**LEARNER GUIDE**

**Communication Level 3**

**Interpret and use information from texts.**

**Unit Standard 119457**

Level 3 Credits 5

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# PERSONAL INFORMATION

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| --- | --- |
| ****NAME**** |  |
| ****CONTACT ADDRESS**** |  |
|  |
| ****Code**** |  |
| ****Telephone (H)**** |  |
| ****Telephone (W)**** |  |
| ****Cellular**** |  |
| ****Learner Number**** |  |
| ****Identity Number**** |  |
|  | |
| ****EMPLOYER**** |  |
| ****EMPLOYER CONTACT ADDRESS**** |  |
|  |
| ****Code**** |  |
| ****Supervisor Name**** |  |
| ****Supervisor Contact Address**** |  |
|  |
| ****Code**** |  |
| ****Telephone (H)**** |  |
| ****Telephone (W)**** |  |
| ****Cellular**** |  |

# **INTRODUCTION**

#### Welcome to the learning programme

Follow along in the guide as the training practitioner takes you through the material. Make notes and sketches that will help you to understand and remember what you have learnt. Take notes and share information with your colleagues. Important and relevant information and skills are transferred by sharing!



This learning programme is divided into sections. Each section is preceded by a description of the required outcomes and assessment criteria as contained in the unit standards specified by the South African Qualifications Authority. These descriptions will define what you have to know and be able to do in order to be awarded the credits attached to this learning programme. These credits are regarded as building blocks towards achieving a National Qualification upon successful assessment and can never be taken away from you!

### Programme methodology



The programme methodology includes facilitator presentations, readings, individual activities, group discussions and skill application exercises.

Know what you want to get out of the programme from the beginning and start applying your new skills immediately. Participate as much as possible so that the learning will be interactive and stimulating.

The following principles were applied in designing the course:

* Because the course is designed to maximise interactive learning, you are encouraged and required to participate fully during the group exercises
* As a learner you will be presented with numerous problems and will be required to fully apply your mind to finding solutions to problems before being presented with the course presenter’s solutions to the problems
* Through participation and interaction the learners can learn as much from each other as they do from the course presenter
* Although learners attending the course may have varied degrees of experience in the subject matter, the course is designed to ensure that all delegates complete the course with the same level of understanding
* Because reflection forms an important component of adult learning, some learning resources will be followed by a self-assessment which is designed so that the learner will reflect on the material just completed.

This approach to course construction will ensure that learners first apply their minds to finding solutions to problems before the answers are provided, which will then maximise the learning process which is further strengthened by reflecting on the material covered by means of the self-assessments.

#### Different role players in delivery process

* Learner
* Facilitator
* Assessor
* Moderator

### What Learning Material you should have

This learning material has also been designed to provide the learner with a comprehensive reference guide.

It is important that you take responsibility for your own learning process; this includes taking care of your learner material. You should at all times have the following material with you:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Learner Guide** | **This learner guide is your valuable possession:**  This is your textbook and reference material, which provides you with all the information you will require to meet the exit level outcomes.  During contact sessions, your facilitator will use this guide and will facilitate the learning process. During contact sessions a variety of activities will assist you to gain knowledge and skills.  Follow along in the guide as the training practitioner takes you through the material. Make notes and sketches that will help you to understand and remember what you have learnt. Take and share information with your colleagues. Important and relevant information and skills are transferred by sharing!  This learning programme is divided into sections. Each section is preceded by a description of the required outcomes and assessment criteria as contained in the unit standards specified by the South African Qualifications Authority. These descriptions will define what you have to know and be able to do in order to be awarded the credits attached to this learning programme. These credits are regarded as building blocks towards achieving a National Qualification upon successful assessment and can never be taken away from you! |
| **Formative Assessment Workbook** | The Formative Assessment Workbook supports the Learner Guide and assists you in applying what you have learnt.  The formative assessment workbook contains classroom activities that you have to complete in the classroom, during contact sessions either in groups or individually.  You are required to complete all activities in the Formative Assessment Workbook.  The facilitator will assist, lead and coach you through the process.  These activities ensure that you understand the content of the material and that you get an opportunity to test your understanding. |

### Different types of activities you can expect

To accommodate your learning preferences, a variety of different types of activities are included in the formative and summative assessments. They will assist you to achieve the outcomes (correct results) and should guide you through the learning process, making learning a positive and pleasant experience.



The table below provides you with more information related to the types of activities.

| **Types of Activities** | **Description** | **Purpose** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Knowledge Activities** | You are required to complete these activities on your own. | These activities normally test your understanding and ability to apply the information. |
| **Skills Application Activities** | You need to complete these activities in the workplace | These activities require you to apply the knowledge and skills gained in the workplace |
| **Natural Occurring Evidence** | You need to collect information and samples of documents from the workplace. | These activities ensure you get the opportunity to learn from experts in the industry.  Collecting examples demonstrates how to implement knowledge and skills in a practical way |

### Learner Administration



#### Attendance Register

You are required to sign the Attendance Register every day you attend training sessions facilitated by a facilitator.

#### Programme Evaluation Form

On completion you will be supplied with a “Learning programme Evaluation Form”. You are required to evaluate your experience in attending the programme.

Please complete the form at the end of the programme, as this will assist us in improving our service and programme material. Your assistance is highly appreciated.

### Assessments

The only way to establish whether a learner is competent and has accomplished the specific outcomes is through the assessment process. Assessment involves collecting and interpreting evidence about the learners’ ability to perform a task.

To qualify and receive credits towards your qualification, a registered Assessor will conduct an evaluation and assessment of your portfolio of evidence and competency.

This programme has been aligned to registered unit standards. You will be assessed against the outcomes as stipulated in the unit standard by completing assessments and by compiling a portfolio of evidence that provides proof of your ability to apply the learning to your work situation.



**How will Assessments commence?**

#### Formative Assessments

The assessment process is easy to follow. You will be guided by the Facilitator. Your responsibility is to complete all the activities in the Formative Assessment Workbook and submit it to your facilitator.

#### Summative Assessments

You will be required to complete a series of summative assessments. The Summative Assessment Guide will assist you in identifying the evidence required for final assessment purposes. You will be required to complete these activities on your own time, using real life projects in your workplace or business environment in preparing evidence for your Portfolio of Evidence. Your Facilitator will provide more details in this regard.

To qualify and receive credits towards your qualification, a registered Assessor will conduct an evaluation and assessment of your portfolio of evidence and competency.

### Learner Support

The responsibility of learning rests with you, so be proactive and ask questions and seek assistance and help from your facilitator, if required.



Please remember that this Skills Programme is based on outcomes based education principles which implies the following:

* You are responsible for your own learning – make sure you manage your study, research and workplace time effectively.
* Learning activities are learner driven – make sure you use the Learner Guide and Formative Assessment Workbook in the manner intended, and are familiar with the workplace requirements.
* The Facilitator is there to reasonably assist you during contact, practical and workplace time for this programme – make sure that you have his/her contact details.
* You are responsible for the safekeeping of your completed Formative Assessment Workbook and Workplace Guide
* If you need assistance please contact your facilitator who will gladly assist you.
* If you have any special needs please inform the facilitator

### Learner Expectations

Please prepare the following information. You will then be asked to introduce yourself to the instructor as well as your fellow learners



|  |
| --- |
| Your name: |
|  |
|  |
| The organisation you represent: |
|  |
|  |
| Your position in organisation: |
|  |
|  |
| What do you hope to achieve by attending this course / what are your course expectations? |
|  |
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# UNIT STANDARD 119457

#### Unit Standard Title

Interpret and use information from texts.

#### NQF Level

3

#### Credits

5

#### Purpose

Learners at this level read and view a range of texts. Learners credited with this unit standard are able to read a variety of text types with understanding and to justify their views and responses by reference to detailed evidence from text. They are also able to evaluate the effectiveness of different texts for different audiences and purposes, by using a set of criteria for analysis.

Learners credited with this unit standard are able to:

* Use a range of reading and viewing strategies to understand the literal meaning of specific texts.
* Use strategies for extracting implicit messages in texts.
* Respond to selected texts in a manner appropriate to the context.
* Explore and explain how language structures and features may influence a reader.

#### Learning assumed to be in place

The credit calculation is based on the assumption that learners are already competent in terms of the following outcomes or areas of learning when starting to learn towards this unit standard: Level 2 unit standards.

* US: FET-C/02 Access and use information from texts.

#### Unit standard range

A variety of written and visual texts used in socio-cultural, learning and workplace contexts.

Specific range statements are provided in the body of the unit standard where they apply to particular specific outcomes or assessment criteria.

#### Specific Outcomes and Assessment Criteria

**Specific Outcome 1:** Use a range of reading and viewing strategies to understand the literal meaning of specific texts.

* Assessment Criterion 1: Unfamiliar words are identified. Their meanings are correctly determined by using knowledge of syntax, word-attack skills, and contextual clues. Range: Borrowed words, complex terms, acronyms, neologisms, colloquialisms, slang, jargon, dialect.
* Assessment Criterion 2: Different options for the meanings of ambiguous words are tested, and selected meanings are correct in relation to the context.
* Assessment Criterion 3: Main ideas are separated from supporting evidence and paraphrased or summarised.
* Assessment Criterion 4: The purpose of visual and/or graphic representations in texts are recognised and explained. Range: Photographs, aerial photographs, schema, bar graphs, pie charts, pictures, drawings, illustrations, cartoons, maps, mind-maps, diagrams.

**Specific Outcome 2**: Use strategies for extracting implicit messages in texts.

* Assessment Criterion 1: Source of text is identified and discussed in terms of reliability and possible bias.
* Assessment Criterion 2: Author’s attitude, beliefs and intentions are explored in order to determine the point of view expressed either directly or indirectly.
* Assessment Criterion 3: Author’s techniques are explored and explained in terms of purpose and audience. Range: Length of sentence, punctuation, diction/choice of words, use of figurative language/jargon/technical terms/slang/dialect/irony/humour/satire/sarcasm/legalisms, choice of visuals, choice of camera angle, type of shot, cinematographic techniques.
* Assessment Criterion 4: Promotion of, or support for, a particular line of thought/cause is identified and explained with reference to selection or omission of materials.

**Specific Outcome 3**: Respond to selected texts in a manner appropriate to the context.

* Assessment Criterion 1: Instructions and requests are acted upon.
* Assessment Criterion 2: Text-type, format and register used are on the correct level of formality.

**Specific Outcome 4:** Explore and explain how language structures and features may influence a reader.

* Assessment Criterion 1: The choice of words, language usage, symbols, pictures and tone is described in terms of how a point of view is shaped or supported. Range: Bias (cultural, religious or peer preferences, misrepresentation, discrimination, racist, sexist, ageist), humour, irony, sarcasm, use of omission and silence, figurative expressions, repetition, hyperbole, generalisations, stereotyping, pictures and captions, typography and grammar.

#### Unit Standard Essential Embedded Knowledge

The following essential embedded knowledge will be assessed through assessment of the specific outcomes in terms of the stipulated assessment criteria:

Learners can understand and explain that language have certain features and conventions which can be manipulated. Learners can apply this knowledge and adapt language to suit different contexts, audiences and purposes.

