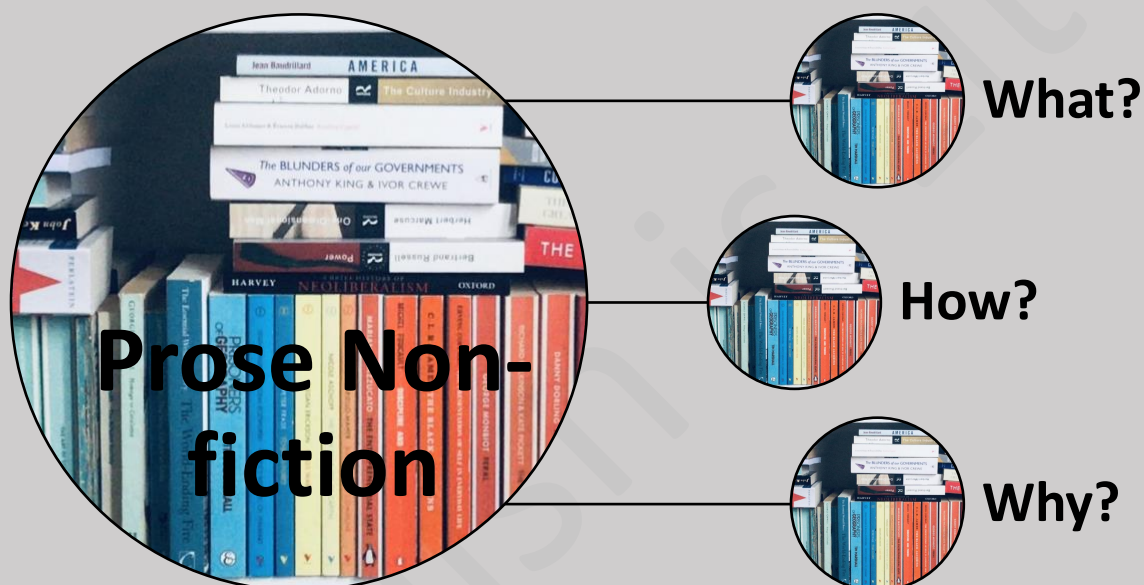


# Reading...

## Prose Non-fiction

### Introduction

When you **critically examine** a piece of **prose non-fiction** in English you are being asked to consider three things:



### What?

When faced with an unseen prose non-fiction text (ie. an RUAЕ paper) start by asking yourself the following questions:

1. What **type** of text am I reading?
2. What is the writer's **thesis** or **mission statement** (ie. what have they set out to do)?
3. What are the **key points** forwarded by the writer in this text?

These questions will allow you formulate a sound understanding of what the text is **doing** and what the writer is **saying** in it.

## Identifying Essay Types

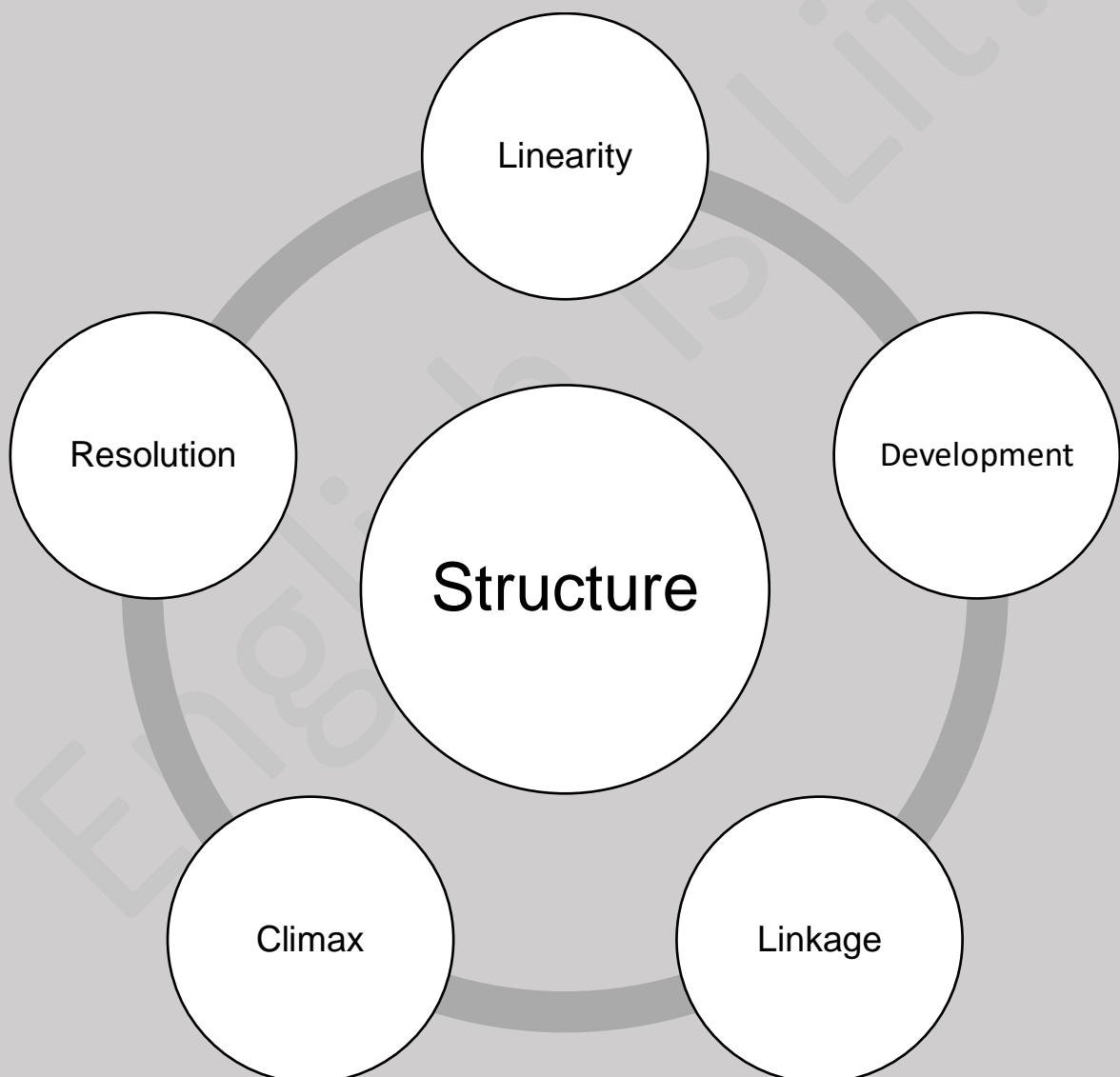
Essay Type	Function	Uses/Includes
<b>Argumentative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To convince audience of writer's point/argument</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facts/stats/anecdotes/examples</li> </ul>
<b>Persuasive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To <b>convince</b> audience of writer's point/argument</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideas/opinions to appeal to emotions</li> <li>Often includes statistics/facts/anecdotes</li> </ul>
<b>Expository</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To <b>inform</b> audience about a topic/issue (ie. to <b>expose</b> something about topic)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thesis/mission statement</li> <li>Evidence of research (facts/stats)</li> </ul>
<b>Informative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To <b>inform</b> audience about a particular topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impartiality</li> <li>No thesis/mission statement</li> <li>'How to...' guides/fact files/WikiHow</li> </ul>
<b>Critical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To <b>analyse</b> and <b>evaluate</b> a text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detailed and insightful reading of text</li> <li>Quotations</li> <li>Critical terminology</li> <li>Evaluative and analytical phrases</li> </ul>
<b>Descriptive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Description</b> or focused study of a subject in detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draw on senses to build a vivid description</li> </ul>

