

Grammar 1 - Lexis

Introduction

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Having a good knowledge of basic grammar is essential for A Level English Language and Literature. In this unit you will be asked to revise your knowledge of the basic parts of speech and then apply that understanding to a number of texts.

Task 1

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Revise your knowledge of the terms listed on the following slides. Write out an explanation of what the term means and provide examples to aid your understanding. You could create a table like the following:

Term	Definition	Example
Noun		
Verb		

Grammar terms...

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Noun

Concrete, abstract, proper

Verb

Infinitive, modal, auxillary, declarative, imperative,

Adjective

Adverb

Grammar terms...

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Determiner

Articles, possessives, quantifiers

Pronoun

Synonym

Antonym

Metonym

Task 2 - put it into practice

At A-level, our job is not simply to be able to identify these grammatical features, it is to explore their use and to interpret their impact upon our reading of a text.

Look at the extract from 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' and start by identifying the use of nouns and pronouns.

“Ay, ay,” said the lawyer. “My fears incline to the same point. Evil, I fear, founded — evil was sure to come — of that connection. Ay, truly, I believe you; I believe poor Harry is killed; and I believe his murderer (for what purpose, God alone can tell) is still lurking in his victim’s room. Well, let our name be vengeance. Call Bradshaw.”

The footman came at the summons, very white and nervous.

“Pull yourself together, Bradshaw,” said the lawyer. “This suspense, I know, is telling upon all of you; but it is now our intention to make an end of it. Poole, here, and I are going to force our way into the cabinet. If all is well, my shoulders are broad enough to bear the blame.

Meanwhile, lest anything should really be amiss, or any malefactor seek to escape by the back, you and the boy must go round the corner with a pair of good sticks and take your post at the laboratory door. We give you ten minutes to get to your stations.”

Jekyll and Hyde - nouns and pronouns

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Consider:

- Are concrete or abstract nouns the most dominant here?
How does this fit in with our understanding of the novel?
- How are pronouns used here and what does their use reveal about the characters?
- There is a distinct lack of proper nouns during this extract when Utterson, the lawyer, is being written about. What could this be suggesting?

Task 3 - put it into practice

Verbs can be incredibly complex and difficult to work with, but if you can start with a basic understanding, it really helps! Look at the two extracts that follow and identify the use of verbs. In each text, you will be considering how the writers' choice of verb construction direct our reading of character and situation...

The boy with fair hair lowered himself down the last few feet of rock and began to pick his way toward the lagoon. Though he had taken off his school sweater and trailed it now from one hand, his grey shirt stuck to him and his hair was plastered to his forehead. All round him the long scar smashed into the jungle was a bath heat.

‘Lord of the Flies’ William Golding, Chapter One.

Consider:

- **How does the verb construction reveal Ralph’s (the boy in the extract) personality in this opening?**
- **Was is the difference between the verb construction used to describe Ralph and those used to describe his surroundings? What significance might this have?**

5 May - I must have been asleep, for certainly if I had been fully awake I must have noticed the approach of such a remarkable place. In the gloom the courtyard looked of considerable size, and as several dark ways led from it under great round arches, it perhaps seemed bigger than it really is. I have not yet been able to see it by daylight.

‘Dracula’ Bram Stoker, Chapter Two

Consider:

- **What is the significance of the modal verbs in this extract?**
- **How does the use of verbs explore the ideas of fear and uncertainty Stoker wishes to convey?**
- **What is the impact in the shift in verb tense?**