



How to Analyse a Non-Fiction Text Properly

KS4 ENGLISH LITERATURE

Ages 14-16 ⌚ 4 min read

What Does It Mean to Analyse a Text?

When you **analyse** a non-fiction text, you're not just reading the words. You're becoming a detective, asking questions about *why* the writer chose certain words, *how* they've organised their ideas, and *what* they're trying to persuade you to believe. Non-fiction texts include newspapers, blogs, instruction manuals, biography, and essays—anything that presents facts rather than made-up stories.

Think of it like watching a magician. You don't just enjoy the magic trick—you try to work out *how* they did it by watching their hand movements and timing carefully.

Look at Purpose and Audience

Before diving into the details, ask yourself: **Why did the writer create this text?** Are they trying to **inform** (explain something), **persuade** (convince you), **entertain**, or **advise**? Who is reading it? A text written for **ten-year-olds** looks very different from one written for scientists or politicians. The purpose changes everything—the language, the examples, and which facts they choose to highlight.

Examine the Structure and Format

How is the text organised? Does it have **headings**, **paragraphs**, **bullet points**, or **images**? Non-fiction writers deliberately chunk information into digestible pieces. Short paragraphs feel punchy and urgent. Long paragraphs feel detailed and thoughtful. **Subheadings** guide your eye and break up complex ideas. This structure is a **choice**, and analysing it tells you something about what the writer thinks matters most.

Think of it like building a house. The way the rooms are arranged affects how people move through it and what they notice first.

Analyse the Language and Tone

Writers pick **specific words** for specific reasons. A news article might use **formal, neutral language** to seem trustworthy. An opinion piece might use **emotional language** or **rhetorical questions** to provoke a reaction. Look for **repetition, metaphors, statistics, and expert quotations**. Does the writer sound angry, hopeful, sarcastic, or calm? This **tone** influences how you feel about the topic.

Check the Evidence and Sources

Real non-fiction should be backed up by **evidence**. Ask: Where does this information come from? Are there **statistics** with dates? Do they quote **experts** or **reliable sources**? Or is the writer making claims without proof? Strong analysis means spotting when a writer is being truthful versus when they might be exaggerating, leaving out information, or being biased.

Think of it like a court case. A good lawyer shows evidence (documents, witnesses, facts), but a bad one just makes bold claims with nothing to back them up.

Put It All Together

When you analyse a non-fiction text, you're combining all these skills: understanding **purpose**, recognising **structure**, noticing **language choices**, and evaluating **evidence**. This transforms you from a passive reader into an active thinker who understands not just *what* a text says, but *how* and *why* it says it.