

# Higher English

*RUAE*

## **‘Stretch Yourself’ Homework Booklet**





This booklet provides further opportunities to practise specific close reading question types.

The questions in this pack have been chosen to stretch your close reading abilities – some are quite challenging; all are of a ‘Higher’ level.

Your teacher may set these questions as homework, extension work, or as independent consolidation/revision.

Remember to employ your close reading strategies & formulae where appropriate, as well as relying on your own common sense.

Wherever you encounter a word or phrase unfamiliar to you, you should look it up in a dictionary, and take a note of the definition, then practise using the word in a new context.

### **Question types included:**

- 1. Context**
- 2. Linking**
- 3. Word Choice**
- 4. Imagery**
- 5. Sentence Structure**
- 6. Tone**



Many candidates lose marks when answering **context questions**, firstly because they are unsure of the meaning of words or phrases due to a limited vocabulary, and secondly because they fail to answer the question using the appropriate method.

### **ACTION**

- Continue to read broadsheet newspaper articles widely to expand your vocabulary
- Make sure you are familiar with how you should be answering context questions: use the formula



## **PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

1.

“One of them is a belief in the grandeur of the everyday, where the ordinary is just the unique in hiding. As it says in *Docherty*, ‘messiahs are born in stables’. That being so, as a boy I kept finding Bethlehem round every corner. So many things amazed me.”

**Question – Show how the lines above help you to arrive at the meaning of “the ordinary is just the unique in hiding.” (2)**

2.

“Odd, this business of going out to ‘see’ a band. My parents, when they were younger, would probably have talked about going to hear a band or going to dance to one, and would not have recognised or understood the ritual that evolved with rock: clumps of people solemnly gathering to face the stage.”

**Question – Explain the significance of the word ‘ritual’ in the context of the lines above. (2)**

3.

“The Gulf Stream has not always flowed. As far as scientists can tell, it has stopped quite abruptly in the past – and in as little as a couple of years. Now it seems that global warming is recreating the very conditions which caused it to stall before, with the potential to plunge the whole of northern Europe into another Ice Age.”

**Question – Explain the meaning of ‘stall’ as it is used above. (2)**

4.

"If you hail from Glasgow you will have friends or relatives whose roots lie in the Irish Republic. You will have Jewish friends or colleagues whose grandparents, a good number of them Polish or Russian, may have fled persecution in Europe. You will eat in premises run by Italian or French proprietors. It is a diverse cultural heritage enriched now by a large and vibrant Asian population and a smaller but significant Chinese one."

**Question – By referring closely to the extract above, show how you are helped to understand the meaning of the expression "diverse cultural heritage". (2)**

5.

"Frank Furedi, reader in sociology at the University of Kent, has written a book, *Paranoid Parenting*, in which he explores the causes and far-reaching consequences of too much cossetting. 'It is always important to recall that our obsession with our children's safety is likely to be more damaging to them than any risks that they are likely to meet with in their daily encounter with the world,' Furedi writes."

**Question – How does the context in which it is used help you to understand the meaning of the word "cossetting"? (2)**

6.

"Others are, however, convinced that it is only a matter of time before we face Armageddon. Liberal Democrat MP and sky-watcher Lembit Opik, says: 'I have said for years that the chance of an asteroid having an impact which could wipe out most of the human race is 100 per cent.' He has raised his worries in the Commons, successfully campaigned for an all-party task force to assess the potential risk and helped set up the Spaceguard UK facility to track near-earth objects. He admits: 'It does sound like a science fiction story and I may sound like one of those guys who walk up and down with a sandwich-board saying the end of the world is nigh. But the end *is* nigh.' "

**Question – Show how the extract above helps you to understand the meaning of the word "Armageddon". (2)**



Many candidates lose marks when answering **link questions**, firstly because they forget that a linking sentence links backwards as well as forwards, and secondly because they fail to make specific reference to the ideas/points in the passage that are being linked.

### **ACTION**

- Make sure you are familiar with how you should be answering linking questions: use your formula
- Remember to look at the overall structure of the text. Look for the topic sentences and signpost words that indicate the direction of the argument



## **PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

1.

