

Answers to questions on prose non-fiction should address relevantly the central concern(s)/theme(s) of the text and be supported by reference to appropriate techniques of prose non-fiction such as: ideas, use of evidence, selection of detail, point of view, stance, setting, anecdote, narrative voice, style, language, structure, organisation of material . . .

12. Choose a **non-fiction text** in which vivid description is an important feature. Discuss in detail how the vivid description is created and go on to explain how it contributes to your appreciation of the text as a whole.

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George Orwell's "Marrakech" is an essay where his use of vivid description is an important feature in revealing the poverty and discrimination caused by the failures of colonialism. Orwell's powerful use of anecdote and imagery help to convey this critical stance on colonialism clearly to the reader.

The essay begins with a vivid image of the levels of poverty and death present in Marrakech. In the opening paragraph, Orwell establishes how unclean and distasteful the conditions are in Marrakech. The flies, drawn to the decay, follow a dead body being taken through the streets, yet return, as the restaurant is unsanitary enough to provide them with the possibility of food. There is an implied sense of pity for those people forced to live in such conditions.

"As the corpse went past the flies left the restaurant table in a cloud and rushed after it, but they came back a few minutes later."

The structure of the opening paragraph is vivid as the short and striking opening heightens dramatic impact. The vivid image of the 'cloud of flies' emphasises their sheer volume, almost as if they appear as a mass, and shows how they move. This powerful description clearly expresses the levels of poverty in Marrakech. Not only is a dead body carried openly through the streets, but the flies, feasting on decay, are more satisfied at the filthy restaurant. This vivid description creates a rather cold and detached tone emphasising how this is the norm, therefore intensifying the reader's sense of disgust and sympathy at the poverty on display.

Orwell's use of vivid description continues as he conveys the squalor of the living and working conditions in the Jewish ghetto. Orwell describes the Jewish ghetto, highlighting the appalling conditions the Jews are forced to live under, having been marginalised by mainstream society.

“Working in dark fly-infested booths that look like caves.”

Orwell's use of simile, comparing their places of work to “caves” vividly depicts how dark, bleak and primitive the conditions really are. It makes you think of the dark ages and clearly highlights the discrimination shown towards the Jews in Marrakech. It also reveals the extent of the poverty in the city that proper working conditions are simply unavailable. This helps to develop Orwell's overall argument about the failure of colonialism and highlights the societies hierarchy. The colonisers look down on the Moroccans, so they in turn discriminate against the Jewish community. Again, Orwell's exploitation of vivid description makes clear the many problems present in the city.

Orwell then goes on to vividly describe another marginalised section of society – its women. Orwell presents a vivid physical description of the women of Marrakech, showing us the toll that their mistreatment has taken on their bodies. Orwell then describes the menial tasks they are expected to perform, despite their lack of health and strength. He writes about a meeting with a group of women collecting wood.

“Then for the first time I noticed they poor old earth-coloured bodies, bodies reduced to bones and leathery skin, bent double under the crushing weight.”

Orwell exploits particularly vivid and emotive language here in phrases such as, “poor old”, “reduced to bones”, “bent double”, and “crushing weight”. This creates pity and sympathy for the women. Orwell's plaintive, moving and emotive tone reveals his compassion and sympathetic stance. There is a sense of shock evident in Orwell at the amount of work and the way in which women, especially elderly women, are treated in the society. The poverty is clearly depicted through the heavy manual tasks that must be undertaken by these women. And again, it through Orwell's vivid and moving description that these situations are made apparent to the reader.

It is not only the Jews and the women who are mistreated, and Orwell uses vivid language to describe the sickening mistreatment of animals. Orwell reflects on the eventual fate of the animals in Marrakech, stating how cold and unfeeling the masters are towards the disposal of their animals' dead bodies.

“Its master tips it into the ditch and the village dogs have torn its guts out before it is cold.”

Vivid and emotive language is used to simultaneously create pity for the animals, and contempt for their owners. ‘Tips’ depicts the owners’ callousness, while ‘torn its guts out’ presents a horrific, violent, and grotesque image of the loyal animals’ fate. Again, the tone is bitter and accusatory, and the stance critical and confrontational.

It is this critical and confrontational stance that Orwell has been building throughout the essay through his use of vivid description. For while he is critical of the many injustices he sees in the society, he sees the blame for the poverty, racism and mistreatment lying squarely with the colonisers. However, Orwell believes that the colonial project is doomed to failure, as the colonised are likely to turn on their colonisers eventually, in order to escape their oppression.

“How long before they turn their guns in the other direction?” Every white man there has this thought stowed somewhere or other in his mind.”

Orwell’s vivid word choice of ‘stowed’ suggests the coloniser hides or suppresses the fact that they are exploiting these people who outnumber them greatly within their subconscious, fearful of confront it. It also has connotations of the hidden concealed truth of the situation. The use of the rhetorical questions forces the reader to engage with these ideas, considering how likely this it to happen and the possible consequences. Orwell’s use of vivid description now forces the reader to confront the moral and ethical dilemma of the colonial project and the problems it has caused for Marrakech.

“Marrakech” by George Orwell is an essay which uses vivid language and description throughout to demonstrate the poverty, discrimination and exploitation of the society that has been caused by the colonial project. Orwell is critical of the effect of the colonisers throughout and uses his skilful vivid description to persuade the reader to support his stance and believe, as he does, that the colonial project is wrong.