Candidates are unlikely to achieve all the specific outcomes, to the standards described in the assessment criteria, without knowledge of the stated embedded knowledge. This means that for the most part, the possession or lack of the knowledge can be directly inferred from the quality of the candidate’s performance. Where direct assessment of knowledge is required, assessment criteria have been included in the body of the unit standard.

#### Critical Cross-field Outcomes (CCFO)

**Unit Standard CCFO Identifying:** Identify and solve problems: using context to decode and make meaning individually and in groups in oral, reading and written activities.

**Unit Standard CCFO Working**: Work effectively with others and in teams: using interactive speech in activities, discussion and research projects.

**Unit Standard CCFO Organizing**: Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively through using language.

**Unit Standard CCFO Collecting**: Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information: fundamental to the process of developing language capability across language applications and fields of study.

**Unit Standard CCFO Communicating**: Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills: in formal and informal communications.

**Unit Standard CCFO Science**: Use science and technology effectively and critically: using technology to access and present texts.

**Unit Standard CCFO Demonstrating**: Understand the world as a set of inter-related parts of a system: through using language to explore and express links, and exploring a global range of contexts and texts.

**Unit Standard CCFO Contributing**: Contribute to the full development of self by engaging with texts that stimulate awareness and development of life skills and the learning process.

# READING AND VIEWING STRATEGIES

#### Outcome 1

Use a range of reading and viewing strategies to understand the literal meaning of specific texts.

#### Assessment criteria

* Identify unfamiliar words and correctly determine their meanings by using knowledge of syntax, word-attack skills, and contextual clues. Range: Borrowed words, complex terms, acronyms, neologisms, colloquialisms, slang, jargon, dialect.
* Test different options for the meanings of ambiguous words and select meanings are correct in relation to the context.

## Introduction

**Reading is an essential part of communication.** When a writer (the communicator) wants to communicate with a recipient (the reader) and they are not in direct contact with each other, the writer will communicate his message in writing.

We see this every day in the form of advertisements, newspapers, magazines, CD covers, comic books, etc.

When you are reading something it is important to remember that the **writer wants to give a specific message**: when Game sends out flyers about special offers, they want you, the reader, to consider buying one or more of their products.

This is true of all forms of advertisement: the advertiser wants to introduce himself and his products to you in such a way that you are persuaded to buy from him, rather than from his competition.

A newspaper, on the other hand, contains articles that have at least two purposes: to inform you, the reader, and also to convince you, the reader, of the writer’s point of view. They use various methods to persuade you to buy the newspaper, so that you can read it: they have big advertisements about the headlines or main stories in the paper, they also print their headlines in big, bold letters in order to grab your attention.

You must always be aware that the writer’s purpose is to persuade you that their point of view is the right one. This is true of advertisements, magazines, newspapers, anything you read, even company policy.

What needs to be remembered is that in the case of company policy, you have to follow the rules as laid down. With almost everything you read, that is not directly work related, especially in newspapers and magazines, you have to remember that the writer wants to persuade you to believe his point of view.

Some writers are very good at this, so you must always analyse what you are reading in order to come to your own conclusions about the matter. One way of doing this is, of course, to read more than one writer’s point of view. You can do this by reading more than one newspaper or magazine that has articles of the same subject and you will be surprised by the differing points of view that are put forward.

An excellent example could be a newspaper headline that reads:

**ALL WHITE RUGBY TEAM**

This could mean that the Springbok rugby team was chosen with only white players. It could also mean that the coach, Jake White, has the right to put together the team without interference from the rugby administrators. It could also be a humorous play with words in order to grab your attention.

This means that whenever you read something, you have to be able to analyse what you are reading. You also have to be able to “read between the lines” – when things are not stated directly, but only hinted at.

If we look at the newspaper headline that was quoted as an example, we could take the headline to be a speculation that, if Jake White was able to choose players for the team, he would only choose white players.

So, how would you know what the headline means? By reading the article and then analysing it, taking into consideration

What the writer states in the article,

Who would probably read the article

And very importantly, what the writer’s normal point of view is about the choice of rugby players for the Springbok rugby team.

Only then can you really determine what the writer is trying to tell you.

## Identify Unfamiliar Words

Whenever we read something, we are bound to come across words that we don’t know. There are many methods of determining the meaning of the words:

We can look up the meaning in a dictionary or thesaurus.

We can use our knowledge of syntax to determine the meaning of the word.

We can use word-attack skills.

We can use contextual clues.

### Dictionaries

There are various kinds of dictionaries available:

#### Bilingual Dictionary

A bilingual dictionary, e.g. an Afrikaans/English dictionary will give the word, in Afrikaans with the English equivalent, and vice versa.

#### Explanatory Dictionary

An explanatory dictionary gives the word, its meaning as well as advice on how to use it in practice. This dictionary would be in one language only, English or Afrikaans or Sotho, etc. There is only one language involved, so there will not be references to the Afrikaans or Sotho equivalent.

Dictionaries usually also tell you how to pronounce the word correctly.

#### Thesaurus

A thesaurus is a dictionary that contains lists of words that have the same, similar or related meaning.

### Syntax

**A set of rules** for the formation of sentences. We all know that each sentence should have nouns, verbs and so on and that they should be in the correct order.

If we do not quote them in the correct order, we can actually change the meaning of the sentence.

If you say: “ My husband and I have been nearly married for two years.” it literally means that for two years you and your husband have been almost married, but have not gotten married yet. You probably mean that for two years you have been thinking about getting married, but cannot make up your minds to actually do it.

If you say: “My husband and I have been married for nearly two years” it means that you and your husband got married nearly two years ago and you are still together.

This means that you must always write and speak sentences in the correct order. At the same time you must be aware that, when we write as we speak, everybody sometimes put the words in the incorrect order. You must learn to understand what the writer is trying to say.

### Contextual Clues

The parts that immediately come before or after a word or passage and **clarify its meaning.**

Sometimes when you read a piece of writing, there will be words that you don’t know the meaning of. Very often, when this happens, you can determine the meaning of the word by looking at the whole sentence.

Below is a quote from a newspaper article in the Pretoria News of 26 July 2005 about Orlando Pirates:

*Orlando Pirates will not take part in future Telkom Charity Cup tournaments.*

*That’s unless what club chairman Irvin Khoza called a “fake voting contest to select the participating teams, which in no way resembles reality” is abolished.*

*The scathing outburst by the “Iron Duke” of South African football, follows the bizarre omission of The Buccaneers from Saturday’s four-team annual extravaganza at FNB stadium.*

If there are words you don’t understand, you can infer the meaning by looking at the whole sentence, for example in the last paragraph the word scathing is used. Without knowing the meaning of the word, we can deduce that it means something like angry, disgusted, nasty or something similar.

Scathing means: harshly critical

### Word-Attack Skills

Word-Attack skills are a variety of strategies that experienced readers use in order to understand text. Using these strategies help people to decode, pronounce and understand unfamiliar words.

#### Make predictions

Look at the pictures, table of contents, chapter heading, maps, and diagrams of a book before reading it. Write down:

* The subjects contained in the book.
* Make predictions about what the text contains. During reading, look for words or phrases from these predictions.
* While reading, revise the predictions to make new ones.

#### Visualise

Many people think visually, in other words in pictures. They use shapes, movement and colours. These people can benefit from this technique:

* Imagine a fictional story taking place as if it were a movie. Imagine the character’s features. Picture the plot in time and space.
* adjectives to create pictures, diagrams or other mental pictures.
* Use graphic organisers to lay out information. Make sketches or diagrams on scrap paper.

#### Ask and answer questions

Using this technique will help you to recognise when you are confused and it encourages active learning. This technique is similar to predicting.

* Before reading, think about the subject based on the title, chapter heads and visual information. Make notes about anything you are curious about.
* While reading, pause and write down any questions. Be sure to write down questions if you are confused.
* Look for the answers while reading. Pause and write down the answers.
* Were all your questions answered? Could the answers come from other sources?

#### Retell and summarise

Retelling the text in your own words clears up language issues; it challenges you to aim for complete retention. Summarising allows you to discriminate between main ideas and supplementary information.

* While reading, make a note of the main ideas or events. Put a check mark in the book or write a note to point out a main idea.
* At the ends of chapters or sections, review the information or story. Note main ideas or events and the details that support them.
* After reading, retell or summarise the text. Focus on the important points and support them with relevant details.
* Refer to the book to check the retelling or summary.

#### Connect the text to life experiences, other texts and prior knowledge

When you connect text to your experience and knowledge it helps you to personalise the information and it also helps you to remember the information.

* Is the subject familiar? Do the characters resemble people that are familiar to your? Where did you learn about the concept: from school, at home or from other experiences?
* Is the style or genre familiar? Does it resemble other texts? For this purpose you may consider Television shows, movies and games as texts. Anything that reminds you of the current text will help.
* Write down similarities between the current text and experiences, knowledge or other texts.

#### Individual words

* **Use picture clues, if they are available**. Look at the picture: are there people, objects or actions in the picture that might make sense in the sentence?
* **Sound out the word**. Start with the first letter and say each letter out loud. Blend the sounds together and try to say the word. Does the word make sense in the sentence?
* **Look for chunks in the word**. Look for familiar letter chunks. They may be sounds, prefixes, suffixes, endings or whole words. Read each chunk by itself. Then blend the chunks together and sound out the word. Does that word make sense in the sentence?
* **Connect to a word you know**. Think of a word that looks like the unfamiliar word. Compare the familiar word to the unfamiliar word. Decide if the familiar word is a chunk or form of the unfamiliar word. Use the known word in the sentence to see If it makes sense. If so, the meaning of the two words are close enough for understanding.
* **Reread the sentence**. Read the sentence more than once. Think about what word makes sense in the sentence. Try the word and see if the sentence makes sense.
* **Keep reading**. Read past the unfamiliar word and look for clues. If the word is repeated, compare the second sentence to the first. What word might make sense in both?
* **Use prior knowledge**. Think about what you know about the subject of the book, paragraph or sentence. Do you know anything that might make sense in the sentence? Read the sentence with the word to see if it makes sense.

### Borrowed Words

Borrowed words are words that are incorporated into a language from another language.

This happens a lot in South Africa, where we have Afrikaans, Zulu and Xhosa word in English, and so on.

The English language has borrowed from other languages for a long long time, that is why there is an estimated vocabulary of over one million words in English.

In Afrikaans, we have borrowed words such as lorry and box from English. In Afrikaans it is spelled differently: a lorrie and a boks, but the word originated from English.

### Acronym

A word formed from the first letter of other words

* SDF: skills development facilitator
* FNB: First National Bank
* ABET: adult basic education and training
* ESCOM: Electricity Supply Commission
* Soweto: South Western Township
* Soshanguve: Sotho, Shangaan, Nguni, Venda

### Neologisms

A new word or expression

This is, of course, a borrowed word, before it is officially incorporated into the language. It can also be a new word that is created around a particular circumstance or happening.

* Surf the web
* Internet
* World Wide Web
* e-mail

All the above are words and expressions that were created when computers became popular and new terms had to be found to describe the functions available.

### Colloquialism

An informal word or phrase. This will be used in ordinary conversation, not when addressing a conference or writing business letters.

* Ag sis man
* I’m going to latch onto my connection (I’m going to see my friend)
* Don’t take you eye off the ball (don’t lose sight of the goals)

### Slang

**Very informal words and phrases** that are more common in speech than in writing and are used by a particular group of people

* My Bra
* Howzit Broe
* Whazzup

### Dialect

A form of language used in a particular region or by a particular social group

The way we speak English and Afrikaans in Gauteng is different to how it is spoken in the Cape. The people in the Cape have their own unique way of speaking, which is legitimate even though not always grammatically correct. When this happens, it is called a dialect.