“At the same time plans are advanced for ‘accommodation centres’, which will have the immediate effect of preventing natural integration, while children of immigrants are to be denied the harmonising effect of inter-racial schooling. Meanwhile, ever more sophisticated technology is to be employed to stem the numbers of young men who risk their lives clinging to the underside of trains and lorries, or are paying obscene sums of money to the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s own version of slave traders – those traffickers in human misery who make their fortunes on the back of others’ desperation.

Yet at the heart of this ever more draconian approach to immigration policy lie a number of misconceptions. The UK is not a group of nations swamped by a tidal wave of immigration. Relatively speaking, Europe contends with a trickle of refugees compared with countries who border areas of famine, desperate poverty, or violent political upheaval. The countries of origin of the highest numbers coming here change from year to year, depending of the hotspots of global conflict. A significant proportion of refugees want nothing more than to be able to return to that homeland when conditions allow.”

**Question – Referring to specific words or phrases, show how the sentence ‘Yet ... misconceptions’ performs a linking function in the writer’s line of thought. (2)**

2.

“Sorry, lassies, say the historians, but you’ve got to face facts – that’s where you were – in menial jobs, contributing to the illegitimacy rate in Ayrshire or Aberdeen – we’ve got a nice graph on that one – or being burned at the stake in front of Edinburgh Castle. The rest of you were at home stirring the porridge. Not much to write about there.

This is just not the full picture. The smallest amount of digging will turn up many Scotswomen over the centuries involved in many different areas of life. We can go right back to Pictish society, run on a matriarchal system of descent. We can look at women like Isobel, Countess of Fife, who set the crown on Robert the Bruce’s head and suffered dearly as a result. What about the female Covenanting martyrs whose stories still need to be investigated?”

**Question – Explain how the sentence ‘This is just not the full picture’ provides a linking function in the argument. (2)**

3.

"We were given three tips by my father about our future reading. They were: you can have two books on the go at the same time, but not more; you should finish reading any book if you have not got bored with it by page 36; and you should make, in pencil, personal notes at the back.

This last injunction will seem to many people outrageous. A book should *never* be defaced by the reader's stupid comments. I disagree. I invariably sideline passages that I want to remember, and index them with references like 'Funny story, p216' or 'good quote, 143', so that when, years later, I pick up the book again, I can rediscover those passages, and if someone else reads my copy, they will be amused by my reactions."

**Question – Show how the opening sentence of the second paragraph, 'This last injunction ... outrageous', acts as a link. (2)**

4.

Granny Wallon, who lived on our level, was perhaps the smaller of the two, a tiny white shrew who came nibbling through her garden, who clawed squeaking with gossip at our kitchen window, or sat sucking bread in the sun; always mysterious and self-contained and feather-soft in her movements. Behind this crisp and trotting body were rumours of noble blood. But she never spoke of them herself. She was known to have raised a score of children. And she was known to be very poor. She lived on cabbage, bread and potatoes – but she also made excellent wines.

Whatever the small indulgences with which Granny Wallon warmed up her old life, her neighbour, Granny Trill, had none of them. She was as frugal as a sparrow and as simple in her ways as a grub. She could sit in her chair for hours without moving, a veil of blackness over her eyes, a suspension like frost on her brittle limbs, with little to show that she lived at all save the gentle motion of her jaws. One of the first things I noticed about Granny Trill was that she always seemed to be chewing, sliding her folded gums together in a daylong ruminative cud."

**Question – Explain how the first sentence of the second paragraph forms a link between paragraphs one and two. (2)**

5.

"American hospitality, long as I have enjoyed it, still leaves me breathless. The lavishness with which a busy man will give up his precious time to entertain a stranger to whom he is in no way bound remains for me one of the wonders of the world.

No doubt this friendliness, since it is an established custom, has its false side. The endless brotherhoods into which people brigade themselves encourage a geniality which is more a mannerism than an index of character, a tiresome, noisy, back-slapping heartiness. But that is the exception, not the rule."