# How?

When you are clear about what the writer is saying, the next step is to think about how those ideas are being conveyed. At this point, you are being asked to identify **features of language** used by the writer and explain the job that they are carrying out in the text.

## 1. *Structure*

When we look at structure, we are thinking about the order in which the story is told; the way the argument is developed; how the points link; whether or not the argument builds to a climax; and how the essay is concluded.



## 2. **Tone**

Tone is the **attitude/emotion** expressed by the writer throughout. Common tones adopted by writers of essays are:



It is not enough to just **identify** the **tone**: you have to be able to explain **how** the **tone** is **created** and say why it is **effective**.

To discuss the **creation** of tone, you should identify **features of language** used by the writer and analyse how they function in the context of the article.

### **Focus on**

- **Word choice**
- **Sentence Structure**
- **Imagery**

### 3. Analysing Imagery

Sometimes, we can be guilty of only looking for **similes** and **metaphors** when we analyse imagery. Yet, prose non-fiction writers draw on a range of **sophisticated devices** that fall under the imagery umbrella. It is important, therefore, that you are able to identify more than just similes and metaphors.

The organiser (below) outlines the **parts of imagery**:

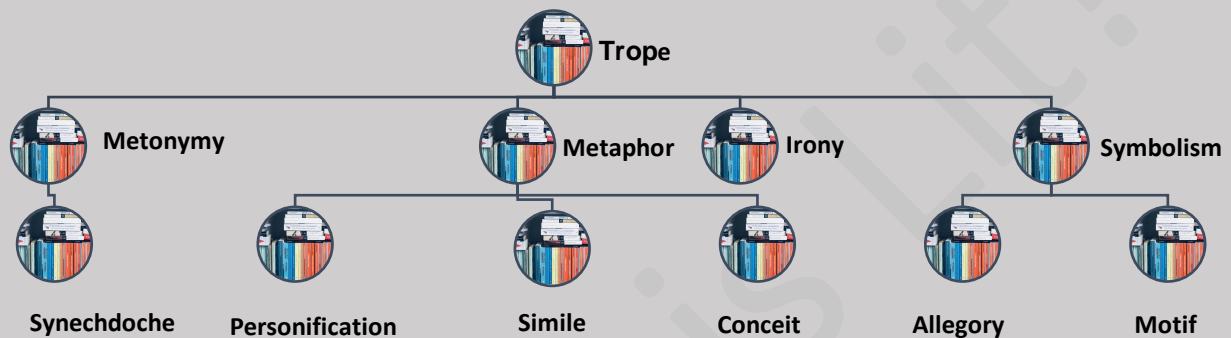


Figure 1 The relationship between tropes, adapted from *Making Meaning in English*, Didau (Routledge: 2021, pg.121)

As with tone (and indeed word choice and sentence structure), it is not enough to identify the technique. Remember to explain in **analytical detail** how these techniques work to create tone or to make a point.

## Why?

The last stage in your critical analysis of prose non-fiction is to consider a.) **why** the writer has made the **decisions** that they have and b.) **why** these **decisions** are **effective**.

A writer might make **decisions** in order to:

Critique
Upturn
Dismantle
Challenge
Problematise
Attack
Explore
Interrogate
Celebrate
Deconstruct

Use these phrases to **evaluate**:

- *The writer adequately...*
- *This is an adept way to...*
- *Here, we have a skilled exploration of...*
- *The writer's use of X is masterly in the way it...*
- *The writer is successful in...*
- The theme of \_\_\_\_\_ is dextrously examined by the writer...

English is Lit!