A dialect is usually mainly one language, but with a lot of borrowed words and neologisms, and a unique way of pronouncing the words.

### Jargon

Words or expressions that are used by a specific trade, business or industry.

* A paper tiger: when a committee or other body is established to investigate an occurrence, and nothing much happens, it is called a paper tiger. It means that the committee is not doing what it is supposed to do, the members of the committee postpone actions and make up imaginary problems as to why they cannot do the work in time.
* In the training environment in South Africa we find a lot of jargon – words that are used in a context not previously used and existing words put together to mean something that is unique to the education and training environment. We talk about Unit Standards, which previously was called training courses, we talk about assessments rather than tests and we have standards generating bodies and standards governing bodies, and so on.

### Complex Terms

Words or phrases that are complex and usually technical and related to a specific industry or sector.

* Electrocardiograph: monitors the heartbeat
* Government fiscal matters: to do with the government’s budget and how they spend the money that we pay in taxes.
* The metallurgist in charge is Karis Allen, 35, a specialist in fractions and corrosion: a metallurgist is a person who specialises in studying metals, fractions and corrosion in this instance means how metal, such as steel, breaks and corrodes

### Schema

An outline of what the written piece is about. The outcomes for this course, as well as the Course Content on page 7 gives you an outline of what this course is about.

A schema is a shcematic presentation of a piece of writing, the outline without the content. If you were writing an article for a magazine, the schema could look as follows:

* Introduction: a summary of the article where you answer the Who? What? Where? When? and Why? questions. Who did what, where, when and why.
* Body or development: here you will present the contents in paragraphs that follow one another in a logical way.
* Conclusion: where you arrive at the conclusion of the article.

### Ambiguous Words

Ambiguous means **unclear or undecided**, having more than one meaning. So an ambiguous word can have more than one meaning. When you come across a word like this, you have to refer to the context in which it is used in the sentence.

The boxer was boxed in.

* A boxer can be a person who boxes as a sport or a medium-sized breed of dog with a brown coat and pug-like face.
* Boxed: a box can be a container with a flat base and sides and a lid; it can also be an enclosed area for a group of people in a theatre, sports ground or law court, it can also be a service at a newspaper office for receiving replies to an advertisement, and so on.

The boxer was boxed in a small area between the house and the gate and was barking his head off.

During the fight, the boxer in the red shorts was boxed into one corner of the boxing ring by the boxer in the blue shorts.

If the sentence and the context the word is used in still does not make the meaning of the word clear, look up the word in a dictionary.

## Analysing Written Material

### Reading Skills

Taking into account the various reading strategies that we employ, as well as the strategies that are used to capture our attention, how do we analyse written material to ensure that we understand what the writer is trying to say?

To start off, you would use more than one strategy when reading an article in a newspaper, for example.

You could skim or scan, in order to determine the main points, read and then reread in order to ensure that you are reading correctly and then you would summarise the main points:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Who | What |
| When | Where |
| Why | How |

Following is an extract from an article about slavery in Africa. Read the extract and then answer the following questions.

*At the first cracks of gunfire, the villagers of Nyamlell in southern Sudan dropped their hoes and scattered into the bush. Abuk Marou Keer also heard the guns. But the blind Dinka woman could only pull her seven-year-old son and twelve-year-old daughter close. Shaking with fear, they hid in their windowless hut and prayed.*

*Minutes later 300 men on foot, horseback and camels crashed through the fields of maize. Clad in turbans and the long, white robes of the desert, they brandished rifles, pangas and spears. Soon 80 village men lay dead.*

*The invaders were Muslim Arabs from northern Sudan; the victims darker-skinned Dinka tribes people who are Christians or practice native religions*

*Once the Arabs seized the cattle, they moved from hut to hut gathering grain, blankets, salt – and human booty. Deep in the shadows of one hut, they discovered Abuk. Grabbing the terrified woman by her bead necklace, a militiaman growled, “Now you belong to me!” in all, 282 Dinka, including Abuk’s mother, sister and niece were herded up and forced to march north.*

*Two days later Abuk and the rest of the prisoners reached a compound, which she was told would be her “home.” Like the other Dinka women and children, she was ordered to carry water, wash clothes and collect firewood for her Arab masters. Abuk had become a slave*.

### Summaries

A summary is a **brief statement** of the **main points** of something.

The purpose of using reading strategies and then rereading a piece of written word is to separate the main ideas from supporting information and also to identify the author’s purpose.

*At the first cracks of gunfire, the villagers of Nyamlell in southern Sudan dropped their hoes and scattered into the bush. Abuk Marou Keer also heard the guns. But the blind Dinka woman could only pull her seven-year-old son and twelve-year-old daughter close. Shaking with fear, they hid in their windowless hut and prayed.*

If we take the first paragraph of the article about slavery, we can summarise as follows, using the who what where when how and why questions:

* What happened? Where did it happen? Who fled? Why did Abuk not flee with her children?

*During the day, the villagers heard gunfire and fled. A blind Dinka woman could not flee, so she and her children hid in their hut.*

I have now summarised a 54-word paragraph into a 24-word paragraph, quoting only the main ideas of the paragraph.

Everything else is **supporting information**:

* The villagers dropping their hoes indicate that they were working in the fields, so it must be daytime. The blind woman’s name is supporting information, as well as the ages of her children.
* The last sentence is also supporting information.

The **purpose** of a summary is to take a big piece of text and break it into smaller parts that are easy to understand and, when you are learning something, memorise it easily, separating main ideas from supporting information.

**In everyday life we break big things into smaller parts all the time**: when you have a big piece of steak in your plate, you don’t put the whole steak into your mouth, you cut it into smaller pieces so that you can eat it.

We also do this with big tasks: doing the weekly washing, we break it into smaller pieces by sorting clothes into colours and materials and then we wash them, using more than one load. When we mow the lawn, we start with one piece, once that is finished we do the next piece, and so on.

****It therefore makes sense to do this with reading material as well.****

A **summary** can take many forms:

* You can summarise in point form
* When you are summarising a big piece of text, you will make use of headings and sub-headings. This manual is an example of using headings and sub-headings to break a big piece of text into smaller pieces
* Another method of summarising is using a mind-map.

### Point Form

This is when you summarise, using points. If we use the same example, it would look like this:

* The villagers heard gunfire and fled.
* A blind woman could not flee, so she and her children hid in their hut.

### Mind-map

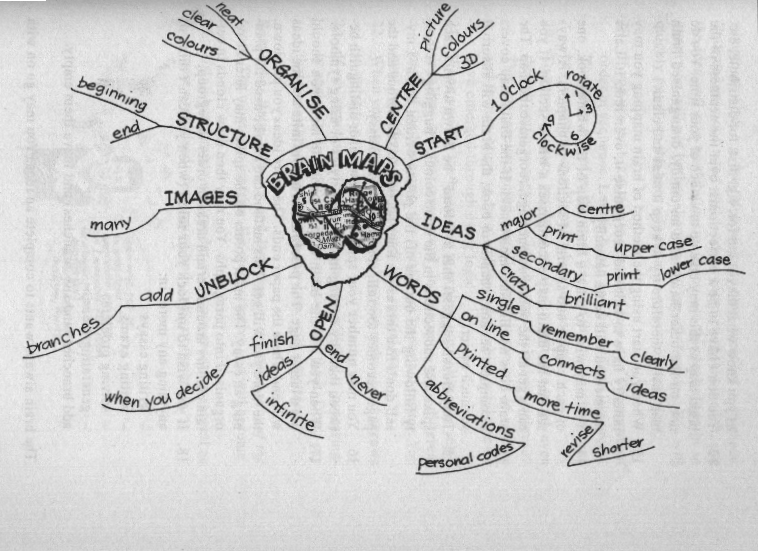
**A mind-map is a summary that looks like a diagram.** When you are learning and trying to memorise facts, a mind-map is your easiest and best method of summarising.

A mind-map is **more effective** for studying than summarising facts in points, underneath each other, since the human brain is capable of absorbing facts in all directions. Not only from top to bottom, but also from left to right.

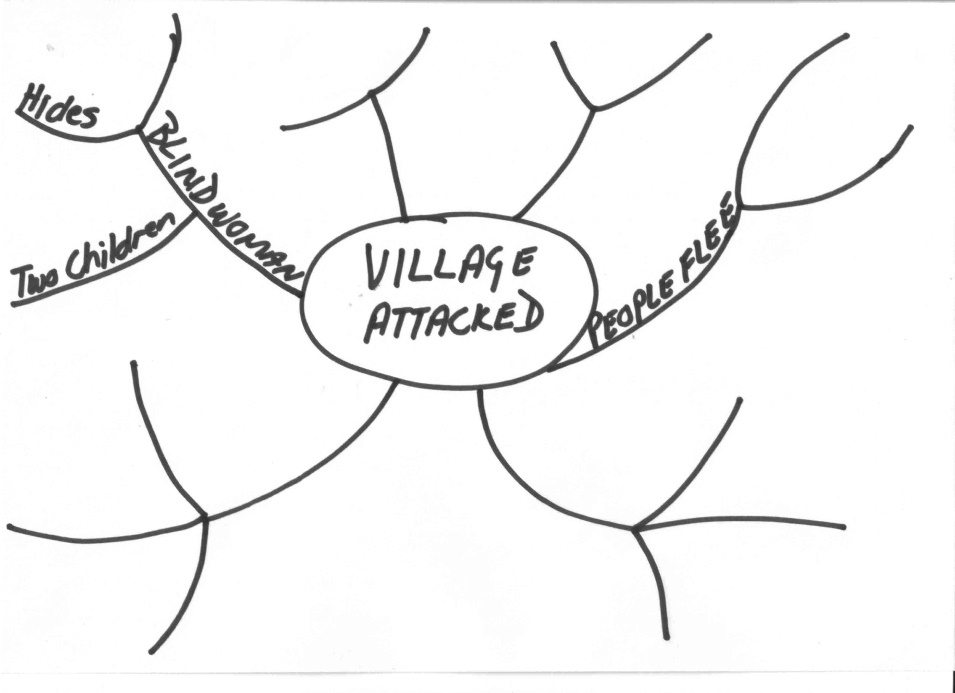
With a mind-map, you follow ;the same procedures as for any other summary. You take a big piece of writing, break it into smaller parts by using headings and sub-headings, and then you summarise in point form or paragraph form.

A mind-map looks different, since it resembles a diagram. The one main point of the summary is quoted in the middle. This would be a **heading** in your summary.

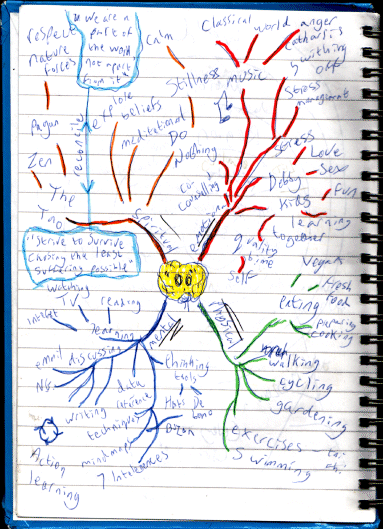
The **sub-headings** are written on lines that flow out of the main point. Any further points would branch out from the lines that contain sub-headings.