**Question – "No doubt this friendliness, since it is an established custom, has its false side."**

**Explain how this sentence provides a linking function in the development of the argument of the passage. (2)**



When asked about the **word choice** a writer uses, you need to think carefully about not only the basic point the writer is making, but also how the specific words that have been chosen help to convey the writer's meaning. You should think about how effective the author's word choice is and how impact would be lessened if different words were to be used instead.

### ACTION

- Continue to read broadsheet newspapers as widely and often as possible as this is an excellent and quick way to broaden your vocabulary.
- Remember that the key concept to focus on when analysing word choice is the word's connotations and how the choice of one word over another subtly affects the impact on the reader.



## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1.

"Even the universal image of old age as the time of superior wisdom is passing away. We no longer have Elders whose counsel is precious and who must be respected. This debunking was already underway with Shakespeare's sardonic Seven Ages in *As You Like It*. For him, life after about 40 was already crumbling into absurdity. In our own times, grandmothers are still expected to remember – that much of their function remains – but their habit of giving advice, and requiring attention to be paid to their advice, is no longer wanted. The old have been excommunicated and they resent it."

**Question – By referring to two examples from the paragraph above, show how the writer uses word choice to highlight his feelings about what has happened to old people. (4)**

2.

"That was 1966 and Muhammed Ali seemed not simply the best boxer of the day but the best boxer who could possibly be imagined – so good that it was an inspiration to see even a picture of him. My body shivered when I saw him as if an electric shock had pulverised my ability to feel. No fighter could touch him. His self-knowledge was glorious, so transcendentally fixed was he on the only two subjects he knew: himself and boxing. He so filled me with his holy spirit that whenever, late in a game, our side needed a rally, I would call out Ali's chant to my teammates, 'Float like a butterfly sting like a bee!' That made little sense metaphorically in relation to baseball, but it seemed to work more often than not. It was for me, the summer of 1966, Ali's absolute moment of black possibilities fulfilled. And I wanted that and had it for a moment, too, had it, perhaps, among the neighbourhood guys, the touch and glory of the great Ali."

**Question – Show how the writer uses word choice in the extract above to convey the intensity of his feelings about Muhammed Ali. (4)**

3.

"We are sitting at one end of a time corridor, over a thousand years long. We, that is you and I, are trying to concentrate on the dark remoteness at the other end – The Dark Ages of Europe. They, the foreigners at the other end, are almost silent. Whilst we are bathed in light and colour, they are hiding from the harsh glare of the sun in what looks like a cell or a tunnel. To us they seem like children in many ways, with their Nativity stories, ghosts and miracles, their unquestioning beliefs and their Gardens of Eden. If they could see us, they would think us indescribably rich and exotic."

**Question – Show how the writer's word choice in the above extract illuminates any two aspects of either our world or theirs. (4)**

4.

"And the press has persisted in peddling incorrect figures about immigration. One newspaper's assertion in 1938 that there were more Jews in Britain than Germany ever had, was plain wrong. Similarly, the tabloids' current depiction of Britain as an international magnet for asylum seekers is totally misleading. Most of the world's refugees do what they've always done: they move from one poor country to another, usually a neighbouring one. Only a tiny percentage make it to the richer countries: 5% to Europe, and less than 1% to Britain. A regular peruser of the press today, however, with its loose talk of 'swamping' and 'floods', would be stunned to learn that, of 15 EU countries, Britain stands at number 10 in the number of asylum seekers per head of population."

**Question – Show how the writer's word choice in the paragraph above demonstrates her disapproval of the press. (2)**

5.

"We live in an age where parental paranoia has reached absurd heights. ... Inevitably, this paranoia has fuelled an artful kind of job creation. When something terrible happens – a sledging accident, a fall from a tree, a scare about 'dangerous' foods – the sirens sound and the blue lights flash. This is not just the arrival of the ambulance: it is also a metaphor for the extensive child protection industry gearing itself up for another bout of self importance. Mee-maw, mee-maw. Clear the area, please. This is a job for the expert doom-mongers."

