Extreme travel

9 How a writer influences the reader

Learning objective

- To explore the question 'how does a writer...?'

Introduction

Some people choose to visit and explore extreme environments. From hostile, uninhabited islands to jungles, deserts, mountains and vast areas of ice and snow, there are many extreme areas on our planet. These are often dangerous and conditions can be life-threatening.

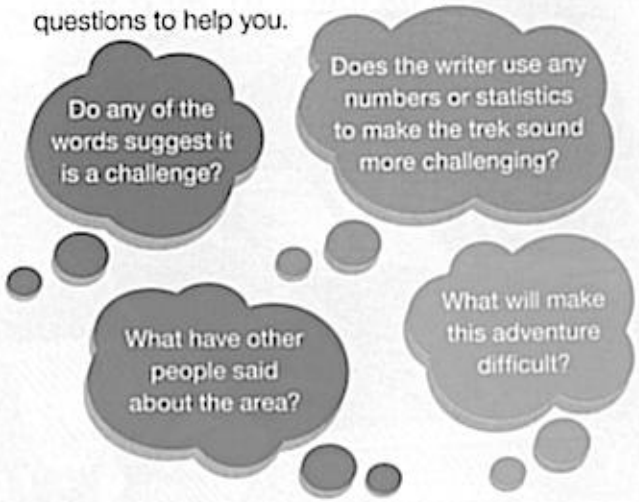
Students are often asked to think about a writer's techniques and how a writer may try to manipulate feelings. From holiday brochures to charity adverts, writers try to appeal to us and change the way we feel. When we are asked to consider, 'how does the writer...?' we need to think carefully about:

- what the writer actually says
- how the contents might affect the reader
- the writer's method.

Activity 1

Read the extract opposite. The article suggests that this is Sir Ranulph Fiennes' 'greatest challenge to date'.

1. Look at the subheading and write down anything that the writer says here to suggest this is a great challenge.
2. Now look at the rest of the article. How does the writer present the trek as a challenge? Use these questions to help you.



Activity 2

Now think about each piece of information you have chosen. Can you explain why each of these suggests that the trek will be a challenge?

Support

The writer mentions Captain Robert Falcon Scott and Apsley Cherry-Garrard in the text. Who do you think these people are? Why do you think the writer mentions them?

Stretch

Some of the language is extreme and paints a bleak picture of the expedition. Given the adversity he faces, why do you think Sir Ranulph Fiennes wants to embark on this 'appalling challenge'?

You should look for both explicit and implicit reasons. Remember to support your answer with textual references.

Sir Ranulph Fiennes to attempt record winter Antarctica trek

Veteran explorer describes planned 2,000-mile trek in temperatures as low as –90°C as his greatest challenge to date

The appalling challenge of a six-month 2,000-mile walk across the south pole, in the perpetual darkness of the Antarctic winter when temperatures can plummet to –90°C, proved, perhaps inevitably, irresistible to the veteran explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes. [...]

Fiennes' hero, Captain Robert Falcon Scott, wrote 'great God, this is an awful place' when he finally reached the south pole a century ago, before freezing and starving to death with his team on the return journey. Apsley Cherry-Garrard called his own trek 'the worst journey in the world'. [...]

Those journeys were made in summer. Nobody before has attempted [...] crossing the pole in winter. In a prepared statement, Fiennes said: 'This will be my greatest challenge to date. We will stretch the limits of human endurance.' [...]

However, in person, at the launch at the Royal Society of The Coldest Journey, Fiennes could not really explain why anyone should contemplate such a venture, still less a man aged 68 who has survived cancer, major heart surgery, and the loss of most of the frozen finger tips on one hand – which he cut off himself with a saw bought specially for the purpose. 'It's what I do,' he said, looking slightly puzzled at the question.

Activity 3

Using all the skills you've looked at in Activities 1 and 2, write two paragraphs to answer the following question:

How does the writer persuade us that this will be a great challenge?