****

If we were to summarise our example in a mind-map, it would look like this:



Another example of a mind map:



## Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is rewriting something using different words - you rewrite the entire text, using your own words.

*One day, while the villagers of Nyamlell, a village in southern Sudan, were busy tilling their fields, they heard gunfire. Everybody dropped their hose and fled helter-skelter into the surrounding bush. Unfortunately, one blind woman named Abuk Marou Keer could not flee. She and her children, a seven-year-old son and a twelve-year-old daughter, took shelter in their hut, where they sat in the dark, praying that they would not be found. You could smell their fear in the windowless hut.*

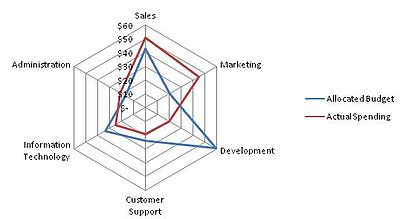
Now I have rewritten the entire paragraph, using my own words. Can you see that the paragraph still means the same thing, the message is still the same. This is paraphrasing.

*Once the Arabs seized the cattle, they moved from hut to hut gathering grain, blankets, salt – and human booty. Deep in the shadows of one hut, they discovered Abuk. Grabbing the terrified woman by her bead necklace, a militiaman growled, “Now you belong to me!” in all, 282 Dinka, including Abuk’s mother, sister and niece were herded up and forced to march north.*

### Spider diagram

A spider chart or star chart, is a two-dimensional chart of three or more quantitative variables represented on axes starting from the same point. The relative position and angle of the axes is uninformative.

Radar charts are usually used to compare performance of different entities on a same set of axes



This spider chart represents the allocated versus budgeted spending for a given organization. We can see that:

* sales were more than budgeted
* marketing spent more than was budgeted for
* development spent a lot less than was budgeted for.

The chart looks like a spider’s web where the lines of the web have values allocated to them. The amounts allocated according to the budget are marked at each category, after which the marks are connected with a coloured line. Do the same with the actual spending but in a different colour to enable you to compare the two at a glance.

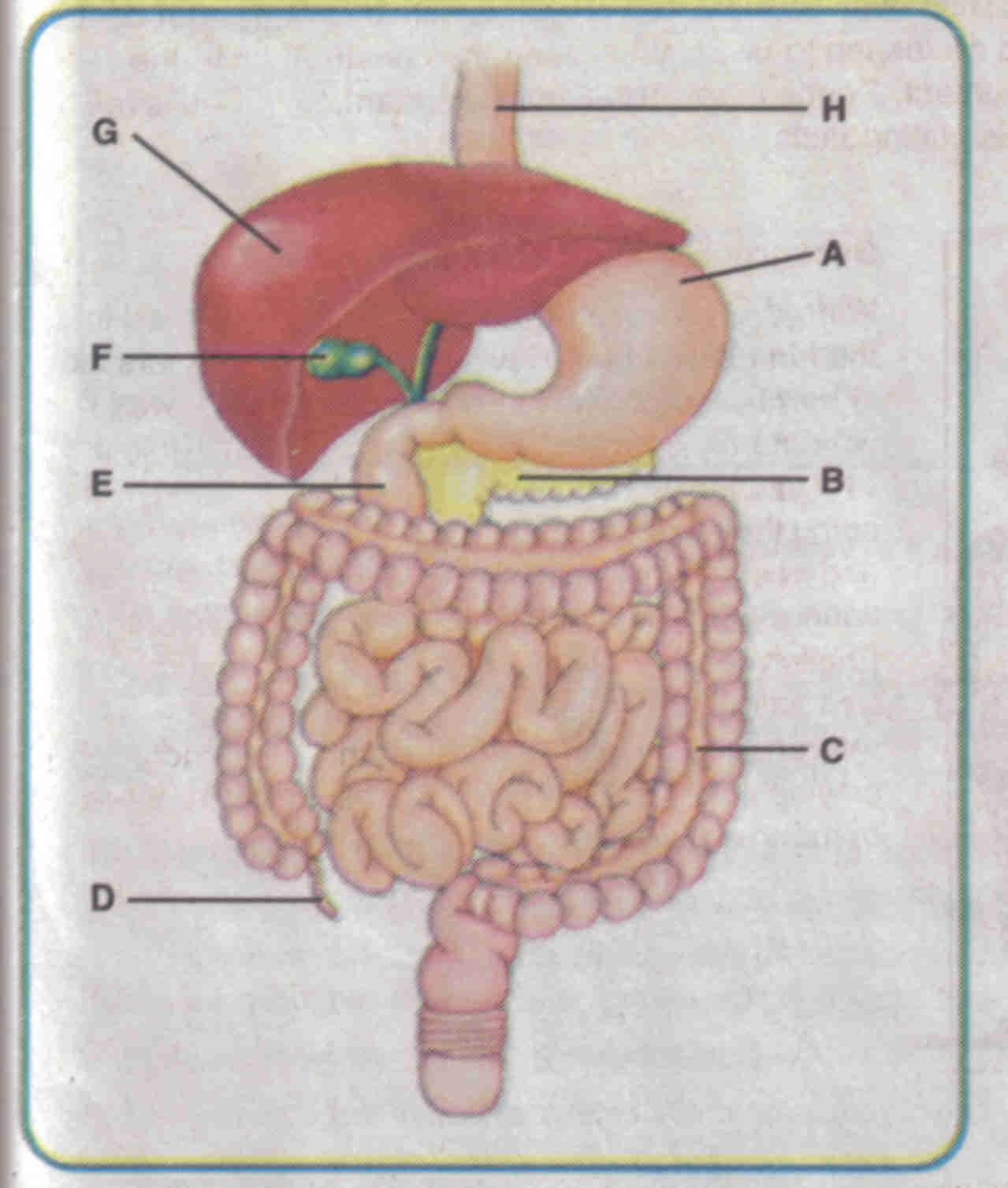
## Visual And Graphic Representations

Visual and graphic representations are used to illustrate what the written piece is about. It is used to give more information about the subject, without writing long lines of text to explain the point the author is trying to make.

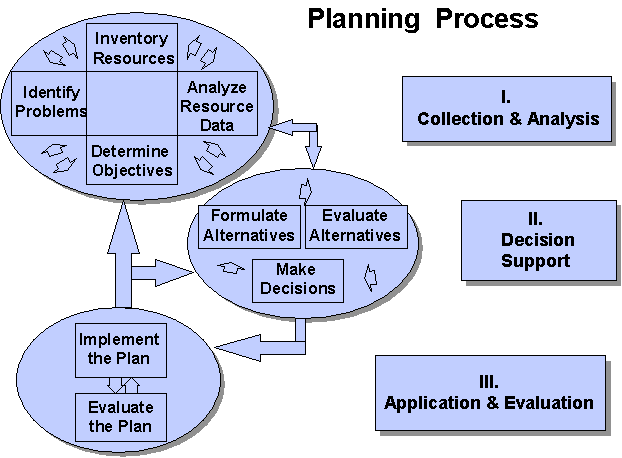
### Diagram

A simplified drawing showing the appearance or structure of something.

This is a diagram of a human’s intestines. Can you see how easy it would be to explain the look, position and function of each separate organ in the human body by making use of a diagram.



The following diagram is called a flow char and illustrate the process of planning.



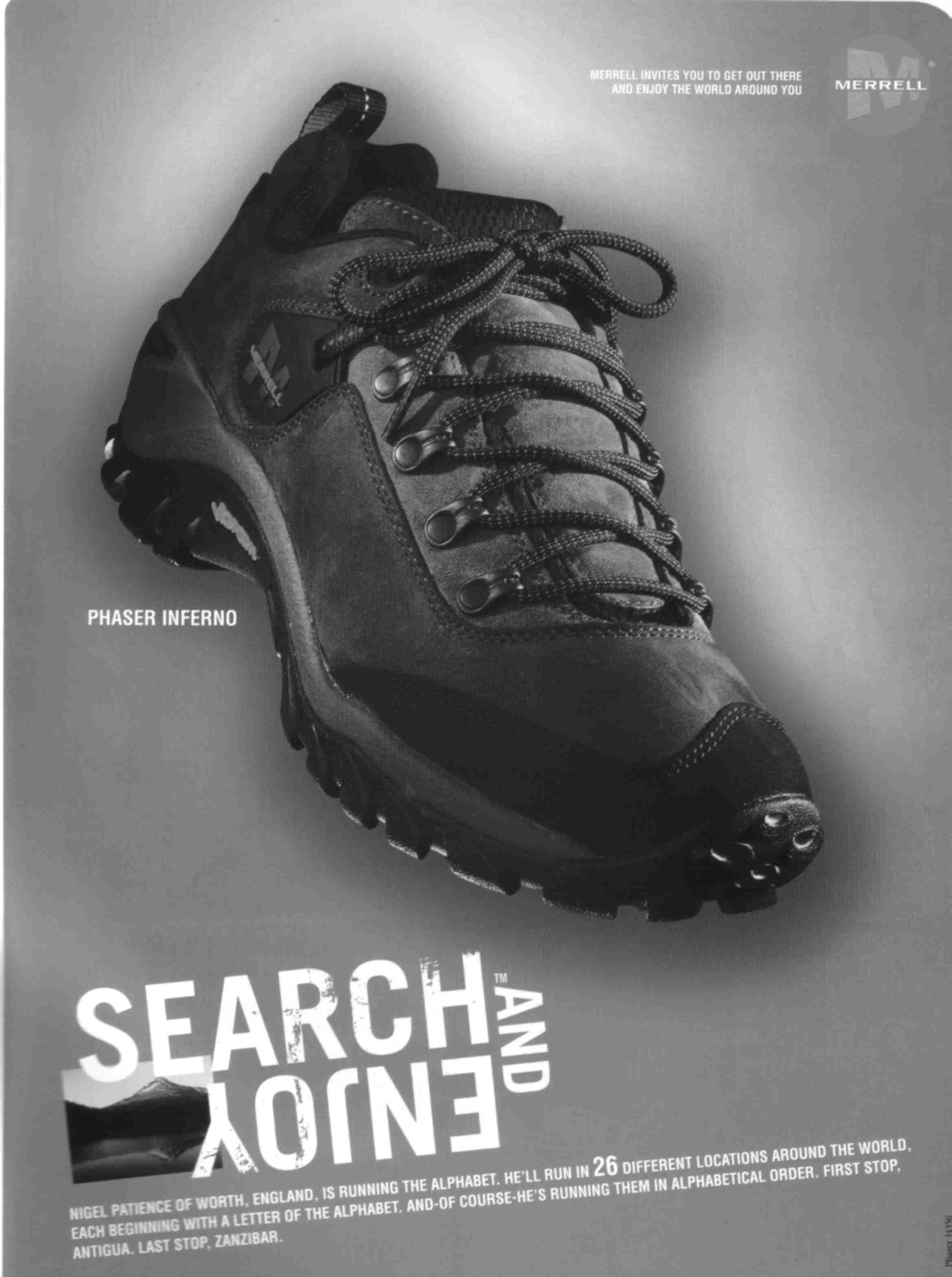
### 

### Photographs

When the manufacturer decided to advertise these shoes, they chose to use a photograph of the shoe to illustrate what it looks like, rather than saying to you, the reader:

“This is a lace-up shoe, with soles fit to walk or climb in, made from leather and suede, with added protection at the back for your heels, durable, long-lasting and comfortable. These shoes are made with your comfort in mind. Go out now and buy your Search and Enjoy Phaser Inferno climbing and hiking shoes.”

