

R I N G W O O D
— A NATIONAL TEACHING ACADEMY —

GCSE

English Language Paper 1

Fiction
response to
'The Hobbit'
Advice notes



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Eng Lang

Paper 1 Fiction – ‘Advice Notes’

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GCSE English Language

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading

Section A – Reading Response to Fiction extract

'The Hobbit' by J.R.R. Tolkien

ADVICE DOCUMENT

60 minutes

- Spend about 15 minutes reading through the source and all four reading questions.
- Spend no more than 4 minutes completing question 01.
- Spend no more than 8 minutes completing question 02.
- Spend no more than 8 minutes completing question 03.
- Spend no more than 25 minutes completing question 04.

5 "Now you are in for it at last, Bilbo Baggins," he said to himself. "You went and put your foot right in it that night of the party, and now you have got to pull it out and pay for it! Dear me, what a fool I was and am!" said the least Tookish part of him. "I have absolutely no use for dragon-guarded treasures, and the whole lot could stay here for ever, if only I could wake up and find this beastly tunnel was my own front-hall at home!" He did not wake up of course, but went still on and on, till all sign of the door behind had faded away. He was altogether alone.

10 Soon he thought it was beginning to feel warm. "Is that a kind of a glow I seem to see coming right ahead down there?" he thought. It was. As he went forward it grew and grew, til there was no doubt about it. It was a red light steadily getting redder and redder. Also it was now undoubtedly hot in the tunnel. Wisps of vapour floated up and past him and he began to sweat. A sound, too, began to throb in his ears, a sort of bubbling like the noise of a large pot galloping on the fire, mixed with a rumble as of a gigantic tom-cat purring. This grew to the unmistakable gurgling noise of some vast animal snoring in its sleep down there in the red glow in front of him. It was at this point that Bilbo stopped. Going on from there was the bravest thing he ever did. The tremendous things that happened afterward were as nothing compared to it. He fought the real battle in the tunnel alone, before he ever saw the vast danger that lay in wait. At any rate after a short halt go on he did; and you can picture him coming to the end of the tunnel, an opening of much the same size and shape as the door above. Through it peeps the hobbit's little head. Before him lies the great bottommost cellar or dungeon-hall of the ancient dwarves right at the Mountain's root. It is almost dark so that its vastness can only be dimly guessed, but rising from the near side of the rocky floor there is a great glow. The glow of Smaug! There he lay, a vast red-golden dragon, fast asleep; thrumming came from his jaws and nostrils, and wisps of smoke, but his fires were low in slumber. Beneath him, under all his limbs and his huge coiled tail, and about him on all sides stretching away across the unseen floors, lay countless piles of precious things, gold wrought and unwrought, gems and jewels, and silver red-stained in the ruddy light.

30 Smaug lay, with wings folded like an immeasurable bat, turned partly on one side, so that the hobbit could see his underparts and his long pale belly crusted with gems and fragments of gold from his long lying on his costly bed. Behind him where the walls were nearest could dimly be seen coats of mail, helms and axes, swords and spears hanging; and there in rows stood great jars and vessels filled with a wealth that could not be guessed. To say that Bilbo's breath was taken away is no description at all. There are no words left to express his ...

GCSE English Language

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading

Section A – Reading Response to Fiction extract

'The Hobbit' by J.R.R. Tolkien

ADVICE DOCUMENT

60 minutes

[continued]

35 ... staggerment, since Men changed the language that they learned of elves in the days when all the world was wonderful. Bilbo had heard tell and sing of dragon-hoards before, but the splendour, the lust, the glory of such treasure had never yet come home to him. His heart was filled and pierced with enchantment and with the desire of dwarves; and he gazed motionless, almost forgetting the frightful guardian, at the gold beyond price and count.

01 Read again the part of the source, **lines 23 to 27**.

List four things from this part of the text that we learn about the dragon, Smaug.

[4 marks]

02 Look in detail at the extract from **lines 8 - 18**.

How does the writer use language to give the impression that the hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, is frightened?