Exam link

The following steps can help you answer 'How...' questions in the exam:

1. When analysing what a writer says, work out who the writer is – in this case it is journalist Maev Kennedy, not Sir Ranulph Fiennes.
2. Look carefully at what the question asks you to do. Are you being asked how the writer persuades you to do something or why you are persuaded that this is a difficult task?
3. Once you understand what you are being asked to look at, start focusing on what the writer says and how they put their ideas together.
4. Pick out words, phrases, techniques or methods and explain how these work in relation to the question.

   Picking out words and phrases or stating a technique or method can be meaningless unless you are able to explain how they work in the context of the question. For example:

Where is the emotive language?

The writer uses a wealth of emotive language in the passage.

Why does the writer use emotive language?
Why does it suggest the trek is challenging?

11 Persuasive writing techniques

Learning objective

- To understand and explore a range of different techniques that a writer may use for effect

Alongside the language and content of a text, you need to think about the techniques used to create an effect.

Activity 1

1. In pairs, make a list of any persuasive techniques you know. Write down a definition of each of these.
2. Now look at the list you have made and write down why each of these techniques would be effective. (How do they work? What do they do? Why are they persuasive or effective?)

Tip When analysing a text, try to avoid writing vague statements. 'The writer uses short sentences to make me read on' is vague. Always give evidence to support your point or technique, and remember to explain the effect. For example, 'The writer uses short eye-catching sentences like "It was mesmerizing" to give the reader the clear impression that the events were captivating.'

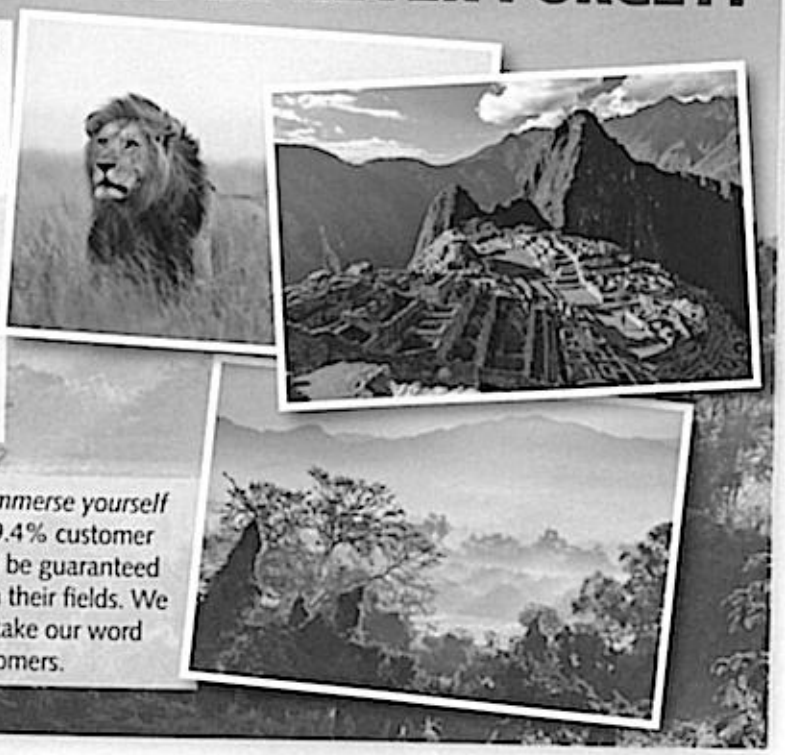
Read the following text from the travel company Extreme Adventures.

EXTREME ADVENTURES

FANCY AN ADVENTURE YOU'LL NEVER FORGET?

Last year 2.5 million young people took a gap year and we're here to help. If you are looking for exhilarating adventures and remote destinations, then look no further. If you fancy a foray into the Falklands or a trek to Timbuktu, we're here for you. Are you fascinated by cultures, mesmerized by magnificent wildlife or want to sample bizarre local cuisines? We're here to help.