**Question – In what way is the writer's attitude towards the 'expert doom-mongers' made clear through her use of word choice in the extract above? (3)**

6.

"A lot has been learned about the nature of cosmic collisions and this new knowledge has given a remarkable twist to the story of our origins. We now recognise that comet and asteroid impacts may be the most important driving force behind evolutionary change on the planet. Originally, such objects smashed into one another to build the earth 4.5 million years ago. After that, further comet impacts brought the water of our oceans and the organic molecules needed for life. Ever since then, impacts have continued to punctuate the story of evolution. On many occasions, comets slammed into earth with such violence that they nearly precipitated the extinction of all life. In the aftermath of each catastrophe, new species emerged to take the place of those that had been wiped out."

**Question – In what way does the writer use word choice in this paragraph to highlight his ideas about 'cosmic collisions' and evolution? (4)**



When asked about the **imagery** a writer uses you need to think carefully about both what the author is trying to say, and how the chosen comparison adds to the impact on the reader. When answering questions on imagery, it is essential that you deconstruct the image – separating the literal root from its figurative use.

### **ACTION**

- Ensure that you are aware of the three types of imagery commonly used by writers – simile, metaphor and personification.
- Ensure that you deconstruct the 'literal root' of the image. Using your formula will help achieve this.



## **PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

1.

"The awakening was strange. I think I must have been aware of the noise of people entering the house, one of those slow fuses of sound that splutteringly traverses the unconscious until it ignites into waking. My consciousness and the room came into the light together. My eyes were bruised with brightness. What I saw seems in retrospect to have had the shiningness of newly minted coins, all stamped unmistakably as genuine, pure metal, the undepreciable currency of my life."

**Question – Choose two of the extended images contained in the paragraph above. Show how effective each example of imagery is in describing the boy's awakening. (4)**

2.

"One fight I attended in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, showed a fascinating insight into how the money haemorrhaged. He was accompanied by a retinue of 44, of whom perhaps six were professionally involved. The rest were relatives, friends of relatives, old pals of Ali who had fallen on hard times, and outright leeches. Daily they plundered the hotel's shopping mall amassing clothes, jewellery and tacky souvenirs, all charged to Ali's account."

**Question – Show how effective you find the writer's use of imagery to convey his feelings about what happened to Muhammed Ali's money. In your answer, you should analyse two examples taken from the paragraph above. (4)**

3.

"I just slung it over my shoulder like the great weapon it was, my knight's sword. And I felt like some magnificent knight, some great protector of honour and virtue, whenever I walked on the field.

I used that bat the entire summer and a magical season it was. I was the best hitter in the neighbourhood. Once, I won a game in the last at-bat with a home run, and the boys just crowded round me as if I were a spectacle to behold, as if I were, for some small moment, in this insignificant part of the world, playing this meaningless game, their majestic, golden prince."

**Question – Show how the writer uses imagery to convey how the bat affected the way he thought about himself. You should refer to two examples in your answer. (4)**

4.

"Whether the specific storms that scythed down trees in Paris last Christmas, drowned the Po Valley last month and battered Britain last week can be attributed to the warming trend is a subject of serious – and contentious – scientific debate."

**Question – Show how the writer uses imagery to emphasise the impact of the storms which affected Europe. In your answer you should refer to two examples. (4)**

5.

"Growing up devoid of freedom, decision-making, and the opportunity to learn from taking their own risks, our children are becoming trapped, neurotic, and as genetically weakened as battery hens."

**Question – How effective do you find the imagery above in conveying the writer's view of the way children are being brought up? (2)**

6.

"It seems the childcare pendulum has swung: the principal threat to children is no longer neglectful parents, but excessively protective ones who are always worrying about germs."

**Question – Explain how the imagery used above supports the writer's point that over-protective parents are now a concern. (2)**

7.

"Once we appreciate that impact catastrophes have shaped life as we know it, and that such events will happen again in the future, how will this awareness alter the way we see ourselves in the cosmic context? Will we let nature take its course and trust to luck that our species will survive the next violent collision? Or will we confront the forces that may yet influence the destiny of all life on earth?"

