...

Rhetoric past and present

After twenty years of using findings from research into rhetoric in courses on public speaking and presentation skills, I am in no doubt that the rhetorical devices described by classical Greek writers more than two thousand years ago are just as effective as they ever were.

Comparing the techniques used by today's politicians with those found in Shakespeare helps us appreciate the continuing effectiveness and relevance of rhetoric. Equally, it demonstrates that despite the difficulty in understanding Shakespeare's language it is by no means as obscure or out of date as it might seem at first sight. And the fact that as great a writer as Shakespeare used these rhetorical techniques to construct some of the most memorable lines in English literature can help to allay the doubts of those who think there is something disreputable about rhetoric. After all, if it worked for Shakespeare, it can work for anyone else. And, unlike the young M.P. mentioned at the start, Shakespeare knew full well that the prospect of being persuasive without using rhetoric makes about as much sense as trying to make an omelette without using any eggs.

 www.speaking.co.uk

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SOURCE C: JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS (20 JANUARY 1961)

[1] Vice President Johnson, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, President Eisenhower, Vice President Nixon, President Truman, Reverend Clergy, fellow citizens:

[2] We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom—symbolizing an end as well as a beginning—signifying renewal as well as change. For I have sworn before you and Almighty God the same solemn oath our forebears prescribed nearly a century and three-quarters ago.

[3] We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

[4] Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

[5] This much we pledge—and more.

[6] To those old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share, we pledge the loyalty of faithful friends. United there is little we cannot do in a host of cooperative ventures. Divided there is little we can do—for we dare not meet a powerful challenge at odds and split asunder.

[7] To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny. We shall not always expect to find them supporting our view. But we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom—and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside.

[8] To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required—not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

[9] Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.

[10] So let us begin anew—remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.

[11] Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belabouring those problems, which divide us.

[12] Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce.

[13] And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.

[14] My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

[15] Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.