You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

[8 marks]

03 You now need to think about the **whole of the source**.

This text is from a short story. How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

You could write about:

- what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning
- how and why the writer changes this focus as the extract develops
- any other structural features that interest you.

[8 marks]

04 Focus this part of your answer on the **whole of the source**

A student, having read this section of the text said: *"The writer brings the room to life, as though the reader is in the dungeon with Bilbo."* **To what extent do you agree?**

In your response, you could:

- write about your own impressions of the character and setting presented to you
- evaluate how the writer develops this character and setting
- support your opinions with quotations from the text

[20 marks]

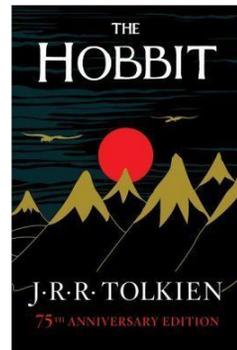
Question 1

The 'LIST' question

- Refer to lines 23 to 27.
- List four things from this part of the text that we learn about the dragon, Smaug.

Advice

- This question is designed to ease you into the exam.
- There were many points about Smaug the dragon for students to list.
- Those of you who simply pulled out information sometimes did better than students who tried to *interpret* the passage.
- Remember, in this question, **"KISS"** (*"Keep it simple, stupid!!"*).
- There's no need to write in full sentences – many full-mark answers simply used bullet points. The best answers began their points with 'He...' or 'Smaug...'
- Some of you dropped easy marks here because you did not contain your comments to what you learned from lines 23-27. Always read the question more than once to get a crystal-clear appreciation of what you're being asked to do.



Question 1 model answer

You could include any of these points but must include four separate points.

- He was 'vast'.
- He was 'fast asleep'.
- He could breathe fire.
- He was surrounded by lots of treasure.
- He was red-gold in colour.
- The noise of 'thrumming' came from his jaws and nostrils.
- Wisps of fire came from his jaws and nostrils.
- He had a 'huge coiled tail'.

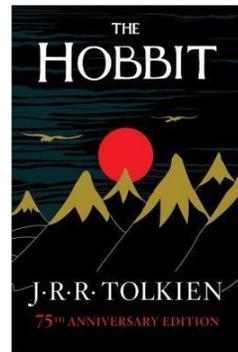
Question 2

The 'LANGUAGE' question

- Look in detail at the extract from lines 8 - 18.
- How does the writer use language to give the impression that the hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, is frightened?

Advice

- This question requires the analysis of language.
- The **MOST IMPORTANT** place to begin is with the question: it insists that you look for language that gives the impression that Bilbo is **frightened**.
- Next: you can **only** use points that are found between lines 8-18: any language from outside of this part of the passage is invalid and some of you did lose marks due to this.
- **Now: what language reveals Bilbo to be frightened?**
- Overall: this part of the extract certainly reveals Bilbo to be frightened. There is plenty of content to be found. However, those of you who performed less well on this question often just labelled or pointed out language features but failed to comment on the **effect** this language was intended to have upon the reader or explain a reason behind the writer's choices. Those of you who offered a basic, generic comment (e.g. "it creates a picture in our heads" or "it makes us understand how Bilbo feels") often got no more than Level 1 ('Simple comment').
- In brief, you need to be able to offer a reason as to **HOW** the language has a certain effect upon the reader.
- You shouldn't worry if you can't label or identify language terms. It is **MUCH MORE VALUABLE** to explain how a word or phrase is meant to be effective in carrying meaning to the reader. The best way to achieve this is by putting a conjunction in the answer that links to an explanation phrase.



Question 2 model answer

You could include any of these points. To get 8 marks, you are advised to comment on at least FOUR items of language.

