

Marking Guide Yr 6 CT 2016: English A: Language & Literature SL Paper 1

Text 1: Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*

An adequate to good analysis (3 to 4 marks) will:

- Comment that this text is the front cover of Ondaatje's new novel and the back cover has reviews and the blurb which promotes the novel to the readers.
- Comment on the purposes of the text which to inform, to entertain and to persuade readers to buy and read the latest novel by Ondaatje. Hence various devices are used to achieve these different purposes. The candidate must ensure this is done well.
- Comment on the intended audience as fans of Ondaatje or general readers of literary works.
- Comment on the context or circumstances under which this text is produced. This is Ondaatje's new novel and so it has to be promoted as a distinct read from his earlier novels.
- Comment on the Front Cover of the Novel: The colour here is of a greyish tone with faded black and white images that reflect a sense of nostalgia. In the photograph are persons of Asian descent (Indians) in fancy European costumes. Set in a garden of palm trees, the photograph suggests a wealthy family who finds such a fancy dress party fun and it seems to be a part of their lifestyle. This conjures up the image of a wealthy Indian family who lived in the colonial days of the British and it reinforces the the title of the novel, *Running in the Family*. Readers are keen to find out what "traits" or "secrets" are running in the family. We are also drawn to the large font size and bolded name of the author, Michael Ondaatje in red and the title of the book in also large black capital letters, *Running in the Family*. This visual attention to the author and the title is next reinforced by the lead-in line placed on top of the book cover. The credibility of the Ondaatje is announced as "Booker Prize Winning Author" and his last successful novel, *The English Patient* is highlighted in red to seal the impression that Ondaatje has written another great novel for his fans or for the general readers of literary fiction. The next red print is the name of another famous writer, Margaret Atwood. Her review of the novel is specially featured on the Front Cover to further raise the credibility of Ondaatje as one who is deemed a great writer by Atwood.
- Comment on the Back Cover of the Novel: It contains 4 quotes in red and 1 big chunk of a paragraph in black words. The paragraph in black is typically known as the blurb where the author or the publisher would summarize the novel for the readers. The rest of the quotes in red are reviewers' critique of this novel usually written in very crisp and clear form to reveal the attraction and stylistic worth of the novel or the author. The 1st quote in red and the blurb take up half the space of the Back Cover of the novel. There is a visually balanced sense when the rest of the space is taken up by the remaining 3 quotes with even spacing between them. Towards the end of the Back Cover, there is a red tile with white words in it that stretches across the page. This draws attention to the name of the publisher, Bloomsbury and its website address, www.bloomsbury.com. Below this red tile, is a series of images from left to right, showing a FSC trademark or certification (an environmentally green product in paper quality), ISBN number of the novel and its accompanying barcode, followed by images of 3 of Ondaatje's books published by Bloomsbury and also an image to encourage readers to buy the eBooks by Ondaatje. These series of images conform to the convention of most printed books whereby the publisher would highlight its support for the environment in printing and showcase the other titles in its publishing house.

A good to excellent analysis (4 to 5 marks) will discuss the above with more sophistication and may include the following details:

- **Front Cover:** Atwood's review shows that Ondaatje has very unique ideas in his novel. This is shown through the use of adjectives like "exotic" and "outrageous. The auto-biographical nature of the book is conveyed through this phrase, "true story". The impressive style of Ondaatje is communicated through the phrase "with all the exciting qualities of fiction". This suggests that the narrative structure of the novel is complex, non-linear and filled with rising and falling actions which will appeal to literary fans.
- **Back Cover:** New Statesman's review praises Ondaatje's style through words like "outstandingly evocative". It also compares his style to the epitome in such a genre of writing through this cryptic line, "Like all classic writing, the motion of the book lingers on". The use of simile as a parallelism of previous comment strengthens reader's view of Ondaatje's style in "like the movement of a boat, long after the last pages". Another effective metaphor used is when this review praises how the episodic elements of this novel are woven neatly "with all the graces of a billowing, seamless dress." This highly visual and kinesthetic imagery is very apt. The biographical nature of the novel is phrased as "semi-autobiographical account of a journey back to the beginning, to Ceylon...". Ondaatje's family background is described as "a privileged group of mixed Dutch, Tamil and Sinhalese origins." This will modify the reader's perception of the people in the photo on the Front Cover and further increases their curiosity to want to read the book which contains multi-cultural elements. How the subject matter in the novel is gathered by Ondaatje is conveyed through the use of an active verb followed by a listing technique in the phrase, "Created from asides, snapshots, poems, glimpses...". The covert style of Ondaatje's story telling is also described to be "unorthodox and incomplete". This makes the readers want to discover for himself how effective is this indirect this approach to story telling.
- The blurb stands apart from the rest of the reviews on this page because of the colour of its words. It gives a summarized version of the novel. It gives a time reference to the birth of the narrative, "Twenty-five years after leaving his native Sri Lanka for the winters of Canada...". The surreal nature of this vision for Ondaatje is described as "a dream of tropical heat and barking dogs lures Michael Ondaatje...". Literary sensitive readers might surmise that there are features of magical realism in Ondaatje's writing and might be desirous to discover these for themselves. The consequence of such a vision for Ondaatje is "to return home and revisit a childhood and a family he never fully understood." The 2 active verbs are carefully crafted with alliterative /r/ consonants to reinforce the driving force behind Ondaatje's creation of this novel. Similar to the 1st review on this page, the blurb also lists where Ondaatje gets his inspiration from in "anecdotes, poems and memories". The intertwining plot and subplots of family history are aptly described as a metaphor of a painting with this line, "portrait of the colorful stories and secrets of his ancestors".
- New Yorker's review ~~seems to be taken out from a longer write up~~. This is seen through the use of ellipsis. Like the other reviews, only good things are spoken about Ondaatje's new novel. That this is a rave review is seen from the listing of super-rated adjectives in "Eloquent, oblique, witty, full of light and feeling". His style and skill are appreciated by this reviewer in the parallel structure, "knowledge of the fragility and luck of life ... the grace and originality of his prose." The syntactically balanced parallel structure is so poetic and mesmerizes the readers into believing that Ondaatje's latest novel is a class of its own.

- Globe and Mail review uses the metaphor of a heat wave in describing Ondaatje's piece of work as "Shimmering through the haze of heat and memory...". This is very effective because as the penultimate review paragraph on this page, it provides a fresh visual and almost tactile imagery for the readers. This is followed by 2 sets of words that conjure up the metaphor of a painting in, "impressionistic...surreal portrait...". The use of contrast is also evident when there is a comparison of the past and present in this line, "an exotic time and place, now gone, a colonial paradise that had its own rhythms and imperative". This ending line acts like a circular closure to what is stated in the beginning about the vagueness of one's past and memory.
- Margaret Atwood's review appears for the second time on this page. Similar in tone to her previous remark on the Front Cover of the novel, this set here is full of praise for Ondaatje's writing. In fact the "qualities of fiction" she mentioned earlier is now elaborate upon as "agile and [at his] evocative best". The emotive features of the new novel are artistically described as "Brightly coloured, sweet and painful, bloody-minded and otherworldly" without giving away too much about the contents of the novel. The last line is an epic comment from a seasoned and famous writer. That Ondaatje has achieved "the status of legend" is what every young writer wants to hear from a veteran in the field of writing. Readers are surprised by such a commendation from Atwood herself who is an accomplished writer. This definitely spurs anyone to want to get hold of a copy of Ondaatje's latest novel!

Text 2: What happens when language becomes “Facebook Official”?