You can actually see all this from the photo



It is important that learners start looking at and analysing photos since they play an important role in our lives today, especially with regards to advertisements and media articles.

### Arial Photography

Aerial photography has been around for a long time. It was used as early as 1858 from hot air balloons. Aerial photography was used widely during the first World War. Photos taken from the air was used to gather information about the enemy’s position, moves and strength. At times, this was done daily. During the second World War and the Korean War aerial photography was also used a lot to gather information about the other side’s movements.

Today, aerial photography is used for the following purposes: to gather military information, to draw maps, to make survey photographs of natural resources such as forests, crops, rivers and so on.



Photos taken from the air can be done from a hot air balloon, a helicopter, a parachute (although this will be difficult) and an aeroplane. The view from the air is vastly different from the view from the ground. Compare the following two photographs, both are of rice paddies. One was taken from the air and the other one was taken from a slightly higher viewpoint than the woman collecting rice seeds.

Of course, the height at which the photo is taken also affects what the photo looks like.

In an aerial photo all vertical lines, such as poles and tall buildings, tend to disappear at a “vanishing point” in the centre. In other words, it is difficult to judge the height of things from an aerial photo.



### Pie Chart

A pie chart is used to show how a total breaks down. For example, you have R3000 per month to spend on rent, transport, food, etc. You can use a pie chart to give a visual demonstration of how you spend your R3000. Or you could write an explanation of a paragraph or two to prove to your parents that you are not spending money on unnecessary things.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Rent | 900 |
| Transport | 300 |
| Food | 800 |
| Clothes | 500 |
| Spending | 500 |
| Total | 3000 |



### Bar Graph

Is used to compare values at intervals, the bars run horizontally. For example, you can compare your marks for your matric subjects per school term.

You can compare the results on paper, which is lengthy, or you can use a bar graph.

* This example shows only your mathematics results.



* This example shows all your subjects

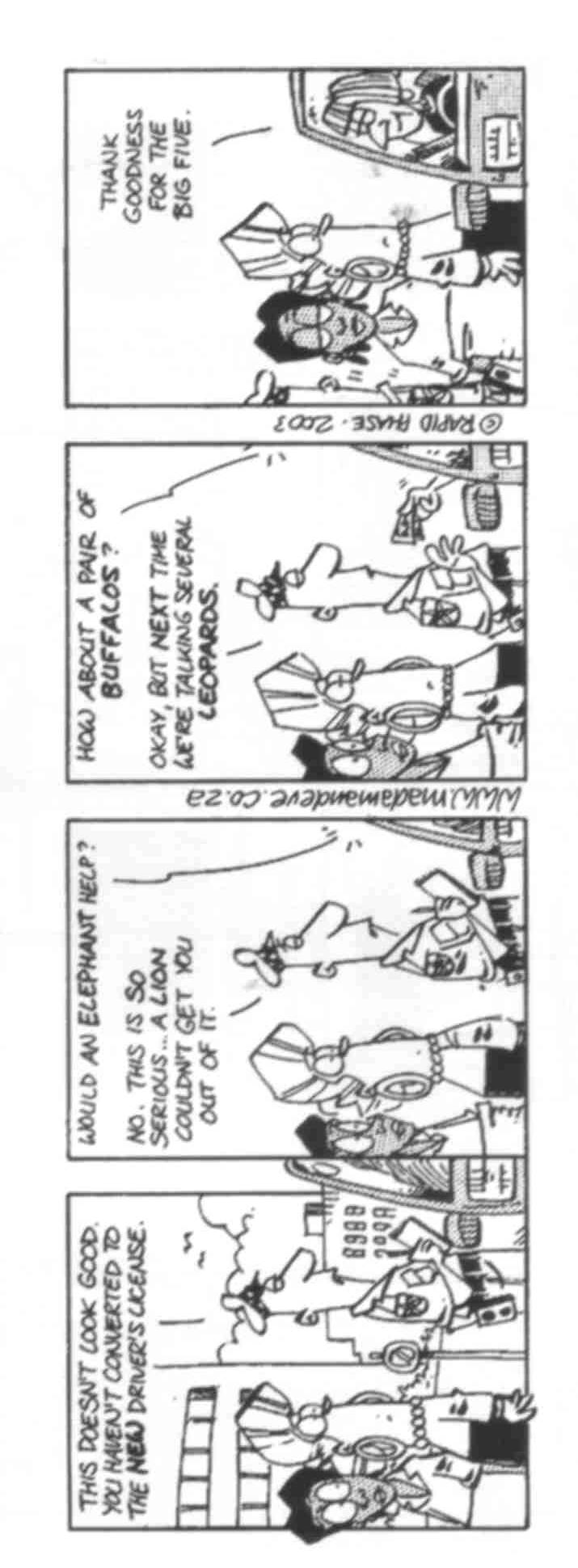
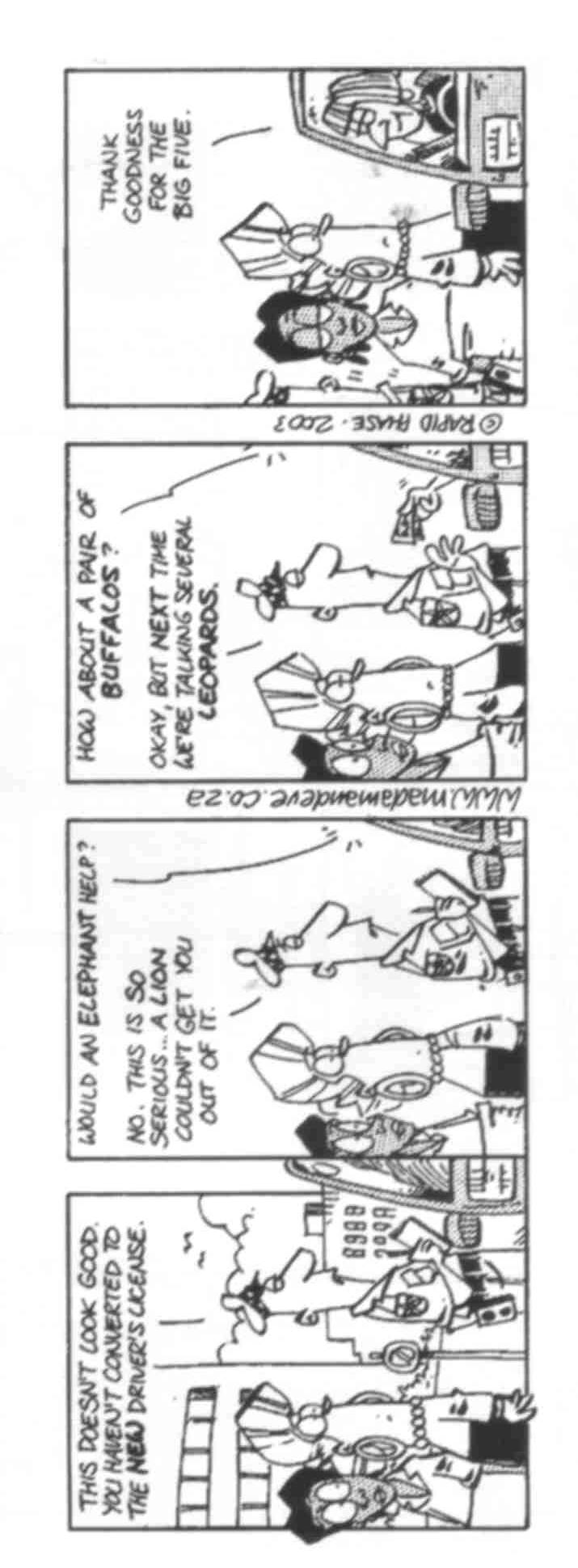


### Cartoons

Cartoons in magazines and newspapers usually make a statement about something newsworthy that happens.

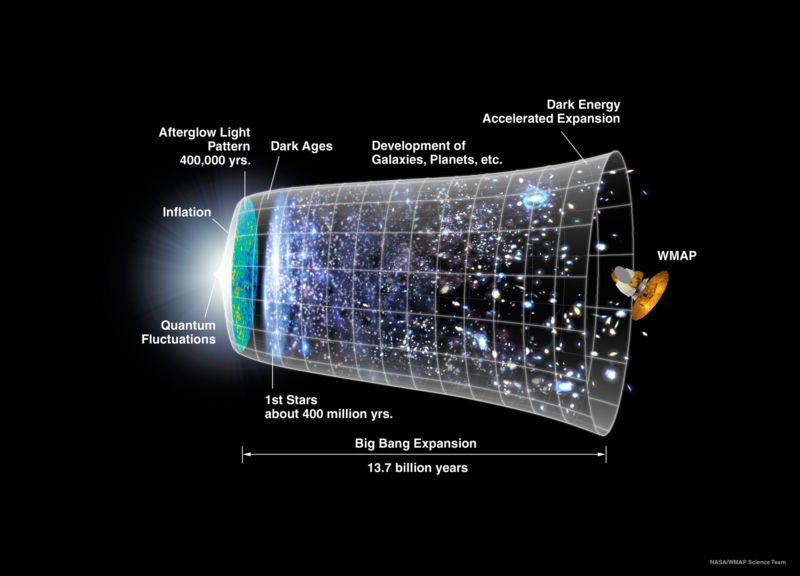
Cartoons are usually the author’s point of view about a subject and should be read with the enjoyment of the cartoon in mind and should not be taken literally, since it only conveys one person’s point of view.

One of my favourite cartoons is Madam and Eve, because it is so uniquely and typically South African. They usually make a statement about something that has happened in our own country and, while I do not always agree with them, I can really enjoy the cartoon. Incidentally, the cartoon was started by an American who was very amused by the way the word Madam is used in South Africa. In America, a madam is an owner and manager of a brothel ☺, so there is humour even in the name of the cartoon.