- The glow that 'grew and grew' and becomes 'redder and redder' increases Bilbo's anxiety **because** the repetition of the verb and comparative adjective intensifies this sense of anxiety.
- The heat is increasing: 'it was now undoubtedly hot'. The adverbs 'now' and 'undoubtedly' intensify this feeling of pressure **by** making the heat seem to increase more immediately.
- This pressure is reinforced with the verb phrase, 'he began to sweat' **because** we associate sweating with fear, tension or anxiety.
- The use of sound increases the urgency and pressure in Bilbo's mind. The verb 'to throb' **makes** the experience begin to seem painful. We also see a sequence of onomatopoeic words: 'bubbling', 'gurgling', 'rumble', 'galloping' and each example of onomatopoeia intensifies this growing sense of unease **because** the sound is shown as becoming increasingly overwhelming.
- Bilbo's sense of vulnerability is continually reinforced **by** the contrast between the small hobbit and the 'vast animal' snoring.
- The explicit statement by the narrator that the next thing Bilbo did is "the bravest thing he ever did" emphasises the level of fear Bilbo experiences **because** the superlative adjective 'bravest' and the adverb 'ever' combine to build a sense of hyperbole.

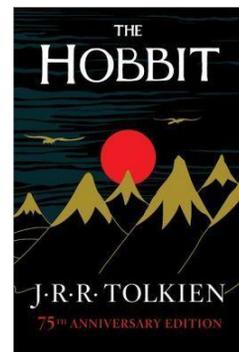
Question 3

The 'STRUCTURE' question

- Refer to the whole of the source.
- This text is from a short story. How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

Advice

- This question proved to be the **MOST CHALLENGING** – many of you dropped marks on this.
- So, what is the 'STRUCTURE' question asking you to do?
- In the simplest terms, you are asked to examine *what* happens, *where* and *why*.
- As you do this, you should always ask this simple question: 'How does reading about this, at this point, add to my understanding of the text as a whole?'
- So, what can you comment upon? Well, how about?
 - Any changes in mood or tone at different parts of the extract?
 - Any changes in the situation at different parts of the extract?
 - Any changes in the character at different parts of the extract?
 - Any changes in setting or place at different parts of the extract?
 - Any changes in the sense of voice (*i.e. who is speaking or whose eyes we see this world through*) at different parts of the extract?
- But, whatever changes you see, it's **VITAL** that explain these changes or shifts in terms of:
 - (1) **where** they are in the extract;
 - (2) the **significance** of their placement at this part of the extract;
 - (3) the **contrast** that is created by any of these changes or shifts.



Question 3 model answer

You could include any of these points:

- The writer first focuses us on a conversation Bilbo is having with himself. We call this an *interior monologue*. It is significant that this monologue comes first within the extract because it builds reader intrigue at the degree of peril Bilbo finds himself within. We are yet to have the vivid descriptive detail of the dungeon and so must fear the worst as Bilbo announces, "Now you are in for it at last, Bilbo Baggins."
- The first key contrast is that the narrative moves from this internal conversation to much more description of Bilbo's physical situation. We get a sequence of heat-related phrases, 'feel warm', 'glow', 'red light', 'redder and redder', 'undoubtedly hot' and 'sweat'. This semantic field of heat shifts the extract to a more physical focus, which foreshadows the introduction of a dragon.
- The next shift in focus is that the narrative moves into vivid description of the dragon itself. We get a greater use of adjectives and figurative language, in particular to emphasise the size of the dragon and the contrast between the dragon's vastness and the hobbit's smallness.
- However, it's really interesting that the reader's attention is taken away from the obvious danger and peril of the dragon because the same happens to the character, Bilbo: his attention, as is ours, is entirely shifted onto vivid description of the treasure. Indeed, the narrator emphasises this subtly through the quiet phrase, "he gazed motionless, almost forgetting the frightful guardian".

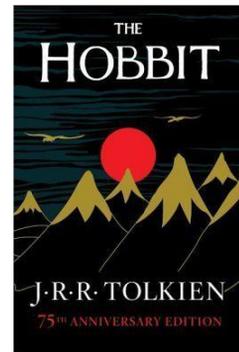
Question 3

The 'STRUCTURE' question

- Refer to the **whole of the source**.
- This text is from a short story. How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

Advice

- Remember, whatever changes you see, it's **VITAL** that explain these changes or shifts in terms of:
 - (1) **where** they are in the extract;
 - (2) the **significance** of their placement at this part of the extract;
 - (3) the **contrast** that is created by any of these changes or shifts.



