



Greenfaulds High School

Developing
Close Reading Skills
Through



Newspaper Article Analysis

National 6/ National 5



Why study feature articles from newspapers?

The Close Reading exam tests your level of understanding, your analytical skills and your evaluative skills of a text. This is always a piece of **non-fiction**, usually a newspaper article. The N5 exam will ask questions on one passage only; the N6 exam will ask on two and then on both. The more familiar you become with feature articles - their style, layout and tone - the better equipped you will be for the exam.

What is a feature article?

An opinion piece. Feature articles provide readers with a written analysis of a certain topic. These articles are intended to serve readers with the writer's interpretation of a story, unlike news stories, which provide the facts and events. There will be a noticeable tone in the presentation of the topic and the writer will employ a variety of writing techniques and language features to express their opinion.

How can I improve my close reading skills?

As well as completing past papers regularly, you should be reading quality broadsheet newspaper articles on a daily basis. This will improve your reading age and give you the best advantage going in to the Higher/Intermediate Two exam. This unit is formal homework but cannot alone be relied upon as preparation for the close reading component of the exam.

Suitable Broadsheet Newspapers:

- * The Guardian
- * The Independent
- * The Telegraph
- * The Times
- * The Herald
- * The Scotsman
- * The Observer

What do I have to do for homework?

Your homework is to analyse newspaper articles in the style that is modelled for you on page 7-9. Your teacher will issue articles and set deadlines. The final piece should be a developed piece of writing, with clear attention paid to the allocated marks. Take special care over the words of the question too (look out for specific types, indicated by words such as *explain, identify, analyse*). You will be scored out of 30 for each piece and the score - along with strengths and developments areas - should be added, by you, to your Progress Log.

**NAA INSTRUCTION SHEET**

	Question	How To	Marks
1	Write a summary of the article, explaining the main points. Include the purpose and audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Most articles set out to entertain or inform us about an issue or sometimes do a mixture of both.▪ Look at the headline, subheading, first and last paragraphs for extra clues once you have thoroughly read the article.▪ For full marks you will be expected to show awareness of how the writer <i>develops</i> his argument.	3
2	Complete a context question on two examples of vocabulary you do not understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Write down the word and what you think it means.▪ Then quote or refer to parts of the <u>previous</u> and/or <u>proceeding</u> sentences/paragraphs that help you arrive at this meaning.▪ Explain how they do so.▪ Repeat this twice for full marks.	4
3	Identify four examples of effective word choice in your article. Write them down. Analyse each example.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ You must quote four separate examples of effective words.▪ You should write a developed paragraph on each. The table on page 5 will help you find specific types of words.▪ With <u>word choice</u>, ensure you discuss the CONNOTATIONS of the word AND its effect in the context.▪ Connotations are what each word suggests/implies/makes you think of.▪ Look out for jargon/contrast/persuasion/informal/formal language too.▪ Each fully analysed example of word choice is worth one mark.	4
4	Identify two examples of imagery in your article. Write them down. Analyse the effectiveness of each example.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ You must quote two separate examples of imagery.▪ With each, identify the type of <u>imagery</u> (simile/metaphor/personification) first.▪ Use the 'Just as...so ...' structure to guide answers.▪ Begin 'Just as...' and explain the LITERAL comparison. What is being compared? What is the original image? What qualities of it are important to understand the figurative extension?▪ Then explain why the FIGURATIVE image that is given works well. What features/qualities of the first are given to the second through this comparison?▪ Each fully analysed example of imagery is worth two marks.	4
5	Identify one example of alliteration in your article. Analyse its use and effect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Write down the example.▪ With <u>alliteration</u>, listen to the sounds that are being used. Are they sad, soft, harsh, sharp, rough, heavy? Why?▪ Does this relate to the subject or the meaning of the passage? What impact does it have on the writer's point? Does it aid his message or suit his tone?▪ Each fully analysed example is worth 2 marks.	2



