

Boost Free Lessons - Year 10 English

Lesson 16: Analytical Response: How Structure Shapes Meaning

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Read the extract below.

They sold the piano in March. In April my mother took up the radio, which she had never listened to, and kept it on in the kitchen at the hours she used to practise. In May she moved it to the hall. By June it was in the shed with the door shut, still going, and none of us ever mentioned it, and she never turned it off.

Your task: Write an analytical response of about 400 to 500 words to this question:

How does the structure of this extract shape its meaning?

You must support every point with a short quotation, and explain what each one shows.

Worked Example 1

Analysing structure: what are you actually looking for?

1. **Structure** is the order and shape of a text, not what it says.
2. Look first at **sequence**. This extract is organised by month, which imposes a timeline on an emotional change.
3. Look at **progression**. The radio moves kitchen, hall, shed. Each move is further away and less acknowledged.
4. Look at **sentence length**. The final sentence is far longer than the others, and its clauses pile up without resolving.
5. Then ask the crucial question: what does the shape **mean**? Structure is only worth analysing if it carries the meaning.

Sequence, progression, sentence shape. Then ask what the shape means.

Remember: **Structure** is the shape of a text: sequence, progression, sentence length and where things are placed. Analyse it only where the shape carries the meaning.



Question 1: Plan your response before you begin writing.

1. What the extract is about, in one sentence

2. The structural feature I will analyse first, and my quotation

3. What that structure shows

4. My second structural feature, and my quotation

5. What that structure shows

6. My overall argument about structure and meaning



Question 2: Write your analytical response below. Continue on the next page.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Continue your response here.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



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Model Response and Self-Check: Analytical Response: How Structure Shapes Meaning**Model Response**

The extract is organised as a calendar, and that structure does almost all of its work. By marking each stage with a month, the writer converts a grief that is never named into something the reader can measure.

The sequence is the first structural choice. The extract moves “in March”, “In April”, “In May”, “By June”, a progression that suggests orderly time passing. But nothing in the content is orderly. The calendar frame is imposed on a decline, and the contrast between the neat structure and the deteriorating behaviour it records is what makes the extract unsettling. The mother's routine looks like recovery from the outside and is the opposite from within.

The second structural feature is the physical progression of the radio: kitchen, hall, then “the shed with the door shut”. Each location is further from the family and less visible, and the movement traces a withdrawal the extract never states. The detail that matters most is that the radio is still going in the shed. Distance increases while the sound continues, so the extract shows something being hidden rather than abandoned.

Sentence length carries the final shift. The first three sentences are short and dated. The last runs on through four clauses joined by “and”, refusing the full stops that organised everything before it. The collapse of the structure at the exact point the radio is shut away enacts what the content describes: a system for managing grief that finally stops holding.

Read together, these choices produce a meaning that no sentence in the extract states. The mother has replaced her practice with a substitute, moved the substitute out of sight, and cannot switch it off. The structure argues that the family's silence, recorded in “none of us ever mentioned it”, is as much the subject as the mother's grief is.

Check your own response

1. I have answered the question about structure, not just content.
2. I have analysed at least two structural features.
3. Every point is supported by a short quotation.
4. I have explained what each structural choice shows.
5. I have not simply retold the extract.
6. My points build on one another.
7. I have made an overall argument about structure and meaning.
8. I have checked my spelling and punctuation.