Question 3 model answer

You could include any of these points:

[continued from prior page]

- Overall, the greatest shift is within the attitude of the hobbit. Bilbo is initially characterised by fearfulness, self-criticism and vulnerability. However, by the end of the passage, this fear has been replaced by the hobbit being seduced by the treasure. This seduction is emphasised by the tripling, “the splendour, the lust, the glory of such treasure”. But, this seduction replaces Bilbo’s fear with a recklessness, “almost forgetting” that the treasure is guarded by a dangerous dragon.

Question 4

The 'EVALUATION' question

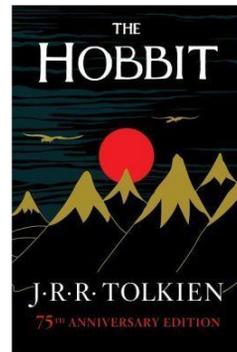
- Focus this part of your answer on the whole of the source.
- A student, having read this section of the text said: *"The writer brings the room to life, as though the reader is in the dungeon with Bilbo."* To what extent do you agree?

Advice

- This question has the **GREATEST** amount of available marks.
- Yet, it was clear that many of you spent too long on Q.1, Q.2 and Q.3 and did not leave sufficient time for Q.4. Many of you rushed Q.4 and this showed – most obviously, with many of you writing **SHORTER** responses for Q.4 than you did for Q.2 or Q.3.
- The key skill for Q.4 is 'evaluation'. The question to ask yourself is this:

→ **TO WHAT EXTENT DO I AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT IN THE QUESTION? Do I agree a lot, a bit or not at all?**
- As there is space for evaluation here, we will see a lot of you having the freedom to respond in a personal way, which is exactly we want to see.
- Nevertheless, many student do worry: what am I supposed to think about this 'statement' that I get?
- A simple tip is this: if in doubt, then **AGREE** with the statement. If the statement thinks a certain way about the text, look for ways in which you can agree with this statement.
- For instance, here, the statement is: *"The writer brings the room to life, as though the reader is in the dungeon with Bilbo."*
- This implies that the room **IS** brought to life by vivid and exciting language. So, go out and find plenty of examples that you think show the writer bringing the room to life with his language

[continued over]



Question 4 model answer

You could include any of these points.

- The writer foreshadows the obvious danger of the room before the room is even presented. The direct speech statement, "Now you are in for it at last, Bilbo Baggins" introduces the perilous context of the setting ahead, heightening reader expectation for the perils ahead.
- The writer uses a large degree of sensory language – that is, language that evokes the senses – to help us appreciate the setting. Words related to light and sight include 'glow', 'red light', 'redder and redder' and 'wisps of vapour' all emphasise the fiery nature of the setting, which will become apparent when the dragon is introduced. Words related to sound include the verb 'throb', onomatopoeic words like 'bubbling' and 'gurgling' and figurative language such as the simile 'a rumble as of a gigantic tom-cat purring'. The physical sensation of heat is also apparent. Combined, this sensory language is deliberately used to create a vivid sensation, especially as this is a fantasy novel so the setting is not familiar to readers.
- The attention to Smaug's lair is designed to maximise a sense of contrast between the darkness of the dungeon and the 'glow' Smaug creates within it. The semantic field of darkness is maximised by the metaphor of the dungeon being 'at the Mountain's root', which emphasises its distance from sources of natural light.

