

Diction

Discussing diction

The focus of this lesson is on how to deal with diction in a test or examination situation. Both the effect and the accuracy of words are discussed.

Lesson Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- discuss a writer's use of diction
- explain the effect of diction
- comment on diction in texts

Curriculum Links

LO 2: Reading and Viewing

- explain the meaning of a wide range of written, visual, audio and audio-visual texts
- recognise and explain the effect of a range of figurative and rhetorical language and literary devices
- give and motivate personal responses to texts

Lesson notes

In comprehension work, literature and poetry you are often asked to look at diction in texts. Here is a list of common questions related to diction and some tips for answering them effectively:

Types of question:	Tips:
Explain how the diction that has been used illustrates the writer's attitudes and beliefs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the picture that the words paint in your mind. • Think about whether the words are neutral or whether they have positive or negative connotations.
Give a synonym for a word taken from a passage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synonyms are words that have approximately equivalent meaning. • Check whether the word that you think is a synonym would actually work as a replacement in the passage. • The word that you choose should have appropriate connotations.
Explain the effect of the writer's diction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the word or words that have been used in relation to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accuracy • effect • atmosphere • tone
Comment on whether or not a word is an appropriate choice of diction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask yourself these questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the word formal, informal or slang? • Is the word appropriate for the situation or context in which it is being used? • Is the word suitable when talking to or writing for the given audience?

Tip!

Although words may appear to be synonyms some choices may not be appropriate. For example, women are not usually described as handsome.

pretty, beautiful,
handsome, gorgeous



TASK

Comment on the diction of this sentence. Use the underlined words as a guide.

The tree-lined avenue overflowed with immaculate women carrying stuffed shopping bags.