6	Look at the sentence structure of the article. Identify 2 notable features of punctuation in the article. Analyse their function within the sentence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember to link the use of the punctuation to the writer's meaning/tone/argument. Why does he use this? What does it add to the sentence? What function or job does the punctuation mark form here? How and why? Always be specific by linking to the actual sentence in which it is used. Each fully analysed example is worth 2 marks. 	2
7	Identify 2 other notable features of sentence structure . Analyse their use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember CRAP WOLL! (Climax, Repetition, Anti-climax, Punctuation, Word Order, Length of sentence, Listing) Why does the writer use this particular structure? What does it add to the sentence/tone? What function or job does it form here? How and why? For full marks, answers will specifically reference the sentence in which the structure is used. 	4
8	Now look at the general structure of the article. Find a sentence that serves a linking function . Analyse how it does so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quote the sentence. Follow the four steps: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Concentrating only on the linking sentence, quote the word(s) that link back to the previous arguments. Give a brief summary of what they link back to, in your own words. Concentrating only on the linking sentence again, quote the word(s) that link forward to the coming arguments. Give a brief summary of what they link forward to. Also look out for linking words (But/However/And/Similarly...) All four stages must be followed for full marks. 	2
9	Identify the tone of the article. Quote 2 examples of its use. Explain how each example conveys this tone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember that tone is the emotional stance of the writer. They will certainly express a feeling or attitude throughout the article. Write this down and then pick out two examples of how this is shown. Take each one on its own and discuss HOW it displays this tone. You will have to analyse word choice, structure or imagery as these all help to convey a writer's emotions/attitudes. 	2
10	Analyse the final paragraph of the article. Explain how effective it is as a conclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These questions want you to support your opinions with specific examples. Link what is said in the conclusion - or how it is said - to earlier points in the article. Paraphrasing is best. Does the final paragraph summarise? Reinforce? Continue? Link back? Remind? Explain? Round off...etc.? Focus on the ideas and style of the writing. Is it in keeping with the rest of the passage? Or does it change in tone or bring in new ideas? Why? Fully explain. 	3
			Total = 30 marks



Analysis Help Sheet			
Word Choice	Imagery	Structure	Common Tones
Connotations	Simile	Punctuation	Serious
Colloquial language	Metaphor	(- ? ... ! ; : - _ -)	Light-hearted or humorous
Hyperbole	Personification	Sentence Type: question, command, statement...	Tongue-in-cheek
Pun		Simple sentences	Angry
Informal language	Writing Style	Complex sentences	Sarcastic
Formal language	Expert testimony	Sentence Length	Bitter
Jargon	Use of example/ analogy	Rhetorical questions	Matter-of-fact
Oxymoron	Anecdote	Lists	Conversational
Contrast	Use of humour	Linking words	Questioning/
	First-person narrative	Repetition	Doubtful
	Tense change	Inversion	Cynical
	Register	Unusual word order	Sound
		Minor sentences	Alliteration
		Climax	Onomatopoeia
		Anti-climax	Rhyme



Sample Article

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

By Jemima Lewis

Real Men Wash Dishes

A tip for any single men out there: if you want to get lucky with the ladies, you will be needing a pair of rubber gloves. According to researchers at the University of California, women are more attracted to men who do housework. This has caused raised eyebrows among old-fashioned sorts, who seem to feel there is something a bit suspect about a man bustling about in a pinnie. But in fact, it is a statement of the blindingly obvious. Quite apart from the fact that domesticated males make better marriage material, it is always sexy to see a man do something well.

My grandfather – a square-jawed former surgeon, war hero and competitive rower – made the daintiest cucumber sandwiches I have ever seen. He was also a dab hand at tapestry. As a child, watching his enormous, spade-like fingers flashing away at a particularly intricate piece of petit point, I thought him the very definition of a manly man: someone who took a quiet satisfaction in the execution of practical jobs.

The mystery, really, is why so many men allowed themselves to exist in a state of humiliating domestic incompetence for so long. One often hears tragic tales of old men who, when their wives die, find themselves stranded in an alien kitchen lost amid a tangle of electrical cords, threatening-looking cleaning implements and cupboards full of rotting ingredients. I know of one widower who ate nothing but eggs, hard-boiled in his kettle, for months before a kindly nurse signed him up for meals on wheels. I once saw a newly divorced middle-aged man – clearly a novice in matters of food hygiene – stir a cup of tea with the end of a lavatory brush. That definitely wasn't sexy.

Neither was Tim, the only slob I ever went out with. On our first night together, I threw myself onto his bed in what I hoped was a seductive fashion, slid right across his sheets on my bottom and flew off the other side. It transpired that he hadn't washed his sheets for three years; they were as black and slippery as ice. When I asked why he had let them fester for so long, he replied he couldn't be bothered to lug them all the way to his mother's house for her to wash. It seemed to me that he had fallen at the first evolutionary hurdle – being able to fend for yourself outside the nest – so I left him in his glacial bed and went in search of a superior mate. If you want to keep them keen, gentlemen, it pays to learn to clean.