If you're wild about wildlife we can offer a tailor-made camping trip on the Serengeti. If you're nuts about Brazil we can organize an amazing journey that weaves through South America and ends at the breath-taking top of Machu Picchu.



Travel expert, Terry Maskell, claims our trips, *'allow you to immerse yourself in inspiring journeys and unforgettable adventures'*. With 99.4% customer satisfaction and over 10,000 successful trips each year, you'll be guaranteed an adventure you'll never forget. Our guides are the finest in their fields. We believe we are the best adventure agents around. But don't take our word for it; check out the thousands of reviews from satisfied customers.

Activity 2

Extreme Adventures is trying to persuade potential travellers to embark on one of its adventures.

1. Which emotions does the company appeal to and why?
2. Some persuasive techniques have been listed here. Can you find an example of each of these in the text? Explain why the examples persuade the reader to embark on one of the adventures.

SPAG

Lists – used to show a range of potential reasons.

Quotations – often given by an 'expert' to support a product. An expert's support also suggests reliability/respectability.

Statistics – information that is represented by data or numbers.

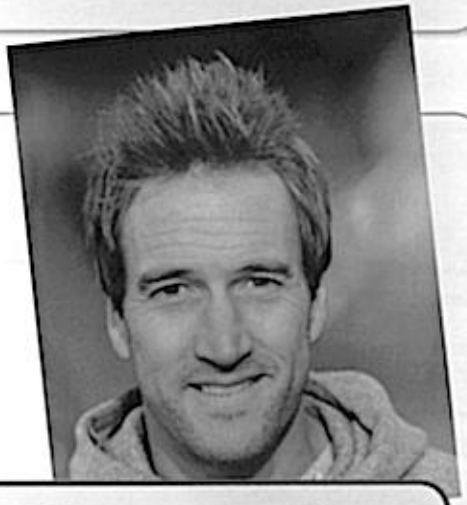
Direct appeal – often uses pronouns such as *we, us, our, you*. This appeals to the reader who may feel personally involved in the text and can imagine themselves doing what the text suggests.

Rhetorical questions – questions that are used for dramatic effect, not intended to get an answer. They can suggest there is no alternative course of action.

Proper nouns – give the name of a specific place, person or organization. They are often used to make an argument credible or realistic as they give us something 'real' to think about.

Activity 3

Ben Fogle, a TV presenter and explorer, entered a competition in 1999. The BBC was looking for volunteers to be marooned for a year on an island. Fogle was successful and spent one year on an island in the Outer Hebrides.



Task: A TV company is looking for school leavers and college students who are willing to live on an island for one year with other young people. Successful winners will be filmed as part of the project. You have decided to apply.

1. With a partner, list the qualities and skills that would appeal to the producers of the TV show described in the task above.
2. Make a list of any hobbies, interests and personal characteristics that will make you suitable for the show.
3. Make a list of any persuasive techniques that you will use to attract the attention of the producer.

Tip A lively and interesting response will certainly get you noticed, but careful planning, sensible structure and well-written sentences are also persuasive.

Support

Plan your response. Think carefully about the structure of your work. How will you start and how will you end? What details will you include?

Stretch

Write your application. Try to use a wide range of persuasive techniques and sentence structures. Your application should be at least four paragraphs in length.

Assessment

Writing

Learning objectives

- To plan and write a letter
- To review and proofread your own writing

Introduction

In this assessment you will have the opportunity to plan and write a formal letter. Think carefully about the skills you have developed throughout this chapter and make sure you incorporate these into your writing.

You see the following letter in a local newspaper.

5 Grange Road
Dernham
DH2 3RG

16th December 2014

Dear Editor,

I recently read an article in your newspaper which seemed to celebrate extreme sports. I have to say that I was appalled when I read your views on these ridiculous activities. From bungee jumping to body boarding, skateboarding to skiing, these sports all carry extreme risks.