An adequate to good analysis (3 to 4 marks) will:

- Comment that this text is a blog article written by Allison Wright on an online portal, OxfordDictionaries.com.
- Comment on the purposes of the text which to inform and to entertain readers on the intricate relationship between language and its influence from facebook usage. Hence various devices are used to achieve these different purposes. The candidate must ensure this is done well.
- Comment on the intended audience as readers who visit the blog regularly to look for interesting articles about language change and usage OR casual visitors to the site who are keen to look at meanings of words but who stumble into the blog out of curiosity.
- Comment on the context or circumstances under which this text is produced. This is an observation about how language has been influenced by Facebook usage and Wright gives an entertaining opinion about this correlation between the two.
- Comment on the blue logo on the top left hand corner of the blog and the mission statement, “Language Matters”. These 2 features show the professional posture that this online portal takes with regards to language usage. Discuss the option for readers to select dictionary by language on the top right hand corner of the blog. There is the use of a pleasant blue navigation bar with white words to display the 4 categories across the top page of the blog (Dictionary, Synonyms, Grammar and Explore). There is red tile with white words at the left hand side of the bar to show the display page as Oxford Words blog. The blog is sponsored by Jet Star as there is a prominent display of its banner in full colour. There are many hyperlinks to definition of words used in the article – all in blue. On the last page of the blog under Further Reading, there are 3 coloured images with captions below them to direct readers to these links. There is a search option for articles in the blog indicated by a red tab. There is also a disclaimer at the end of the article. All these features are typical of a blog or online portal. The colours are effectively used to direct the visual flow of the readers’ eyes to the various sections of the blog.
- On the left hand side bar, we find the name of the writer of the article and his designation listed. As an “editor for the US Dictionaries at Oxford University Press”, Wright’s credibility is quickly established at a glance. The date of publication is also stated on the side bar clearly. Category of “Word trends and new words” and the Tag section are again conventional features of an online portal.
- The photo image of Facebook shows its iconic white alphabet F which will reinforce the idea in the 1st paragraph.
- Each section of the article will be discussed with reference to how language is used to inform and entertain the readers.

A good to excellent analysis (4 to 5 marks) will discuss the above with more sophistication and may include the following details:

- The Title: What happens when language becomes “Facebook Official”? This rhetorical question needs contextual and cultural knowledge to unpack its significance. Readers who are not Facebook users might not know the meaning of “Facebook Official” and it is only until the end that we are given the definition. Working backwards, readers now understand that this question postulates a scenario when language becomes greatly intertwined with Facebook usage.

- 1st Paragraph: Wright marvels at the rapid growth and influence of Facebook with phrases like “It’s hard to imagine just 10 years ago...” The time reference gives readers a sense of awe that Facebook is now a movement from its humble beginnings in Harvard as a “social network”. The use of collective pronouns in “few of us...” is deliberate to bring the reader into an agreement with the writer how fast Facebook has advanced. The visual imagery of thumbs-up icons and the white “F” on a blue background which has been reinforced by the photo image subtly leads the readers to a logical conclusion that Facebook language usage has also influenced us greatly. The use of the line “so has the adoption of the Facebook vernacular” seals our agreement with Wright. The mention of Mark Zuckerberg as “the Co-founder and CEO of Facebook” and that he “must have learned...” adds weight to Wright’s conclusion that Facebook language usage is pervasive. This powerful logical argumentation is subtle and effective.
- Subheading: New meanings from real use. The heading is again a logical flow from the discussion earlier on and the juxtaposition of “new meanings” and “real use” reinforces that logic in the mind of the readers. Wright justifies why Oxford Dictionaries has decided to include Facebook usage of “like, poke and status” and the new meanings associated with them. He explains it as “an impressive amount of evidence of Facebook influence on everyday usage”. The phrase could be an example of glittering generalities because there is no statistical evidence to back it up. Readers are either lulled to agree with him based on common sense and the logic he had proposed or are turned off by such a weak assumption. Nevertheless, Wright has successfully avoided this contention by quickly espousing terms like “corpus-collected sentences” and “lexicographical development” which seem to create a semantic field of linguistics or subject-specific lexis to give an impression that his argumentation is logical and sound. Most readers would have agreed with him. The listing of the word, “like” as a verb in, like (verb) or “like” as a noun in, like (noun) suggests a dictionary nomenclature. The 3 examples he gives for “like” are representative of Facebook usage and they are sound and clear although Wright tries to inject humour in the second example with the conventional meaning of “like” as in “If your spouse is in Facebook, do you have to “like” everything they say and do?”. However, when it comes to the word, “poke”, the examples he gives are hilarious. I think that is the intended effect he wants his readers to get.
- Subheading: Where language goes to die and be reborn. The use of personification and incongruity in religious terms in the subheading continues the humour and tongue in cheek observations of Wright with regards to language usage in Facebook. He uses the word, “friend” as a conventional noun usage and as a verb in Facebook usage to show its change. He also shows the “resurrection” of “unfriend” as a verb which had disappeared since 13th century to show how language could be revived. The use of parenthesis in this section creates an effective explanation and seems like a mental dialogue he has with the reader.
- Subheading: Evolving technology, evolving language. The subheading here is again another clever device used by Wright to instil a memorable image of the logic behind his writing. The syntactically balanced phrase coupled with the –ing form of the verb makes it rhythmic and is a deliberate attempt to sink it into our sub-consciousness. Wright moves from showing his readers how Facebook has effected changes in the language, he now reveals how Facebook itself is changing with the times by