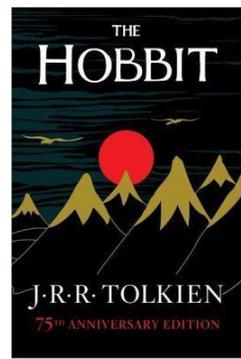
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Question 4

The 'EVALUATION' question

[continued from prior page]

- **HOWEVER, this wasn't the biggest problem with many of your answers to Q.4.**
- No, the **biggest** problem was this: what was the statement asking you to look at in particular? Was it the character, the dragon, the tension? No. It was the **ROOM**. The statement clearly states that the writer brings the **ROOM** to life through his language.
- Far too many of you got completely side-tracked in this answer into commenting upon the character, the hobbit. But, we could not award any marks for this. We could only give marks for comments that considered HOW the writer's language either makes the room seem vivid, or not if that is what you felt. But, you had to focus on the **ROOM**.
- Now, your comments could include anything in the room so it would have been good to see comments on how the writer offers vivid presentations of:
 - the physical setting;
 - the heat;
 - the sounds;
 - the size of the dungeon;
 - the contrast between the dragon and the treasure;
 - the warrior's paraphernalia and their reason for being there;
 - the overall effect of the room upon Bilbo.
- But, whatever you comment upon, you will only get good marks for explaining **HOW** you believe the writer has presented the **ROOM**.



Question 4 model answer

You could include any of these points.

[continued from prior page]

- The contrast between the beguiling treasure and the 'frightful guardian', Smaug. The value, vastness and temptation of the wealth is emphasised by the highly-descriptive language. The effect of the treasure is shown to have an even-greater effect on the hobbit than the dragon, which seems ironic. Nouns such as 'staggerment', 'enchantment' and 'desire' are all designed to emphasise the effect of the treasure upon Bilbo; the frightfulness and danger of the dragon is less emphasised although Tolkien does make subtle reference to the danger by suggesting that Bilbo's heart is 'pierced' with enchantment.

01 Read again the part of the source, **lines 23 to 27**.

List four things from this part of the text that we learn about the dragon, Smaug.

[4 marks]

1. He was 'vast'.
2. He was 'asleep'.
3. He could breathe fire.
4. He was surrounded by lots of treasure.

02 Look in detail at the extract from **lines 8 - 18**.

How does the writer use language to give the impression that the hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, is frightened?

You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

[8 marks]

The first possibility that Bilbo is frightened is conveyed through his interrogative 'Is that a kind of glow I seem to see coming right ahead down there?' His uncertainty contrasts the certainty of the narrator who reveals 'It was', immediately after Bilbo's question.

In addition, the simile of 'large pot galloping on the fire', gives the impression that, in Bilbo's mind, the source of the heat is violent in nature, with the verb 'galloping' giving the impression of the imaginary pot almost being out of control to create the level of heat being produced.

The most explicit hint to Bilbo's fear is suggested with the narrator's observation that '[g]oing on from there was the bravest thing he ever did.' The superlative 'bravest' in combination with the adverb 'ever' contribute to the narrative emphasis on the level of fear being experienced by Bilbo for him never to have had to do something so brave before.

Finally, the writer's use of the metaphor of a 'battle' to describe the war he fought with himself captures the vast effort it took to take the steps to contemplate the 'vast danger' of the dragon in the cave before him. The metaphor implies that his fear risks overwhelming his capability of moving into the cave.

03 You now need to think about the **whole of the source**.

This text is from a short story. How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

You could write about:

- what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning
- how and why the writer changes this focus as the extract develops
- any other structural features that interest you.

[8 marks]

Initially, the writer focuses the reader's attention on Bilbo's interior monologue to interest them. Within it through his observation 'Now you are in for it at last' the writer is led to understand that Bilbo is in a state of peril. This is reinforced throughout the opening where he calls himself a 'fool', even bringing into question the point of him being there when he observes he has 'no use for dragon-guarded treasures'. The writer then develops the reader's interest through shifting focus to the physical descriptions that accompany his walk down the tunnel which was 'beginning to feel warm' then became 'undoubtedly hot'. In this way, the writer develops the reader's anticipation of the eventual arrival at the dragon through representing, steadily, the uncomfortable setting.

03 How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

(Continued)

The writer then develops the reader's interest through shifting focus to the physical descriptions that accompany his walk down the tunnel which was 'beginning to feel warm' then became 'undoubtedly hot'. In this way, the writer develops the reader's anticipation of the eventual arrival at the dragon through representing, steadily, the uncomfortable setting.