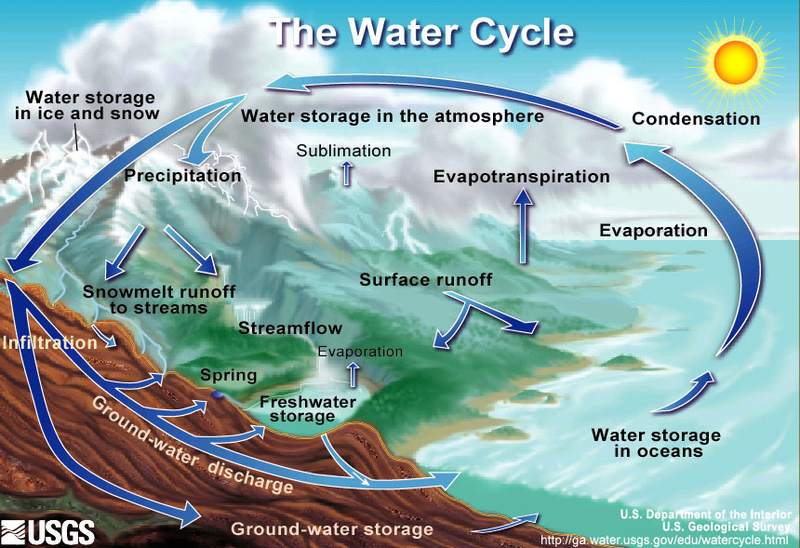


### Pictures And Drawings

Writers also use pictures to illustrate their points and to influence your thinking of the matter. The picture below shows a timeline of the development of the universe:

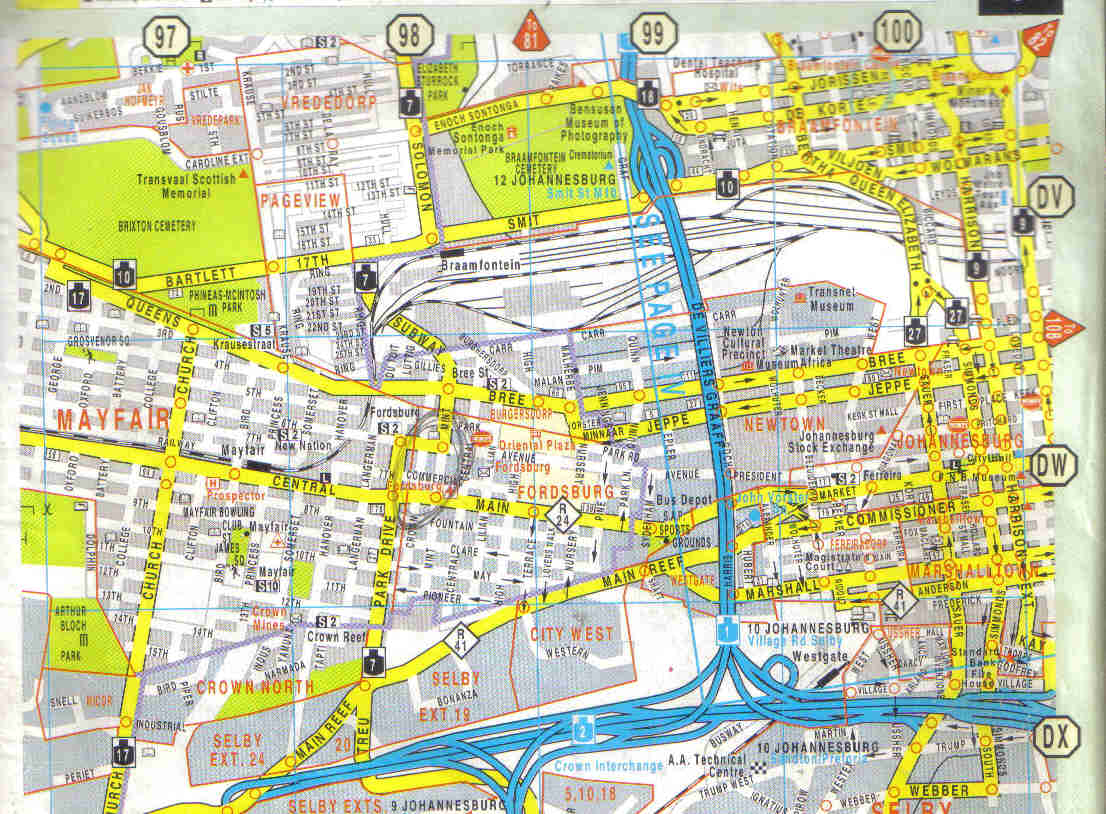


The picture below illustrate the water cycle



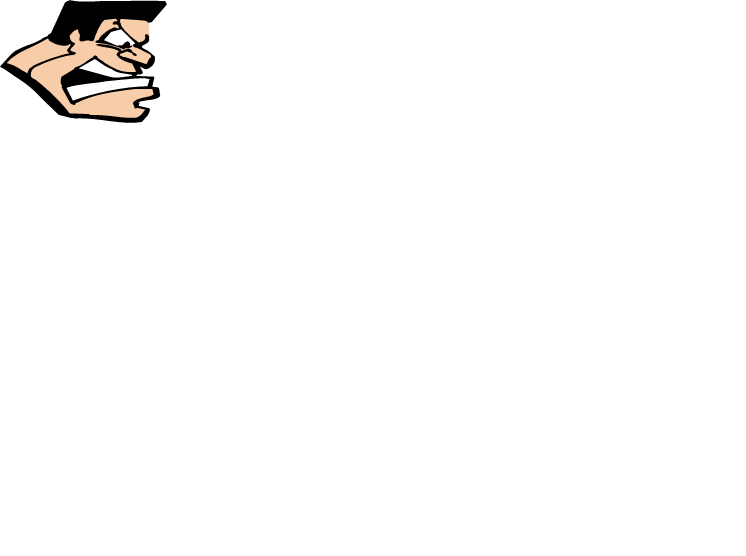
### Maps

It is much easier to explain a route through using a map than giving long written instructions.



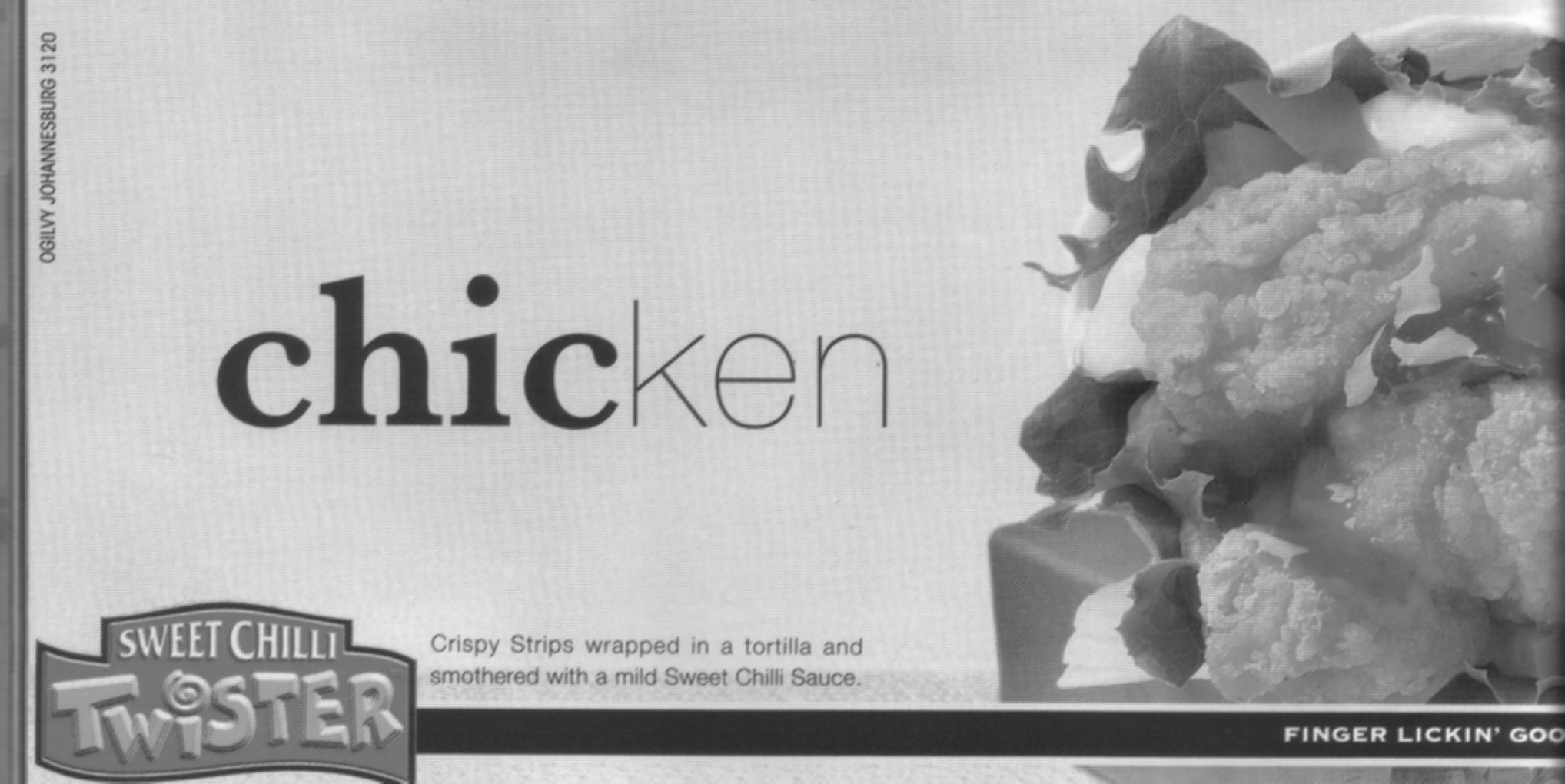
In a group, discuss the following scene and answer the questions:

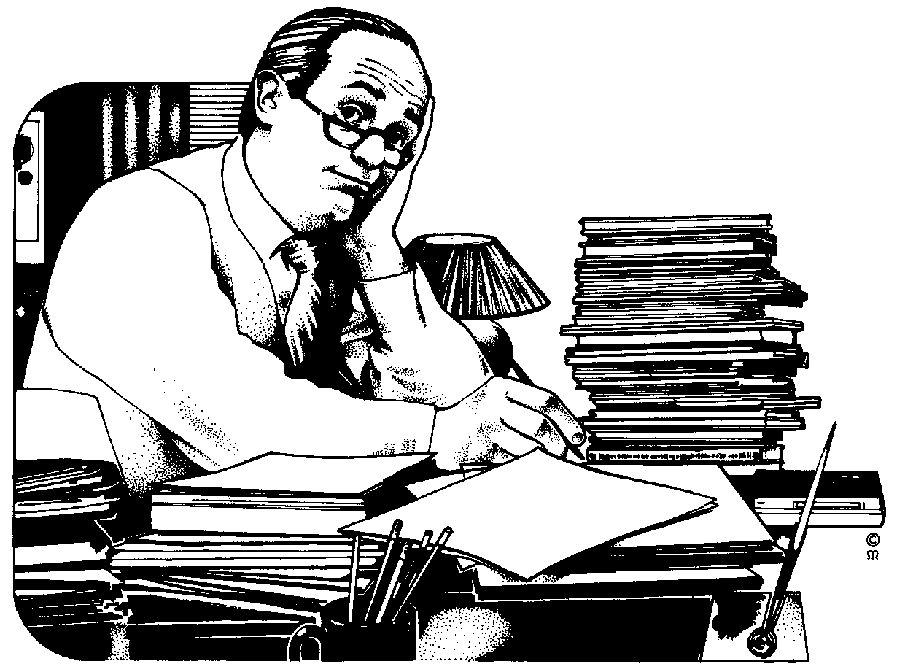
* What do you think is happening in the scene below?
* Why do you think so?
* I put three pictures of the previous exercise together. How does your feeling about what is happening differ from the previous pictures?