changing the terms it has used in the past to describe the “wall” as “timeline” now. The use of dashes in this section is a visual way to help readers to understand how meanings have changed. Implicitly, Wright is shaping the reader’s mind to accept that change is inevitable – both for the agents of change and subjects of change. This is a very effective argumentation.

- Subheading: On being complicated, making it official and the art of stalking. This subheading includes 3 major ideas which are all related to Facebook terms. Wright discusses the negative connotative term, “It’s Complicated” when one lists it with reference to a relationship with someone on Facebook. To him this is highly reflective of real life relationships which are often complicated. He seems to agree to such an ambiguous usage. However, with the next term, “Facebook Official”, he cheekily juxtaposes “official” and “unofficial” in the line “The use of official (adj) became an unofficial barometer in recent years used to validate the status of a romantic relationship”. The metaphor of a barometer is apt because of the constant change in pressure so are the fluctuating statuses in any romantic relationship. Unless one dares to proclaim that their relationship is “Facebook Official”, others will not believe in it. Hence, the “jest” in questioning someone, “Are you Facebook Official?” is a startling evidence of how Facebook has influenced the way people behave. The last term is “Facebook Stalking” of which he claims that he has “no empirical evidence”. Such an honest confession disarms the readers and even most cynical ones. Wright humorously entertains readers with the definition of the term as “frequently visiting and thoroughly perusing someone’s Facebook profile”. He ends off by suggesting that “Facebook Stalking” “ones ex can prove irresistible for the recently dumped”. The slang in the word, “ex” and the humour in this line is unmistakably Wright’s manner of communication. To add the “icing to the cake” of humour, Wright suggests that readers of this article will need to celebrate Facebook’s 10th birthday with the people at Oxford Dictionaries by “liking” and the pun in the parenthesis of “and just plain liking” the Oxford Dictionaries page is so ironic and hilarious.

Observations by Markers:

Some students made very narrow suggestions for the presumed audience for the text(s). For example, suggesting that the blog was aimed at those who enjoyed the language used on Facebook, or that the book cover was aimed at fans of the writer of the novel.

In some scripts very obvious features of the texts were simply ignored as if they didn't exist. Some students dealing with the blog only considered the actual article and ignored all the other features of the webpage on which the article was featured.

Some students tended to just describe the text (through paraphrase/summary) without any actual analysis of the segments being summarised.

Some scripts read in a very disconnected manner, especially when dealing with language features/devices. Students tended to randomly identify a feature they recognised, like the use of an acronym, and then jump to that feature, not relating the effect of the feature with regard to the overall purpose of the writer. Just naming features is weak.

Some students tended to give very long-winded explanations of features of their chosen text, writing whole paragraphs in relation to points that could be summed up in a couple of sentences. It is important to know when it is necessary to be succinct.

Students should avoid writing paragraphs comprising a single sentence.