Debate is particularly heated as regards the role of impacts in directing the course of human history. All of this is very exciting. The whole topic is in a state of ferment, a symptom that something significant is brewing."

**Question – Show how effective you find the writer's use of imagery in conveying the excitement of the 'debate'. (2)**



When asked about the **sentence structure** a writer uses you need to think carefully about the way in which the writer's use of sentence patterns, sentence types or punctuation helps to achieve their purpose. Often a writer's sentence structure will imitate or mirror the thing being described or the point being made.

### ACTION

- Ensure that you are aware of the different elements of sentence structure used by writers. You should think about the type of sentence used; length; punctuation; repetition; parenthesis; narrative point of view; list; climax; inversion, etc.
- Remember to never comment on a comma or a long/short sentence unless it is being used deliberately to achieve a specific purpose.



## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1.

"The problem here is political will rather than financial capacity. The pinch will come in other resource areas, such as health spending. People over 65 consume three times as many prescription items as other age groups. Nearly half those with some measure of disability are over 70.

But the resource question, meeting the material needs of the old and elderly, is only half the story. The real problem lies elsewhere – in the imagination. What are the old for? Who are they, and do the traditional divisions of human life into childhood, youth, middle age and old age still fit our experience?"

**Question – Identify two features of sentence structure from the paragraph above which mark a shift in the writer's line of thought. (2)**

2.

"I have often wondered whether the world would have heard of him had he dug his heels in on the day of departure. Probably not. In 1960, in racist, reactionary, bigoted small-town America, uppity young black men were lucky enough to get one break, let alone two.

Destiny determined otherwise. A legend was in the making. What overwhelms you about this man from such a violent trade are the goodness, sincerity and generosity that have survived a lifetime of controversy, racial hatred, fundamental religious conversion, criminal financial exploitation, marital upheavals, revilement by many of his own nation, and, eventually, the collapse of his own body."

**Question – Show how the writer uses sentence structure to dramatise his view about destiny and Muhammed Ali. (4)**

3.

“At our end of the corridor there is a musical cacophony, at theirs a profound and disheartening silence. At our end of the corridor there are a thousand different voices demanding to be heard, demanding our attention. Music has become more than a backdrop – it has become a blaring soundtrack for practically every event in our lives, whether we are travelling, eating, shopping, exercising, making love or being cremated. We are even given music to ‘listen to’ in the womb. Knowledge and information overwhelm us. At their cold and gloomy end of the corridor, however, only a trickle of learning and culture survives from classical times, mainly through hearsay and deduction.”

**Question – Show how the writer’s sentence structure emphasises the contrasting musical environments of people in the Dark ages and people today. You should refer to two examples in your answer. (2)**

4.

“The scientists say that even if the world’s governments and industries meet international goals on reducing greenhouse gases – which they probably will not – it still won’t be enough to prevent severe changes to the world’s weather. Their advice to governments, businesses and private citizens about this is grim: get used to it.”

**Question – Show how the writer clarifies his argument through the use of sentence structure in the extract above. You should refer to two examples in your answer. (2)**

5.

“What about Anne Leith who went out to Culloden with two other women on the afternoon of the battle to do what they could for the wounded and the dying and who stayed in Inverness afterwards, badgering the authorities to give the Jacobite prisoners better treatment? What about Anne McKay, who helped a young officer escape from Inverness and who suffered physical maltreatment as a result, her teenage son being beaten to death by the redcoats in reprisal?”

**Question – Comment on the effectiveness of the sentence structure in the above extract. (2)**

6.

“A good many people don’t seem to realise that granny-battering goes on, so it’s small wonder they haven’t given much thought to what causes it. Of course, there are people whose natural violence spills over against the aged as it might against anyone in the family, child or wife; and you get occasional cases of the Darby and Joan syndrome, in which a lifetime’s frustrations and furies finally boil over and Darby finishes off Joan, or vice versa. But what is much more common is women driven to the end of their tether by having an old, demanding and possibly cantankerous parent to look after day and night without any let-up for years.”