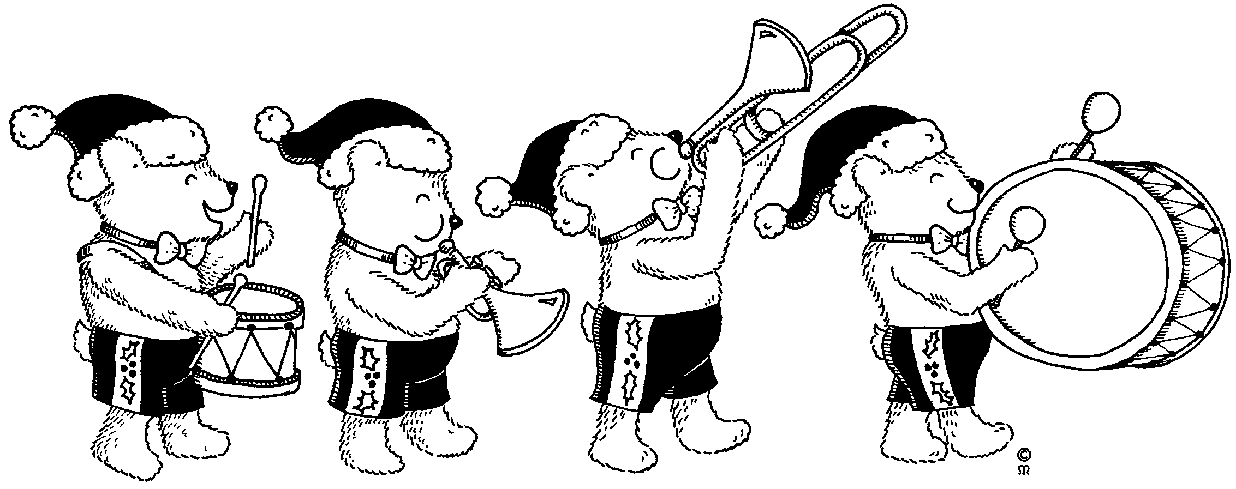
In a group, discuss the following scene and answer the questions:

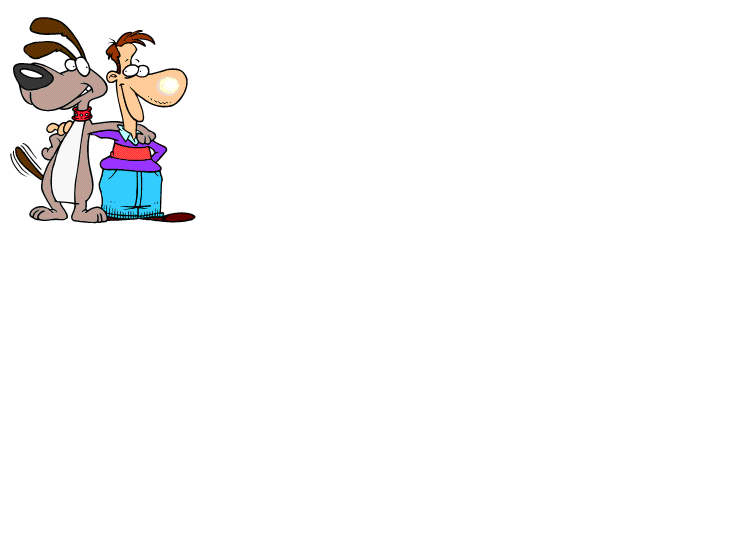
* What do you think of when you look at the scene below?
* Why do you think so?
* I put two pictures of the previous exercise together. How does your feeling about the picture differ from the previous pictures?





In a group, discuss the following scene and answer the questions:

* What do you think is happening in the scene below?
* Why do you think so?



# LANGUAGE STRUCTURES AND FEATURES

#### Outcomes

* Explore and explain how language structures and features may influence a reader
* Respond to selected texts in a manner appropriate to the context

Assessment criteria

* Describe how the choice of words, language usage, symbols, pictures and tone shapes or supports a point of view. Range: Bias (cultural, religious or peer preferences, misrepresentation, discrimination, racist, sexist, ageist), humour, irony, sarcasm, use of omission and silence, figurative expressions, repetition, hyperbole, generalisations, stereotyping, pictures and captions, typography and grammar.
* Use text-type, format and register on the correct level of formality.

## Structural Features Of Text

In the printed media, newspapers, magazines, brochures, text books, use is made of different techniques in order to:

* get your attention,
* help the writer to get the message across,
* indicate a change of topic, a main point or sometimes both,
* encourage you to read the written piece,
* influence you, the reader.

They use the following techniques:

* Different font types and sizes.
* **Bold**, *italics* and underline.
* Visual aids, such as cartoons, diagrams, and so on.
* Titles and subtitles.
* Captions: a title or brief explanation printed with a visual aid, which can be a photo, an illustration, a diagram or a cartoon.
* Photos.
* The layout of the page.
* A summary of a piece of the article is quoted.

Advertisements are very good examples of using text and visuals to get a message across, using as little words as possible.

## Language Structures And Features

Writers use language structures and features all the time, in order to influence what you, the reader, thinks when you have read the written piece.

Languge structures and features include

* The choice of words.
* Use of language.
* Symbols.
* Pictures.
* Tone.

If we look at the article about slavery, we can see some examples in the first paragraph.

*But the blind Dinka woman could only pull her seven-year-old son and twelve-year-old daughter close. Shaking with fear, they hid in their windowless hut and prayed.*

If the author had not told us that they were shaking with fear, we would have felt differently about the paragraph.

### Dealing With Bias

#### What Does Bias Mean?

An opinion or tendency to be strongly for or against a person or thing.

We are all biased in some way or other. We feel strongly about certain subjects, such as pornography, schooling in mother language, and many other subjects. Then there are subjects over which are biased, but do not necessarily feel too strongly about it, so we don’t get all worked up about it. This could be school uniforms, what to wear to the movies, and so on.

We all have opinions about everything, some opinions are stronger than others. Unfortunately, although we would like it to be so, our opinions and views are not always the right ones and, when we do not want to be convinced otherwise, we are biased.

I have a bias- I hate school uniforms and believe that it should be done away with totally. Children should be allowed to wear what they choose to school. I feel strongly about this and I refuse to be convinced otherwise. This is, of course based totally on my own dislike of uniforms and having to look like anyone else, so I am not necessarily right in my point of view, especially since most other people seem to like school uniforms. Luckily, this bias of mine is relatively harmless.

Unfortunately, not all biases are harmless. Bias can take many forms: it can be based on cultural or religious beliefs, it can show itself in a misrepresentation of facts, it can be discriminatory in terms of race, sex or age. It can also be due to peer preferences.

Most of us have suffered from other people’s biases in some way or other.

I have suffered from bias because I am a woman, it was thought that I cannot do what a man can do and, further, that I should not be allowed to prove that I can do administrative and managerial work as good as my male counterparts. To me, it was not a pleasant experience.

If I were biased against Muslims, I would interpret the article about slavery as meaning that all Muslim Arabs are kidnapping people to use and sell as slaves, even though the author of the article does not state this. My bias would then end in me disliking all Arabs and all Muslims, since, in my view they are all slave traders. Clearly, this is not true, since most races and nations have good and bad people and there are slave traders in South Africa as well, who are not Muslims or Arabs.

Whenever you read a written piece of text, you have to bear in mind that you yourself are biased and also that the author is also probably biased. You must always be able to determine the bias in yourself and the author.

Also, whenever you communicate in writing or verbally, bear in mind your own bias as well as the bias of your audience.

Lastly, remember your painful experience at the hands of some other person and his/her bias, before you treat people with disrespect because they disagree with you.

### Humour

In the dictionary, humour is stated as being:” the quality of being amusing”. Jokes are humorous, so can text in an article be humorous or even a novel (long story) or parts of a novel.

The expression of meaning through the use of language which normally means the opposite.

When an author uses irony, he states one thing, while meaning the opposite.

Your sport team lost a game badly over the weekend. On Monday morning you discuss the game with colleagues and you say: “Well, they played really well”, you are being ironic, since you mean the opposite.

### Sarcasm

Is a way of using words that implies the opposite of what they mean, so as to upset or mock someone.

If you were talking to one of the team players that lost the game badly, and you say to him: “Well, you guys really played well” you are being sarcastic.

### Irony

The expression of meaning through the use of language which normally means the opposite.

When an author uses irony, he states one thing, while meaning the opposite.

### Hyperbole

An exaggerated statement that is not meant to be taken in the strict sense of the words.

**“I have told you a thousand times to clean your room.”**

### Generalisations

Make a general or broad statement based on specific cases.

**“Nobody from the Cape eats pap”.**

This is not true, most people from the Cape prefer to eat something else, but some of them do eat pap as much as we do.

When the soccer or rugby team loses two or three games in a row, we tend to say things like: “We can’t play soccer or rugby, we always lose”. This is also not true, since they do win games.

Beware of general statements when you read or write something. Writers should be careful of using general statements, as readers tend to believe what they read.

### Stereotyping

An over-simplified idea of the typical characteristics of a person or thing.

All blondes are stupid. This is a stereotyping, since not all people with blonde hair are stupid. We just notice it, since blonde women are more noticeable to men, and when a blonde woman does something stupid, all blondes are called stupid.

### Figurative Expressions

A word or phrase used in a non-literal sense to add interest to speech or writing.

* **Food for thought.** We cannot really eat our thoughts. The expression means that it is something to think about.
* **He is as strong as an ox**. He is not really as strong as an ox, we only say this in order to illustrate how strong he is

### Repetition

The saying of the same thing over again in different words. This is incorrect use of grammar.

We tend to get into the bad habit of using more than one word that has the same meaning, to illustrate what we are saying:

* Milk dairy
* Reverse backwards
* I will kill you dead
* They arrived one after the other in succession
* Hurry up quickly
* We smell it in our noses

There is also another use for repetition - repeating words and phrases are very effective to emphasise the importance of the statement. Sir Winston Churchill made very good use of repetition in his famous speeches during World War 11.

On 22 May 1940, after the British soldiers had been evacuated from Dunkirk, he said:

“**We shall fight** on the beaches, **we shall fight** on the landing-grounds, ***we shall fight*** in the fields and in the streets, **we shall fight** in the hills; *we shall* never surrender…

On 13 May 1940, just after he was elected prime Minister, he said that he had one aim:

“**Victory – victory** at all costs, **victory** in spite of terror; **victory**, however long and hard the road may be.”

Of course, he said many more memorable things and it is worthwhile reading about him. He was the Prime Minister of Britain during World War 11 and he was a rather colourful character – just what the British needed during wartime.

## Grammar

**Grammar is the whole structure of a language**, including the rules for the way words are formed and their relationship to each other in sentences.

This has to do with the words we use in sentences and also how we use them.

In the section about textbooks I quoted the following example:

*If you say: “My husband and I have been nearly married for two years.” it literally means that for two years you and your husband have been almost married, but have not gotten married yet. You probably mean that for two years you have been thinking about getting married, but cannot make up your minds to actually do it.*

If you say: “My husband and I have been married for nearly two years” it means that you and your husband got married nearly two years ago and you are still together.

Below is a quote from the article about slavery, as written by the author.:

*Once the Arabs seized the cattle, they moved from hut to hut gathering grain, blankets, salt – and human booty. Deep in the shadows of one hut, they discovered Abuk. Grabbing the terrified woman by her bead necklace, a militiaman growled, “Now you belong to me!” In all, 282 Dinka, including Abuk’s mother, sister and niece were herded up and forced to march north.*

* If I substitute the word “booty” in the first sentence with “bodies”, it would mean that the slave traders gathered the remains of dead people to take with them.
* If I change the word order of the third sentence, I can change the meaning of the sentence as well:

“Grabbing the woman by her bead necklace, a terrified militiaman growled ….”

