

# Functional Skills

## English

Level 2 Reading R4a

Detect Point of View v1.0

**Functional Skills English:**

Level 2

**Skill Standard:**

Reading R4a

**Coverage and Range:**

'Learners should be able to read 'between the lines' of texts (for example use of humour/irony, use or manipulation of statistics and facts for persuasion, use of style and language to influence and sway feelings).'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> QCA Functional Skills guidance: amplification of the standards June 2008 QCA/08/3700

## Point of View

A writer's *viewpoint* is the way they consider a topic. It is their particular attitude or set of opinions and beliefs, the way they look at an issue, or their position in relation to the matter being discussed. *Point of view* can be either biased or neutral, and it is often associated with both fact and opinion and inference/implication. When discussing it in your own writing you should focus on identifying the words which show you how a writer feels, e.g. *I can't stand... I just adore... I believe... I do not accept...*

As an example, take a look at this extract:

We want the world on their bike: not just chiselled whippets in lycra. We want a cycling environment that is equally welcoming to women, to families, to pin-striped captains of industry wobbling gently along – the kind of cycle-friendly environment you see in Copenhagen or Amsterdam.

There is only one way to create this paradise, and that is to invest massively in making cycling safer. We are making new cycle lanes, new “Quietways” for those who want to avoid the main roads, and now two huge new cycle superhighways are being launched.

...

Some are worried about the loss of space for cars. I understand those anxieties and we are confident that we can very largely (if not entirely) address them.

What is the writer's point of view?

The writer here clearly wants to increase not only the number of people cycling, but also the range: 'We want the world on their bike: not just chiselled whippets in lycra.' His aim is to create, 'the kind of cycle-friendly environment you see in Copenhagen or Amsterdam,' and his solution, 'is to invest massively in making cycling safer.' Finally, although he has some sympathies with other road users, his attitude is that the benefits to cyclists outweigh the inconvenience to drivers: 'I understand those anxieties and we are confident that we can very largely (if not entirely) address them.'

In the above answer you can see how the student has pinpointed words and phrases that reveal the author's attitude, and then used quotes from the text to bolster each of the points that have been made.

## Exercise 1

The following extract is from the preface to Sigmund Freud's *Dream Psychology*, first published in 1920.

The medical profession is justly conservative. Human life should not be considered as the proper material for wild experiments.

Conservatism, however, is too often a welcome excuse for lazy minds, loath to adapt themselves to fast changing conditions.

...

Besides those who sneer at dream study, because they have never looked into the subject, there are those who do not dare to face the facts revealed by dream study. Dreams tell us many an unpleasant biological truth about ourselves and only very free minds can thrive on such a diet. Self-deception is a plant which withers fast in the pellucid atmosphere of dream investigation.

The weakling and the neurotic attached to his neurosis are not anxious to turn such a powerful searchlight upon the dark corners of their psychology.

Freud's theories are anything but theoretical.

He was moved by the fact that there always seemed to be a close connection between his patients' dreams and their mental abnormalities, to collect thousands of dreams and to compare them with the case histories in his possession.

He did not start out with a preconceived bias, hoping to find evidence which might support his views. He looked at facts a thousand times "until they began to tell him something."

His attitude toward dream study was, in other words, that of a statistician who does not know, and has no means of foreseeing, what conclusions will be forced on him by the information he is gathering, but who is fully prepared to accept those unavoidable conclusions.

What is the writer's point of view in the above extract? Have your tutor check your work when you have finished, then compare it against the suggested answer provided.

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## Exercise 2

The following extract is from the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass; An American Slave*, which was first published in 1845.

I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. They seldom come nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time. A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it. He deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit. The nearest estimate I can give makes me now between twenty-seven and twenty-eight years of age. I come to this, from hearing my master say, sometime during 1835, I was about seventeen years old.

...

I never saw my mother, to know her as such, more than four or five times in my life; and each of these times was very short in duration, and at night. She was hired by a Mr. Stewart, who lived about twelve miles from my home. She made her journeys to see me in the night, travelling the whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day's work. She was a field hand, and a whipping is the penalty of not being in the field at sunrise, unless a slave has special permission from his or her master to the contrary—a permission which they seldom get... I do not recollect of ever seeing my mother by the light of day... She died when I was about seven years old, on one of my master's farms, near Lee's Mill. I was not allowed to be present during her illness, at her death, or burial. She was gone long before I knew anything about it. Never having enjoyed, to any considerable extent, her soothing presence, her tender and watchful care, I received the tidings of her death with much the same emotions I should have probably felt at the death of a stranger.

What is the writer's point of view in the above extract? Have your tutor check your work when you have finished, and then compare it against the suggested answer provided.

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