Young people are, by nature, risk takers. Young people need no encouragement to get involved in ridiculous activities that threaten their lives and worry their families. I appreciate your negative stance on some of the more dangerous sports like tombstoning, but encouraging young people to give free running a go is, to my mind, utterly irresponsible. I am not the type of parent who wishes to wrap my children in cotton wool, but I feel that urging them to try out new and exciting activities will only cause broken bones and broken hearts.

So what's wrong with a game of chess or a stroll around the park? What's wrong with badminton or bowling? I believe…

Activity 1

Task

The letter on page 46 appeared in a local newspaper. You feel very strongly about the letter and decide to write a response.

Write your letter.

Planning

Spend five minutes planning your work. If you wish, use the prompts opposite to help you.

Go through the letter and underline any of the words or phrases that you wish to discuss or follow up in your response.

Make a list of words or phrases to describe how you feel about the letter. This will help you to determine the tone of your letter.

Points to consider before you start:

- Remind yourself of the layout for a formal letter by studying the letter opposite.
- Who will you address your letter to?
- What will your opening sentence be?
- Plan four or five topic sentences that will begin each paragraph in your writing.

Share your plan with a partner. Make notes on each other's plans if you can think of any ideas or points that they could include in their work.

You now have 30 minutes to write your letter.

Support

Remind yourself of the work completed on sentence types on pages 26–27. Try to include a range of sentence types in your work. Use the letter on page 46 to remind you how to vary your sentences.

Activity 2

Now that you have completed your work, spend two or three minutes reading it to ensure it makes sense.

Tips for proofreading:

- Check your work a sentence at a time and make sure each sentence makes complete sense.
- Highlight any spellings you are uncertain about and check them in a dictionary.
- Swap your work with a partner and ask them to annotate your work (in pencil) with suggestions or corrections.

Tip You can either agree or disagree with the views in the letter, but make sure you have clear, supported opinions.

Exploring conflict

Learning objectives

- To consider the theme of conflict
- To explore your own experiences relating to conflict

Key terms

Abstract noun: a noun which identifies things that cannot be physically touched or seen, such as a state, idea, process or feeling
Verb: a word like *eat*, *think* or *walk*. Some identify an action; others identify thoughts and feelings

Activity 1

1. Think about your own experiences of conflict. Have you disagreed with a parent over what to wear? Perhaps you wanted to go swimming but you should have been visiting a grandparent? Maybe your brother or sister borrowed a favourite t-shirt?
   a. Make a list of the different ways you have experienced conflict.
   b. Keeping your own experiences in mind, write down words or phrases you would associate with the idea of conflict.
2. The word 'conflict' does not just refer to two people having a fight. Discuss with a partner how the word 'conflict' can be used in different ways. Make a list of your ideas.
3. Using the ideas you have discussed, write a definition for this term in your own words.

Introduction

How does conflict begin? At its simplest level, there is a problem. In their broadest sense, problems are things that are 'difficult to deal with or understand'. Problems are often the cause or catalyst for conflict, which seems an appropriate place to begin.