This, of course, means that the militiaman is terrified, and not the woman.

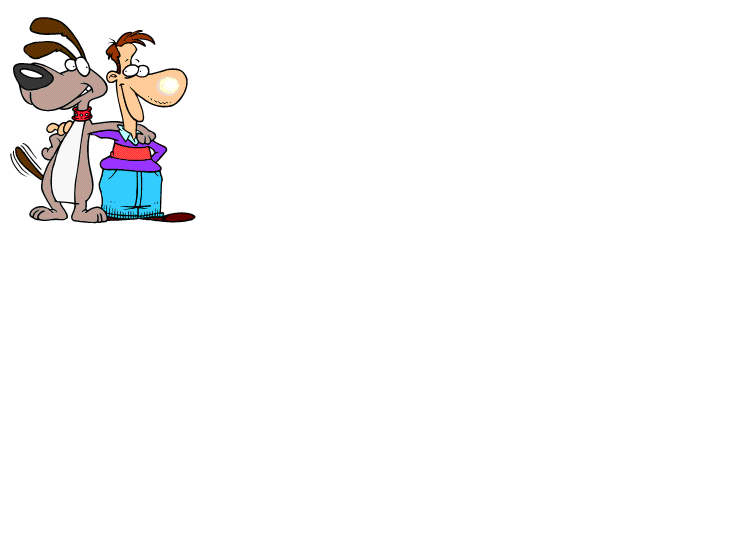
It is easy to change the meaning of a sentence or paragraph just by changing the order of the words in the sentence or paragraph. You must always be aware of this and ensure that, when you are writing something (especially your summaries) you use grammar correctly. If you don’t you can be misunderstood and this could sometimes have serious consequences.

People can be misquoted simply by changing the word order of the sentences. When we read and write text, we have to be careful of our use of grammar.

## Captions

A caption is a title or brief explanation printed with an illustration or cartoon.

Captions can be added to a photo, an illustration, a cartoon, a graph or any other picture.



I can add the following captions to the above pictures, and with each different caption the meaning of the pictures change:

* My father is laughing at our neighbour, whose dogs are taking her for a walk.
* My uncle, looking at our neighbour because he likes her and wants to date her.
* Our neighbour, whose dogs have been scared off by our dog.
* The person on the left’s dog has been to doggy school and knows how to behave, whereas the person on the right’s dogs obviously has not been to doggy school.

I hope that in future, when you see a picture with captions, you will analyse the picture and take into consideration that captions can influence what you think.

## Register

Register refers to the type and style of written work produced by writers.

### Informal Register

This kind of writing is informal. It would include letters to your friends, e-mails to friends and colleagues. It would also include internal correspondence in an organisation.

If you write a note to your facilitator about one of your assignments, this would fall under the informal register.

While your grammar and punctuation should still be correct, you can use a more informal tone and style and also more informal words. Newspaper and magazine articles are usually written in the informal register.

### Formal Register

Letters to the head of a department or branch or head office of an organisation and also letters to clients would be more formal, therefore you will use the formal register.

If you write a letter to the head of the college the format of the letter, the grammar, words and style would be formal.

For example, if you are writing a letter to the president of our country, you will not write like this:

*Howzit Jacob, my Bra*

*I just want to tell you that the trains are late everyday. You must do something about it or I will not vote for you again.*

*If the trains are late again tomorrow, I am going to set fire to it, because my boss has said that he will fire me if I am late again.*

*Bye*

When he has a meeting in your city or town and you are addressing him personally, you can certainly talk to him like this. Writing, however, is always more formal than talking so you have to choose the correct register if you want people to take you seriously.

A letter to our president should rather be written as follows:

*Dear Mr Zuma*

*I live in Soweto and have to travel to the centre of Johannesburg every day. When I arrive late for work, I get into trouble.*

*For the past two weeks, the trains have been late every day and I have been late for work every day. My supervisor is now threatening me with disciplinary steps if the situation does not improve.*

*Please look into the matter from your end.*

*Yours faithfully*

# IMPLICIT MESSAGES

#### Outcome 2

Use strategies for extracting implicit messages in texts.

#### Assessment criteria

* Identify the source of text and discuss it in terms of reliability and possible bias.
* Explore the author’s attitude, beliefs and intentions in order to determine the point of view expressed either directly or indirectly.
* Explore and explain the author’s techniques in terms of purpose and audience. Range: Length of sentence, punctuation, diction/choice of words, use of figurative language/jargon/technical terms / slang/ dialect/ irony/ humour/ satire/ sarcasm/ legalisms, choice of visuals, choice of camera angle, type of shot, cinematographic techniques.
* Identify and explain the promotion of, or support for, a particular line of thought/cause with reference to selection or omission of materials.

## Analysing Written Materials

One of the reasons why we read written text is to determine the purpose of the text – why did the author write this specific article, textbook, instruction manual or whatever you are reading.

Once we have determined what we think is the purpose of the text, we have to be able to justify what we think in terms of what is written in the article, textbook, etc.

In other words, we have to be able to understand what the author means, and we must be able to support out argument from what the author writes.

### Explicit versus implicit

Whenever an author writes some text, certain facts will be stated clearly, while others are not stated clearly, only hinted at.

When facts are stated clearly, we call them explicit. **Explicit means clear and detailed**, with no room for confusion. In the article about slavery, the name of the blind woman is stated clearly, as well as the fact that she is blind. These are stated explicitly.

The opposite of explicit is implicit. **Implicit means suggested**, though not directly expressed. In other words, it is hinted at and you, the reader, should be able to identify what the author means. Referring back to the article about slavery, the writer states:

*At the first cracks of gunfire, the villagers of Nyamlell in southern Sudan dropped their hoes and scattered into the bush.*

The author does not say that it happened during the day, he also does not say that the villagers were working in their fields, yet we know this.

How do we know this? The author says the villagers dropped their hoes. A hoe is a long-handled gardening tool with a thin metal blade that is used to turn earth and cut through weeds. So, in one sentence the author tells us implicitly that it was daytime and that the villagers were working in their fields.

### Length of sentence

The sentence may be regarded as the core of language communication, because a sentence is a complete thought that conveys (gives) a meaning. In other words, you use a sentence to explain yourself to other people, or to give your opinion about something. The end of a sentence is indicated by a full stop, called a period these days.

A sentence must make sense, therefore a sentence must express a complete thought. In order to do this a sentence must contain a verb (doing something) and a noun ( a subject) and the sentence must contain a thought that includes a relevant idea.

If you say: “The accident happened as I crossed the road.”, it makes sense to everyone who hears it and reads it. If you say: My dog was run over and Vin Diesel visited South Africa.”, it will not make much sense to other people. The two concepts have nothing to do with each other. In an instance like this, you will have to use two or more sentences or even two paragraphs.

A short sentence could be: Thabo takes the dog for a walk. It contains a verb: *takes* and it contains a subject, *Thabo* and an object, the *dog*.

Authors use short sentences to heighten (increase) tension in a written piece. Longer sentences make a written piece more relaxed and not as filled with tension. If you are writing about strikes and unrest, your sentences would be shorter, while the sentence in a written piece about farming would be longer to create a more relaxed atmosphere.

Generally, we would try to vary the length of sentences in any written piece. A written piece that has only long or short sentences can be tiring to read.

### Diction

Diction refers to the choice and use of words. We have discussed the use of words at length, so now we will focus on the choice of words.

In most languages, but especially in English, words can have more that one meaning, depending on the context they are used in.

Watch can mean to watch something, in other words to look at something attentively. It can also mean a watch that you wear on your arm and use to tell the time. When you watch out for something it can mean that you have to be careful. A watch is also used to describe a fixed period of duty, usually four hours, on a ship, or in the Army. Firefighters also divide their working shifts into watches.

The actual meaning of the word will be determined by the context – the sentence and paragraph that it is used in.

### Punctuation

Punctuation is used to:

* Clarify meaning.
* Make material more readable.
* Help the reader understand what you are writing.

The most commonly used punctuation marks are:

* Comma (,) is used to separate two independet clauses that are separated by a conjunction. I have given the matter much *thought, but decided* to cut my hair.
* Semicolon: is a stronger punctuation mark than a comma, but not as strong as a full stop. *Children begin by loving their parents: as they grow older they judge them, sometimes they forgive them*.
* Colon:replaces “for instance” or “as follows”. Be careful not to use a colon too often. *He did not understand several parts of the speech: market trends, market prices and the GDP*. Colon is also used to separate chapters and verses of the Bible: *Genesis 2:4*
* Full stop or period is used to indicate the end of a sentence.
* Exclamation mark: is used to indicate surprise or strong emotion. *You look beautiful today!*
* Question mark: appears at the end of a direct question. *Where do you think you are going?*

### Omissions and Silence

Two of the tactics most used by journalists who write for newspapers and magazines are omissions and silence. Many people are misquoted in this way.

Omission is something that has been left out.

Below is a paragraph from the article about slavery. If I leave something out, it changes the entire meaning of the paragraph.

*Once the Arabs seized the cattle, they moved from hut to hut gathering grain, blankets, salt – and human booty. Deep in the shadows of one hut, they discovered Abuk. Grabbing the terrified woman by her bead necklace, a militiaman growled, “Now you belong to me!” In all, 282 Dinka, including Abuk’s mother, sister and niece were herded up and forced to march north.*

Now read the paragraph where human booty and the last sentence has been left out:

*Once the Arabs seized the cattle, they moved from hut to hut gathering grain, blankets and salt. Deep in the shadows of one hut, they discovered Abuk. Grabbing the terrified woman by her bead necklace, a militiaman growled, “Now you belong to me!”*

Do you see that the whole meaning of the paragraph has now changed and that there is now no reference to slavery?

Silence means not saying or writing anything.

If the author of the article about slavery did not write the article, we would never have known that it is going on. Silence can be just as dangerous as omission. If we don’t write and talk about what is going on in the world around us, we will never be able to identify problems. If problems are not identified, solutions cannot be found.

### Idioms and Proverbs

According to the dictionary, an idiom is an expression that is natural to a specific language, while a proverb is a short saying stating a general truth or piece of advice. They are actually the same – a saying that originates in a specific language and is usually applicable to that language, region or culture.

Many proverbs and idioms can be translated into other languages, but many cannot, since what is applicable in Germany is not necessarily important in South Africa. Idioms and proverbs tend to be culturally based, as they originate as a saying that is popular with the people who speak the same language and undergo similar experiences.

* Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. This means that everybody has his own idea about beauty.
* Business is business. In business, there should be no other considerations.
* Easy come easy go. When you have not earned it, you tend to be wasteful.
* To be green with envy. To be very envious of what someone else has or has achieved. This is a good example of differences in language, since in Afrikaans envy and jealousy is yellow, not green. So, if you were making this statement in Afrikaans, you would say that someone is yellow with envy – the actual expression is to wear a yellow jacket. (die geel baadjie aanhê)
* To be as like as two peas. To be similar. In Afrikaans, we would say: soos twee druppels water op mekaar lyk (to look as similar as two drops of water)
* To cross the Rubicon. To commit oneself to an enterprise or a course of action.
* To live in grand style. To lead a life of wealth and luxury. In Afrikaans this is stated as: “op groot voet lewe”, which, when translated literally would state: “living in a big foot”.