

Comprehension Task

You will need to **read this carefully**, **check your comprehension** (your understanding of the text) and **answer all of the questions that relate to the extract**.

In your GCSE English Language exam you will have to read an extract from a random text and will be asked questions **exactly** like these. The more you are able to read and think about texts in detail, the better you will do in your exams. You deserve to do well so make sure you try your very best!

What sorts of techniques should I be looking for?

Use the table below as a guide to help you:

Simile	When you compare one thing to another using the words 'like' or 'as'.	<i>She was as brave as a lion.</i>
Personification	Giving human characteristics to an object or animal.	<i>Lightning danced across the sky.</i>
Alliteration	When words that start with the same sound are used repeatedly in a phrase or sentence.	<i>Gary grumpily gathered the garbage.</i>
Metaphor	When you use one thing to describe another.	<i>Life is a rollercoaster.</i>
Onomatopoeia	A word that mimics (or sounds like) the object or action it refers to.	<i>The bridge collapsed creating a tremendous boom.</i>
Repetition	Repeating a word or a phrase.	<i>"The apartment was on the top floor—a small living-room, a small dining-room, a small bedroom, and a bath."</i>

Top tip: If you're stuck, think about word class (eg. noun, adjective, verb etc.) and whether they have any particular connotations (e.g. positive, negative, powerful, etc.)

Winter's Bone by Daniel Woodrell

Taken from the opening to 'Winter's Bone', Ozark teenager Ree Dolly is faced with an unresponsive mother and a criminal father. Alone, she does what she can do to manage the household and take care of her two younger siblings.

5	<p>Ree Dolly stood at break of day on her cold front steps and smelled coming flurries and saw meat. Meat hung from trees across the creek. The carcasses hung pale of flesh with a fatty gleam from low limbs of saplings in the side yards. Three halt haggard houses formed a kneeling rank on the far Creekside and each had two or more skinned torsos dangling by rope from sagged limbs, venison left to the weather for two nights and three days so the early blossoming of decay might round the favour, sweeten that meat to the bone.</p>
10	<p>Snow clouds had replaced the horizon, capped the valley darkly, and chafing wind blew so the hung meat twirled from jiggling branches. Ree, brunette and sixteen, with milk skin and abrupt green eyes, stood bare-armed in a fluttering yellow dress, face to the wind, her cheeks reddening as if smacked again. She stood tall in combat boots, scarce at the waist but plenty through the arms and shoulders, a body made for loping after needs. She smelled the frosty wet in the looming clouds, thought of her shadowed kitchen and lean cupboard, looked to the scant woodpile, and shuddered. The coming weather meant wash hung outside would freeze into planks, so she'd have to stretch clothes line across the kitchen above the woodstove, and the puny stack of wood split for the potbelly would not last long</p>
15	<p>enough to dry much except Mom's underthings and maybe a few T-shirts for the boys. Ree knew there was no gas for the chain saw, so she'd be swinging the axe out back while winter blew into the valley and fell around her.</p>
20	<p>Jessup, her father, had not set by a fat woodpile not split what there was for the potbelly before he went down the steep yard to his blue Capri and bounced away on the rut road. He had not set food by nor money, but promised he'd be back soon as he could with a paper sack of cash and a trunkload of delights. Jessup was a broken-faced, furtive man given to uttering quick pleading promises that made it easier for him to walk out the door and be gone, or come back inside and be forgiven.</p>
25	<p>Walnuts were still falling when Ree saw him last. Walnuts were thumping to ground in the night like stalking footsteps of some large thing that never quite came into view, and Jessup had paced on this porch in a worried slouch, dented nose snuffling, lantern jaw smoked by beard, eyes uncertain and alarmed by each walnut thump. The darkness and those thumps out in the darkness seemed to keep him jumpy. He paced until a decision popped into is head, then started down the steps, going fast into the night before his mind could change. He said, "Start lookin' for me soon as you see my face. 'Til then, don't even wonder."</p>
30	<p>.....</p> <p>Mom sat in her chair beside the potbelly and the boys sat at the table eating what Ree fed them. Mom's morning pills turned her into a cat, a breathing thing that sat near heat and occasionally made a sound. Mom's chair was an old padded rocker that seldom rocked, and at odd instants she'd hum ill-matched snips of music, notes unrelated by melody or pitch. But for most of any day she was quiet and still, wearing a small lingering smile prompted by something vaguely nice going on inside her head. She was</p>
35	<p>a Bromont, born to this house and she'd once been pretty. Even as she was now, medicated and lost to the present, with hair she forgot to wash or brush and deep wrinkles growing on her face, you could see she'd once been as comely as any firl that ever danced barefoot across this tangled country of Ozark hills and hollers. Long, dark and lovely she had been, in those days before her mind broke and the parts scattered and she let them go.</p>

Check your comprehension!

1. What was the weather like when Ree was standing on the step?
2. Who does Ree live with?
3. Why is Ree's life difficult?

Q1—Look at lines 7-10 and write down four things we learn about Ree Dolly:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Q2—Look at lines 30 –39 and think about the language used to describe Ree’s mother.

Highlight three quotations you could potentially use in your answer. Number each quotation you’ve highlighted and write down the technique and effect used for each one below:

1. Technique:

Effect:

2. Technique:

Effect:

3. Technique:

Effect:

Self-assessment

	Have the writer’s techniques been identified and the correct subject terminology used? <i>(e.g. metaphor, simile, powerful verb, etc.)</i>
	Has the effect on the audience been clearly explained? <i>(e.g. cats are notoriously lazy animals. This not only describes how lifeless and ineffective Ree’s mother is, but also dehumanises her, forcing us to judge her and feel sympathy towards Ree.)</i>
	Has a word explosion been <u>fully</u> completed for a pink slip?