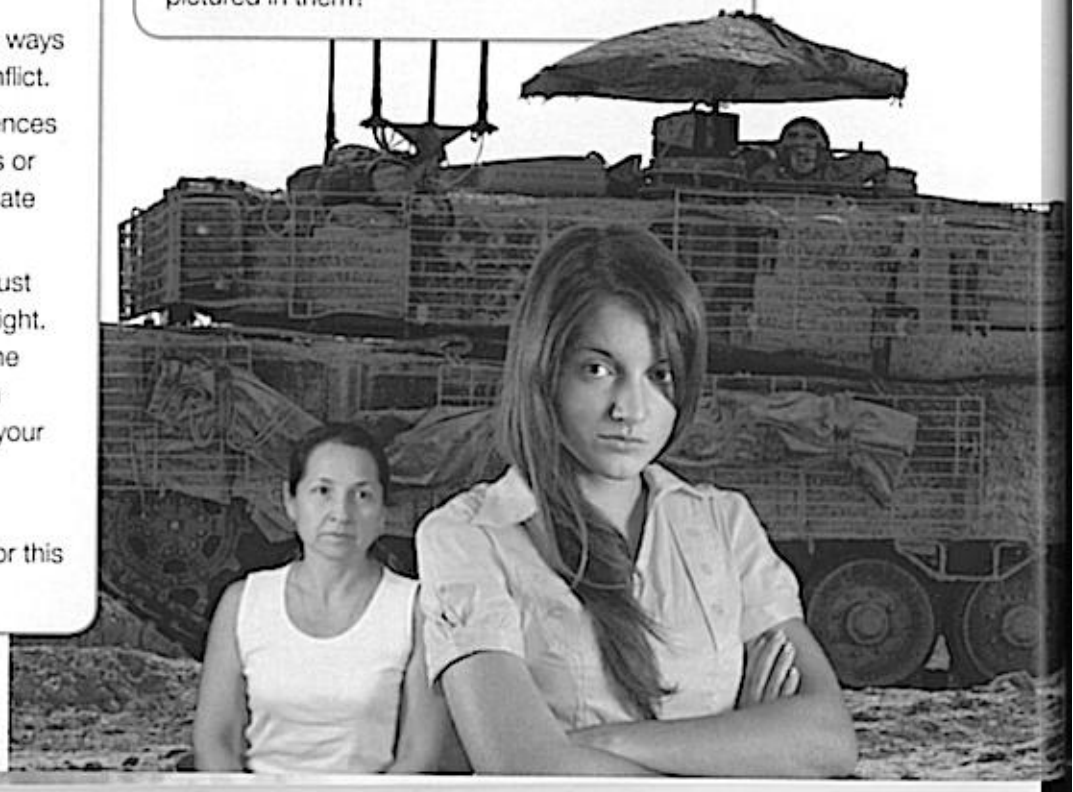
It is important when you are asked to respond to an idea that you understand what you are being asked to do. In this case, there is an expectation that you know what the word 'conflict' means. An idea can have more than one meaning and it might mean slightly different things to different people. An expert reader would consider more than one way in which something can be interpreted.

Conflict can be defined in two ways:

1. As an **abstract noun** it can mean:
   - a fight or struggle
   - a disagreement between people having different ideas or beliefs.
2. As a **verb** it can mean:
   - to fight or struggle
   - to have a disagreement.

Activity 2

Look at the images below. What words or phrases would you use to describe the conflicts pictured in them?



Activity 3

You will have come across conflict in fiction in more ways than you have probably realized. Consider:

- Have you read a story, or part of a story, where there was conflict?
- Have you watched a TV drama or a film which focused on imagined conflict?
- Have you listened to a song where the lyrics responded to conflict?

Design and complete a table to show your recent experiences of conflict in fiction. For example:

Source	What happened	My reaction
Reading *The Hobbit*	Bilbo tries to steal from the trolls he has been sent to investigate. The trolls grab him and fight each other about how to interrogate him. The trolls seem naturally argumentative and are looking for conflict.	I felt tense as Bilbo tried to sneak in and then afraid for his safety. I was also eager to find out how he would escape. The conflict was also a little funny, because Tolkien presented a humorous contrast between the stupid trolls and the intelligent Bilbo.
Watching *Avatar*		
Listening to...		

How does conflict start?

There are many different reasons for the start of conflict, but it often revolves around a particular problem or issue. It can be something specific to individuals, such as an argument over the height of a neighbour's hedge, or something of wider concern, such as a conflict over religious beliefs. Conflict can also be something that is experienced internally, for example, someone worrying about something they think they should have done differently. One thing is certain: there is no shortage of reasons for conflict.

Activity 4

1. List at least five different times when you have observed or experienced the beginnings of conflict.
2. Share your experiences with a partner. Discuss whether any of them are similar.
3. Look at the list you have made. Do you think any of these experiences could form the basis for a story? Choose two of your experiences and answer the following questions:
   a. What title would this story have?
   b. How many characters are involved in the conflict?
   c. What would the reader need to know about the main characters?
   d. What is the most dramatic part of the conflict?