

A Game of Thrones: Close Language Analysis

Student revision resource - Paragraphs 1 and 2

What this resource is for

Use these notes to help you understand how a writer's language creates meaning and effects. The aim is not just to spot a technique. Always explain what a word or phrase suggests, how it affects the reader, and why the writer may have chosen it.

1. Paragraph 1: the opening and Bran's first experience

"The morning had dawned clear and cold, with a crispness that hinted at the end of summer."

- **"clear and cold" - paired adjectives:** The words create a sharp, fresh image of the morning. However, "cold" also introduces physical discomfort and emotional harshness, beginning a cold and severe atmosphere.
- **"crispness" - sensory imagery:** This appeals to the sense of touch. We can almost feel the cutting freshness of the air, which helps the reader enter the setting.
- **"hinted at the end of summer" - personification and foreshadowing:** The weather seems able to "hint", as though nature itself is quietly warning that change is coming. Summer can suggest warmth, safety and comfort, so its ending suggests the approach of something harsher and more threatening.

"They set forth at daybreak to see a man beheaded, twenty in all, and Bran rode among them, nervous with excitement."

- **"set forth" - formal / slightly old-fashioned phrasing:** This helps create the medieval or fantasy setting and makes the journey sound purposeful and ceremonial.
- **"beheaded" - blunt verb:** Martin does not soften what is happening. The directness of the word makes the violence immediate and shocking.
- **"twenty in all" - detail of the group:** This makes the execution feel public and official rather than private. It suggests that this is part of the society's system of justice.
- **"nervous with excitement" - juxtaposition of emotions:** Bran feels two conflicting emotions at once. He is frightened, but also excited because this is his first experience of something adult and important.

"This was the first time he had been deemed old enough ... to see the king's justice done."

- **"first time" / "old enough" - rite of passage:** Bran is being introduced to the adult world. The execution becomes part of his growing up and learning what his society expects of him.
- **"deemed" - formal verb:** The word suggests that adults have judged Bran ready. It reinforces ideas of rules, authority and hierarchy.

- **"his lord father" - two roles in one phrase:** "Father" is personal and affectionate, while "lord" reminds us that Bran's father is also a powerful public figure. This begins the contrast between family life and public duty.
- **"the king's justice" - formal / euphemistic language:** The phrase frames the execution as lawful punishment rather than simply killing. It raises the theme of justice versus violence.

"It was the ninth year of summer, and the seventh of Bran's life."

- **"ninth year of summer" - world-building:** A summer lasting nine years immediately tells us that this is not an ordinary world. Martin introduces the fantasy setting without stopping to explain it.
- **"the seventh of Bran's life" - emphasis on age:** The reminder that Bran is only seven makes the execution more unsettling and emphasises his vulnerability and inexperience.

Overall effect of Paragraph 1

Martin creates a cold, serious and slightly ominous tone while introducing Bran as a very young boy entering an adult world. The paragraph develops the themes of growing up, justice and punishment, fear and courage, family and authority, and the contrast between private emotion and public duty.

2. Paragraph 2: Bran's frightening ideas about the wildlings

"It made Bran's skin prickle to think of it."

- **"skin prickle" - sensory imagery:** Instead of simply saying Bran is afraid, Martin shows his fear through a physical reaction. This makes his response vivid and reminds us that he is still a child.

"He remembered the hearth tales Old Nan told them."

- **"tales" - stories rather than proven facts:** Bran's understanding of wildlings comes from what he has been told, not from personal experience. This introduces the idea that stories and reality may be very different.
- **"hearth tales" - folklore / traditional storytelling:** The phrase suggests stories told around a fire. This gives Bran's memories a fairy-tale or legendary quality and helps explain why the wildlings seem almost mythical to him.

"The wildlings were cruel men ... slavers and slayers and thieves."

- **"cruel" - emotive adjective:** The word immediately presents the wildlings as morally threatening and dangerous.
- **"slavers and slayers and thieves" - list / tricolon:** The three negative nouns pile up accusations, making the wildlings seem increasingly violent and lawless.
- **"slavers and slayers" - alliteration / sibilance:** The repeated "sl" sound links the words together and gives the phrase a sinister, memorable rhythm.

"They consorted with giants and ghouls, stole girl children in the dead of night, and drank blood from polished horns."

- **"giants and ghouls" - supernatural imagery:** These creatures make the wildlings seem connected with an unnatural and frightening world.
- **"consorted" - verb:** The word suggests association with something forbidden or disreputable, making the wildlings seem suspicious and dangerous.
- **"stole girl children" - emotive language:** The verb "stole" suggests deliberate cruelty, while "girl children" stresses innocence and vulnerability.
- **"dead of night" - ominous imagery:** Night has connotations of secrecy, fear and danger, making the wildlings sound predatory.
- **"drank blood" - grotesque visual imagery:** The image links the wildlings with violence and death and makes them seem savage or ritualistic.

"the Others in the Long Night ... terrible half-human children"

- **"Others" / "Long Night" - myth and mystery:** The capitalised phrases sound like legendary or supernatural forces. Martin does not fully explain them here, which increases mystery and fear.
- **"terrible" - emotive adjective:** The vague but strongly negative word encourages fear and disgust.
- **"half-human" - dehumanising description:** The phrase suggests something unnatural and disturbing. It pushes Bran's imagined picture of the wildlings towards the monstrous rather than the human.

Overall effect of Paragraph 2

Martin creates a dark, frightening and almost Gothic tone. The semantic field of violence, horror and the supernatural makes Bran's imagined wildlings seem monstrous. However, because these ideas come from "hearth tales", the paragraph also prepares us to question whether Bran's expectations are reliable. This develops the theme of stories versus reality.

3. PEAZEL: how to build an analysis paragraph

PEAZEL

P - Point

E - Evidence

A - Analysis

Z - Zoom in on a key word or method

E - Effect on the reader / tone / character

L - Link back to the question or writer's purpose

Model PEAZEL paragraph: Paragraph 1

P - Point: Martin creates an ominous atmosphere from the very beginning. **E - Evidence:** The morning has a "crispness that hinted at the end of summer". **A - Analysis:** The description initially sounds calm, but it also suggests that change is approaching. **Z - Zoom:** The verb "hinted" personifies the weather, as though nature itself is quietly warning the reader. **E - Effect:** This creates unease because the "end of summer" suggests the loss of warmth, comfort and safety. **L - Link:** Martin therefore uses the setting to foreshadow the darker and more violent experience Bran is about to face.

Model PEAZEL paragraph: Paragraph 2

P - Point: Martin presents the wildlings as frightening and dangerous through Bran's childhood stories. **E - Evidence:** They are described as "slavers and slayers and thieves". **A - Analysis:** The list makes them sound violent, immoral and threatening. **Z - Zoom:** The repeated "sl" sound in "slavers and slayers" creates sibilance and gives the phrase a sinister rhythm. **E - Effect:** This helps the reader understand why Bran's "skin prickle[s]" when he thinks about them. **L - Link:** However, because this image comes from "hearth tales", Martin also encourages us to question whether Bran's frightening expectations are reliable.

4. Questions to ask yourself when analysing

- What is happening at this point in the extract?
- Which word or phrase is most interesting?
- What language device or method is being used?
- What does the key word suggest or make you imagine?
- What tone or atmosphere is being created?
- What does this reveal about Bran or the world around him?
- How is the reader meant to respond?
- Why might Martin have chosen to place this detail here?

Remember

You do not have to identify every technique perfectly. A thoughtful explanation of one important word is much stronger than simply listing several devices without explaining their effect.