**Question – Comment on the structure of the last sentence in the paragraph above. Explain how the structure chosen is appropriate to the ideas discussed. (2)**

7.

*“In the following extract two sisters have gone down to a creek for a picnic. When they return home they find that one of the sisters has lost a valuable brooch borrowed from her mother without permission, and so they must carefully retrace their exact steps.*

Back we went, searching the bush on which the meadow lark had sung, following our faint trail through the waving grass, refinding the places where the violets were thickest. Down we went on our hands and knees, pushing aside the slim, cool grass with edges that cut the fingers.”

**Question – Comment on the author’s use of sentence structure and its purpose and effectiveness in the context. (2)**



When asked about the **tone** of a piece of writing, you need to think carefully about how the writer would sound if reading the extract aloud, and how the writer feels about his or her subject matter. When answering questions on tone, it is essential that you are aware of the different tones that writers can use, and also that you are aware of how to identify the specific language features/techniques that are used to create tone.

### ACTION

- Make sure you are familiar with the different tones that writers can use and have a suitable vocabulary to describe them: *hectoring; excited; morose; ironic; humorous; sardonic; mocking; affectionate; critical; sarcastic; delighted etc.*
- Remember that tone is not a technique in itself, per se, but rather the effect of other language techniques – usually sentence structure and word choice.



## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1.

“Love of reading led naturally, it seemed at the time, to efforts at writing. If books were not the most sought-after domestic adjuncts in our housing scheme (depraved orgies of poetry-reading behind closed curtains), the desire to actually write poetry could have been construed as proof of mental aberration.”

**Question – What is the tone of “if books were not the most sought-after adjuncts...”? (1)**

2.

“It was the first time he has travelled by air and he swore he would never fly again. This was marginally inconvenient when he was one of the hottest hopes America had for Olympic boxing gold.”

**Question – What tone is adopted in the sentence “This was marginally inconvenient ... boxing gold.”? Explain how effective you find the tone in this context. (2)**

3.

“Yet Ireland has managed to attract its young entrepreneurs back to help drive a burgeoning economy. We must try to do likewise. We need immigrants. We cannot grow the necessary skills fast enough to fill the gap sites. We need people with energy and commitment and motivation, three characteristics commonly found among those whose circumstances prompt them to make huge sacrifices to find a new life.”

**Question – Show how the writer uses tone in the extract above to demonstrate her strength of feeling. (2)**

4.

“So far from fretting, like paranoid parents, about the risks of physical injury, Furedi seems almost nostalgic about them: ‘Playground areas are now covered with rubber to limit the damage when a child does fall.’ Should they, perhaps, be constructed from something more challenging: shards of broken glass, say, or the traditional grit which was once so successful at lacerating young knees, insinuating itself so deeply into the exposed tissue that it could only be removed by a pair of bacteria-infested tweezers?”

**Question – How is the writer’s attitude towards Furedi’s point of view made clear through the use of tone in the extract above? (2)**

5.

“I am fed up listening to scaremongers about the E-coli virus, telling me my child should never visit a farm or come into contact with animals. I am weary of organisations that are dedicated to promulgating the idea that threats and dangers to children lurk everywhere. I am sick of charities who on the one hand attack overprotective parents and at the same time say children should never be left unsupervised in public places.

**Question – Identify the tone of the extract above and explain how this tone is conveyed. (3)**

6.

“I showed Arberore, now a student at Middlesex University, some press cuttings on asylum seekers. She was particularly shocked by one headline ‘A Door We Can’t Close’. She said, ‘It makes me feel like vermin.’ And of another ‘Get Them Out’, she demanded, ‘Who wrote that? It makes me feel as if I’m no one. I can give something to this country. But I want to say to these reporters: we’re all human beings and who knows when British people might need someone’s help? We left everything there: we had a job, a huge house and a garden; we had a nice life. But the most important thing was our freedom.”

**Question – By referring to tone show how you are made aware of how strongly Arberore feels about the press cuttings. (2)**