Sample Analysis

Newspaper Article Analysis: Real Men Wash Dishes

1. SUMMARY

The article explains how men lack in essential domestic qualities which are a key part in attracting a member of the opposite sex. Researchers from the University of California support this claim by concluding that women are more attracted to men who do housework. The title of the piece refers to ‘real men’ and obviously plays up the gender stereotype where men did not do housework. Instead, Lewis wishes to argue that it takes a real man to break down these sexist barriers and ‘wash dishes’.

2. CONTEXT

- (i) “Daintiest” – means delicate, elegant, neat. The context seems to set up a contrast, with the “square-jawed” grandfather exhibiting masculine features yet he is also an example of the traditionally considered feminine qualities. Therefore, when referring to the sandwiches it seems that “daintiest” refers to them as the opposite of masculine and thus means delicate, elegant and neat.
- (ii) “Intricate” – means complex, involved, difficult, complicated. The phrases “tapestry” and “petit point” are related to skilled work with textiles, therefore the words “flashing away” suggest he is accomplished in this field and “intricate” tells us it is skilled work.

3. WORD CHOICE

- (i) Lewis uses colloquialism in paragraph one: ‘a man bustling about in a pinny’. This is used to create an image of a very feminine, home-loving man thus generating humour within the article. The use of the word ‘bustling’ suggests he has no direct purpose or job to do but is frequently moving, perhaps inadequately. The fact that the phrase has been written in such an informal manner suggests the image to be a regular occurrence within the household, as if there is nothing unusual about this image.
- (ii) The word “novice” has connotations of being a beginner, a learner and someone still in training. In this context – describing the failings of a newly-divorced man – the word is comical as it is a clear understatement. He is more than a novice if he is stirring his tea with a lavatory brush.
- (iii) The word “fester” connotes something lying for a long time, gathering dust and breeding germs. It is an effective word here as it conjures up disgusting images of this man’s sheets.
- (iv) The phrase “flashing away” has connotations of speed and agility. These imply that the grandfather is skilled in tapestry work and he works quickly and with dexterity.

4. IMAGERY

- (i) The author also makes use of imagery in paragraph two through the simile: ‘spade-like fingers flashing away at a particularly intricate piece of petit point’. This simile is effective as it makes a direct link between typical masculine features (spade-like fingers) and delicate embroidery work, usually associated with women, therefore expressing how domesticated and home-loving men can be. Just as spades are large, metal, unmovable pieces of equipment, so too are this man’s hands. She sets up the contrast very well here, implying that he would not have the flexibility to carry out such precise work with these hands, yet here he was, engaging in delicate needle work.



- (ii) In the next paragraph, Jemima Lewis adds imagery and personification to the article. The phrase describes how lost and unaware the men feel when they lose their wife either through death or divorce: ‘...find themselves stranded in an alien kitchen, lost amid a tangle of electrical cords, threatening-looking cleaning implements and cupboards full of rotting ingredients’. Just as an “alien” kitchen would be on an unknown planet, in intimidating surroundings and full of decay, with weird contraptions and instruments, so too are these men who find themselves in a normal kitchen but are so unused to it that it feels ‘alien’ and ‘threatening’. The kitchen is compared to an alien planet where the men are ‘lost’. This effectively highlights the extent of their fear and sense of being ‘stranded’ when they are left without a female to help them. Furthermore, the image is heightened through Lewis’ personification of the kitchen appliances as being ‘threatening’. This compares them to an aggressor, a villain, an enemy; someone out to cause them harm or do them wrong.

5. ALLITERATION

Alliteration is also used in paragraph two: ‘manly man’. This is in order to highlight the author’s very different perception of what a real man is, as the author’s definition of a ‘manly man’ follows directly after the use of alliteration. The repeated sound draws attention to the concept and enforces the point which is to follow.

