GETTING A TOP GRADE IN ENGLISH:
Demonstrate your reading skills

Background:

1   You will become a better reader by reading more fiction (happy to recommend) and non-fiction (newspapers, magazines, leaflets, cornflake packets)

2   Struggling readers find it difficult to decode texts. This isn't you. **Competent** readers understand texts (they can identify the "**what**" of reading). **High-level** readers can respond to implied meanings and hints; distinguish between fact and opinion; follow and comment upon an argument; and comment on writers' style and use of language (this is the "**how**" of reading)

What the GCSE criteria say   ➤

AO2 *Reading (En2)*

Candidates are required to demonstrate their ability to:

(i)   read, with insight and engagement, making appropriate references to texts and developing and sustaining interpretations of them;

(ii)   distinguish between fact and opinion and evaluate how information is presented;

(iii)   follow an argument, identifying implications and recognising inconsistencies;

(iv)   select material appropriate to their purpose, collate material from different sources, and make cross-references;

(v)   understand and evaluate how writers use linguistic, structural and presentational devices to achieve their effects, and comment on ways language varies and changes.

1: Demonstrate understanding

Question	Answer
"What are the different reasons the author gives to support his view that 16 year old should not be given the vote?" (6 marks)	*There are several reasons Z believes students should not be given the vote. First, he says XXXX. This show that YYYY. Secondly, he suggests that XXXX which implies YYYY". There is a further way in which we can sense his dislike of the idea: XXXX. All of this demonstrates to us that Z disapproves of the idea of under-16s gaining the right to vote.* Key techniques: 1 Topic sentence 2 Connectives to 'signpost' the text ("First", "secondly", "further") 3 The number of points made is proportionate to marks allocated 4 Point is always followed by evidence and then explanation 5 Killer words: "suggests", "shows", "implies", "evidence" 6 Style: lexical over grammatical words; abstract nouns over verbs ("his dislike of" rather than "he dislikes") 7 Punctuation: confident use of full stops to demarcate sentences, plus colons (:) to lead into examples and semi-colons (;) to separate more subtle ideas 8 Tone: formal/impersonal/detached 9 Personal response: authoritative "we" not "I" and "us" not "me"

2: Distinguish Fact & Opinion

Question	Answer

"How does X use facts and opinions to present his argument?" (6 marks)	*Z supports his argument with a number of facts. Some of these are statistics: for example, he cites the figure of "94% of xxxx" to support his view that YYY. This very high percentage is likely to persuade the reader that YYY. Other uses of facts include reference to history ("In 1969 XXXX") which gives depth to his argument, showing that it's not simply a recent idea. He also XXXX …*
	
	His use of opinion is more subtle. First he …
	
	Key techniques:
	    1 Earlier stuff, plus:
	    2 Answer structured around the question (2-part answer)
	    3 Killer words (a): "cites", "persuade", "support", "evidence"
	    4 Facts might include dates, statistics, examples, quotations, research
	    5 Opinion might include: statement (unsupported by evidence), anecdote, humour, rhetorical questions, use of personal pronouns to get the reader on side ("Us/we")

3: Evaluate the whole text

Question	Answer

"How are both language and image used to get the points across? (7 marks)	*Language is used in various ways to get the writer's points across. First, he writes in an accessible style, addressing the reader directly. For example, he says "XXX". This encourages us to feel that he wishes to involve us in his argument. He also XXXX, which XXX …*
	
	The use of layout also helps to convey his message. The overall presentation of the text includes a large headline designed to grab our attention. This includes emotive words like "XXX"
	
	Key techniques:
	1 Earlier stuff, plus:
	2 Nail the "how" of the text:
	    • Personal ("I…") v impersonal ("There is …)
	    • Formal ("it is") v informal ("it's)
	    • Accessible ("we") v inaccessible (no ref to any person)
	    • Humorous v serious
	    • General v technical
	3 Focus on:
	    • **Vocab** (familiar, formal, polysyllabic, colloquial, slang, pronouns [I/you/we)
	    • **Sentences**: statements, questions, imperatives ("Stop this now!"); short sentences (accessible) or long sentences (less accessible)
	    • **Structure** (chronological? Drop para? Logical build-up of argument?)
	    • **Layout**: overall design; headline; other typographical features (bold, bullets, short paras, sub-headings, key words); analysis of image