

Non-Literary PEAL

Perhaps the most visible – and most frequently called-upon – analytical skill is the PEAL paragraph. Think of it as a vehicle that allows you to communicate your knowledge, understanding and critical thinking effectively. Like a vehicle, it requires certain components, otherwise it won't work; and also, like a vehicle, it needs careful care, revision and maintenance to ensure that it does not break down!

See below some of the components of a good PEAL paragraph:

- Clear point that explicitly addresses the question or thesis (**criterion A: knowledge and understanding & criterion C: focus**)
- Regular recycling of key terms that address the question throughout response (**criterion C: focus**)
- Clear, insightful understanding of the extract and novel: *What is the writer's message?* (**criterion A: knowledge and understanding**)
- Concise, integrated quotations to support understanding (**criterion A: knowledge and understanding**)
- Clear understanding of how authorial choices are used to communicate the message: *how does the writer communicate their message?* (**criterion B: Analysis and evaluation**)
- Link back to the question or thesis (**criterion C: focus and organisation**)

How does this look in practice?

For this activity, I have chosen to work with a non-literary medium: photography. Look at the three photographs below by the great photographer, Henri Cartier-Bresson. Based on your work in the unit so far, what stylistic features do you notice? Discuss this with a partner.

You are now at the stage of practising how to write about photography. Look at the process below of how to plan and write analysis of a stylistic feature in photography. Then use this as a model for your own analysis of a photographic body of work of your choice.

Images taken from this website:

<https://iconicphotos.wordpress.com/tag/henri-cartier-bresson/>



"Sunday on the Banks of Marne", 1937



"Children Playing in the Ruins", Seville, 1933

Planning out the paragraph:

Question	Your answers (rough notes)
Point: How does Henri Cartier-Bresson use a particular stylistic or structural feature in several photographs to comment critically on a social or global issue?	HCB uses visual pathway to highlight the relationship of individuals within a community and the activities which unite them.
Evidence 1: Where do you see evidence of this feature in one of his photographs?	"Sunday": the visual pathway directs the viewer through the composition to the river and the moored river boat.
Explanation 1:	The stillness of the river and the boat reinforces the gentle, slow leisure of the

<p>How does this make viewers feel? How does it make viewers think about the social or global issue?</p>	<p>individuals in the foreground, creating a sense of calm, peace, community, union and leisure.</p>
<p>Evidence 2: Where do you see evidence of this feature in another one of his photographs?</p>	<p>This feature is also seen in "Children Playing", with the visual pathway taking the viewer's eye from the objects at the edge of the composition, through the frame of the broken wall to a central focal point in the background.</p>
<p>Explanation 2: How does this make viewers feel? How does it make viewers think about the social or global issue?</p>	<p>Here the visual pathway serves to highlight the destruction and degradation experienced by the children. The feeling created is shocking and sad; simultaneously, the image conveys a profoundly striking message about the resilience of children.</p>
<p>Link: Again, how does your photographer use this feature effectively in multiple photographs to comment critically on a social or global issue?</p>	<p>The use of visual pathway is a subtle but striking feature which directs the viewer's eye to a central focal point, underscoring the context and experience which unites the objects of the images.</p>

Finished paragraph:

Henri Cartier-Bresson uses visual pathway to highlight the relationship of individuals within a community and the activities which unite them. In the photograph "Sunday on the Banks of the Marne", the visual pathway directs the viewer through the composition of people relaxing on the bank of the river Marne toward a moored river boat, sat stationary on the glassy water. The stillness of the river, combined with the boat's lack of movement, reinforces the image's gentle, slow, leisurely mood. The people in the foreground sit serenely facing away from the viewer, one pouring a glass of wine, another bringing some food to their mouth, as a sense of calm, peace, leisure and community pervades the image. This feature is also seen in "Children Playing in the Ruins", where the visual pathway takes the viewer's eye from the children at the edge of the composition, through the frame of the broken wall to a central focal point of debris and destruction in the midground and background. Here the visual pathway serves to highlight the degradation of the physical environment experienced by the children, presumably following war. The feeling created is shocking, even desolate; but simultaneously, the image conveys a profoundly striking sense of the resilience of children and what unites them. Thus, the structural feature of the visual pathway in Cartier-Bresson's body of work, can be understood as a subtle but striking feature, directing the viewer's eye to a central focal point, whether that is the splash of the sea, a tranquil riverboat, or the detritus from war. It is this focal point which unites the objects of the photograph and creates a sense of community and shared experience.