6. PUNCTUATION

- (i) Lewis also uses sentence structure in order to emphasise her point of male domestic incapability, saying in the second paragraph: ‘manly man: someone who took a quiet satisfaction in the execution of practical jobs.’ The function of this colon is to introduce the definition and explanation of a ‘manly man’ in order to clarify the writer’s point and advance her argument.
- (ii) The author also uses parenthesis in paragraph 8: ‘...middle-aged man – clearly a novice in matters of food hygiene – stir a cup of tea with the end of a lavatory brush’. Parenthesis is used here to clearly mark out parts of the statement and to highlight the main point of domestic incompetence. The clearly humorous anecdote is made more intense by the deliberate assertion within the parenthesis that he is new to food hygiene. It has a slight sarcastic tone to it as it is a huge understatement; he is more than ‘a novice to food hygiene’, he is completely oblivious to it. The absurdity of his action is underpinned through Lewis’ addition of litotes here. She points out this absurdity by feigning mock seriousness within the parenthesis.

7. SENTENCE STRUCTURE

- (i) Lewis further uses varying sentence length to establish her view quickly. In the example: “I once saw a newly divorced middle-aged man – clearly a novice in matters of food hygiene – stir a cup of tea with the end of a lavatory brush. That definitely wasn’t sexy,” we can see a long, complex sentence with a parenthetical insert followed abruptly by a short statement. The brevity of the final sentence helps to establish Lewis’ disgust through anti-climax, thus bringing her argument back to the fore: sexiness and domesticity.
- (ii) There is evidence of a list in “find themselves stranded in an alien kitchen lost amid a tangle of electrical cords, threatening-looking cleaning implements and cupboards full of rotting ingredients.” Lewis employs the list here to emphasise the amount of items the men are not used to. This emphasises their discomfort and allows us to see the sheer number of everyday equipment that had become intimidating to them.



8. **LINKING SENTENCE**

Lewis uses a linking sentence at the beginning of the fourth paragraph: “Neither was Tim, the only slob I ever went out with.” The phrase “neither was” links back to the sentence before that dealt with the unsexiness – and absurdity – of a newly-divorced man stirring his tea with a lavatory brush and which gave other examples of male inadequacy. The phrases “Tim” and “slob” link forward to the anecdote that Lewis provides about one particular boyfriend, a prime example of how men who are not domesticated are unattractive.

9. **TONE**

Lewis evokes a humorous, conversational tone throughout this article. The imagery is effective in creating humorous pictures of the absurd situations she has heard of or been involved in, such as when the author describes the extent of her ex-boyfriend’s dirty sheets: ‘They were as black and slippery as ice’. This simile explains how mouldy and disgusting the sheets had become due to his inability to wash them. Like ice, the sheets are slippery and uncomfortable to sit on and maintain balance. The comparison creates a revolting image of dirt and germs which convincingly amuses and disgusts the reader.

In addition, the structure is utilised effectively to clarify and reinforce Lewis’ points. Lewis uses many parenthetical statements to echo her conversational tone. This structural feature is used in the last paragraph: ‘first evolutionary hurdle – being able to fend for yourself outside the nest – so I left him in his glacial bed.’ She uses it here to stress her previous point and clarify what she means by ‘first evolutionary hurdle’. The imagery here is heightened through this extra information so that all readers are able to access her views on this type of man being un-evolved and less able than a small bird. The overall tone of the passage is conversational and humorous.

10. **CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH**

The final paragraph effectively sums up her view that men are less attractive if they are domestically inept. She provides a final humorous example of men’s inabilities concerning domestic tasks by sharing a personal experience of an ex-boyfriend. She seductively threw herself on to his bed only to find he hadn’t washed his sheets for three years because he could not be bothered to take them round to his mother’s house. This anecdote continues the humorous tone that Lewis has established from the beginning – in her crude “rubber gloves” gag, to the imagery of kitchen utensils – and is therefore more persuasive in conveying her view as we are cajoled into agreeing with her (somewhat hyperbolic) ideas. Finally, Lewis concludes the article with advice for single men that really sums up the humorous tone of the article: ‘If you want to keep them keen, gentlemen, it pays to learn to clean’; a clear pun on the usual ‘treat them mean...’ saying. Instead, Lewis suggests the opposite: masculine traits and tradition ways of viewing the opposite sex and gender roles will not work in today’s society. She replaces the expected ‘mean’ with ‘clean’ and thus highlights, through her catchy title, the change in attitudes to these gender roles. This final paragraph concludes her argument well: it sums up her view that men are less attractive when domestically incompetent, it reinforces her humorous tone, and it continues her colloquial style through the use of first-person anecdotes.

