

# Language Change: What to look for in a text

Structure	Questions to ask	Possible key features
What's the <b>purpose</b> of the text?	Narrative? Descriptive? Informative? Instructional? Argument? Discursive? Polemical?	Layout, typography, syntax and lexis
<b>Historical influences:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17<sup>th</sup>C Travel &amp; science: descriptive, narrative</li> <li>• 18<sup>th</sup>C Age of Reason, standardisation: polemical, instructional</li> <li>• 19<sup>th</sup>C Technology, industry, literacy: narratives, description</li> <li>• 20<sup>th</sup>C: Technology, science, social sciences, multiculturalism: argument, description</li> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup>C: Technology, multi-media: changes in conventions</li> </ul>		
What <b>organisational &amp; typographical</b> features are important?	Chronological? Narrative? Big ideas first? Setting out opposing views? Combination of typography and images?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key connectives</li> <li>• Personal pronouns</li> <li>• Rhetorical questions</li> <li>• Features associated with early printing – heavy punctuation and capitalisation?</li> <li>• Letters now not used ('f' for 's')?</li> <li>• Features associated with technology – columns for newspapers, sub-headings, headlines and straplines</li> <li>• Hypertext</li> </ul>
<b>Historical influences:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-printing press = scribes</li> <li>• Germanic influence via printers (capitals)</li> <li>• Influence of technology (mass markets, desktop publishing, intertextuality) – visuals, shorter attention spans, accessibility issues, hypertext, integrated video etc</li> </ul>		
What <b>syntactic</b> features are important?	Level of complexity <b>Types</b> of sentences: simple, compound, complex, minor <b>Sentences functions:</b> declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, imperative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of connectives (causal and temporal)</li> <li>• Formal, rhetorical, colloquial styles</li> <li>• Repetitions of phrases for effect</li> </ul>
<b>Historical influences:</b> 17 <sup>th</sup> C: discursive, heavily punctuated, labyrinthine sentences 18 <sup>th</sup> C: polemical, verbose, heavily punctuated, logical connectives 19 <sup>th</sup> C: descriptive, verbose; but growing literacy = increased accessibility 20 <sup>th</sup> C: range of texts, accessibility, universal literacy, loss of formality, impact of advertising 21 <sup>st</sup> C: change of conventions; online forms		

<p>What <b>lexical</b> and <b>semantic</b> features are important?</p>	<p>Personal ⇔ impersonal?          Formal ⇔ informal?          Specialist ⇔ general?          Accessible ⇔ inaccessible?          Contemporary ⇔ archaic?          Monosyllabic ⇔ polysyllabic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colloquial, slang, dialect terms, abbreviations, emoticons, metaphors, figures of speech, neologisms, anglo-saxon v French v Latinate terms,</li> </ul> <p>Word formation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• borrowings;</li> <li>• compounding (<i>lipstick</i>)</li> <li>• prefixes and suffixes: <i>transcontinental</i>,</li> <li>• coinages: eg advertising – <i>Xerox</i>;</li> <li>• portmanteau words / blends – <i>travelogue</i>;</li> <li>• common words from proper names: <i>sandwich</i>,</li> <li>• nouns to verbs</li> <li>• broadening</li> <li>• narrowing</li> <li>• degeneration (<i>awful</i>)</li> <li>• regeneration of formerly defunct words (<i>shabby</i>)</li> </ul>
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**Historical influences:**

- **Background:** OE inflections mostly lost; move from English being synthetic to analytics (synthetic = inflected = “Caesarem occidit Brutus’ = ‘Brutus Caesarem occidit’; analytic = word order “Brutus killed Caesar” or “Caesar was killed by Caesar”); 1066 onwards influence of French scribes on spelling (queen) and status accorded to French; mess of English spelling: : *knight, knight, knyht, knight, kith* or *cniht*; early Bibles legitimise English; Chaucer; rise of SE dialect
- **17<sup>th</sup>C:** Trade, loans, rise of English KJB, science
- **18<sup>th</sup>C:** Prescriptive re lexis and grammar (Dr J/grammars), academy question, rational, latinate, Webster, proscriptive rules (comparatives, between/among, double negatives), colonisation
- **19<sup>th</sup>C:** Science, empire, trade, technology (telegraph, telephone, stamp), mass literacy – accessibility, education/correctness/elocution, public schools
- **20<sup>th</sup>C:** Multiculturalism, techonology, social sciences, advertising, slang as mainstream, study of language (descriptive v presecriptive), shift to light punctuation
- **21<sup>st</sup> C:** instantaneous communication, informality, visual culture, change of taboo/acceptance of profanity, emphasis on soundbites and typographically eccentric spellings and names, globalisation: uptalk and ‘like’