Interest is further developed when the writer specifically zooms in on a description of the 'opening' at the end of the tunnel through which Bilbo 'peeps' his 'little head'. This shift in focus reminds the reader of the relatively small size of the hobbit in the context of the dragon's lair, which further develops the sense of peril initiated in the opening to the extract.

Towards the end of the extract, the reader's interest is developed through shifting focus on to a description of the sleeping dragon who has 'wings folded like an immeasurable bat', which develops interest in the reader who will wonder what chance Bilbo has against such a foe. This question is further developed when the writer describes the scene behind the dragon, including the 'coats of mail, helmets and axes', all of which connotes the seemingly impossible task Bilbo will have given the failed attempts of warriors before him.

04 Focus this part of your answer on the **whole of the source**

A student, having read this section of the text said: "*The writer brings the room to life, as though the reader is in the dungeon with Bilbo.*" **To what extent do you agree?**

In your response, you could:

- write about your own impressions of the character and setting presented to you
- evaluate how the writer develops this character and setting
- support your opinions with quotations from the text

[20 marks]

The writer is able to bring the room to life even before Bilbo's arrival by using Bilbo's thoughts to foreshadow its fearful aspect even before seeing it. Through the use of the opening declarative '[n]ow you are for it at last, Bilbo Baggins', the reader is encouraged to imagine the perilous content of the room ahead. The prepositional phrase 'at last' intensifies the fear of the reader who can assume that this is going to be the final challenge of many before from which he has escaped.

The writer also prepares the reader for the physical setting of the room by descriptions of how it was already 'beginning to feel warm' in the tunnel before he arrived. In addition, the repetition of the verb 'it grew and grew' to describe the 'light' helps the reader to get a visual appreciation of the room's contrast compared to the relative dark of the enclosed tunnel. Other sensory language is used to develop the atmosphere in the lead to the room such as the sibilant 'wisps of vapour' which could even foreshadow the smokey breath of the sleeping dragon in the cave which are later described as 'wisps of smoke'.

Another way the writer helps you to imagine being in the room is through a detailed description of the setting of Smaug's lair, which provides a very visual contrast between the darkness of the location and the 'glow' Smaug creates within it. The narrator helps you to picture being there through reference to the noun phrases 'great bottommost cellar' and 'dungeon-hall of the ancient dwarves' both of which are locations associated with the semantic field of darkness, typically positioned within buildings in a way that denies contents or occupants access to light. This feeling of intense darkness is also further conveyed through the writer's use of metaphor to describe its location at 'the Mountain's root', which also simultaneously encourages an empathetic response to the feeling of claustrophobia in such a place.

A student, having read this section of the text said: *“The writer brings the room to life, as though the reader is in the dungeon with Bilbo.”* **To what extent do you agree?**

(Continued)

When describing the chamber occupied by the dragon, Tolkien is able to bring the room to life through almost cinematic description of the dragon’s surroundings. The adverb ‘dimly’ to describe the sight of the warriors’ paraphernalia encourages the reader to see the room like Bilbo. The extent of the wealthy treasure amongst all these images is further reinforced in the reader’s mind who is encouraged to contemplate the ‘great jars(...)with a wealth that could not be guessed’. This hyperbolic language helps the reader to picture the vastness of the treasure in the room with Bilbo.

One argument against the description of bringing the room to life, as though the reader is in the dungeon with Bilbo, is the element of the extract’s genre. To immerse oneself in the narrative to that extent requires a certain suspension of disbelief due to the magical context of the fantasy world. Even the character’s name – Bilbo – will be unfamiliar to a reader, so may alienate them from developing a connection that facilitates virtually occupying a space next to them in the room. Similarly, images such as the simile of ‘wings folded like an immeasurable bat’ might be difficult to engage with fully given the context of it being used to describe a known mythical creature. That said, the simile itself uses a real-world context in order to bridge the mythical divide so, perhaps, this manages to some extent to overcome difficulties of a willing suspension of disbelief from readers trying to imagine themselves in the room with Bilbo.