

Writing a gobbet is different to writing an essay. Whilst a gobbet should be unified and coherent like an essay, it should largely focus on explaining one passage of text rather than making a general argument. Conclusion may be useful for more general overview. Try to arrange points thematically, rather than line by line (though some paragraphs may lend themselves to this latter approach). Cite detail from passage, whether words, phrases or line numbers. Do not paraphrase or merely translate.

i) Always (briefly) give the context (noting what happens after as well as before). If the passage is part of direct speech, name the speaker. Context can often lead on to bigger points (e.g. if first person speech, consider reliability and character of narrator).

ii) Briefly explain significant names and references (preferably in integrated way).

ii) Comment on the passage as a whole e.g.:

- how does it fit into overall structure and themes of the work? Cross-reference to show off your knowledge (but do not digress). In drama, consider stagecraft and setting; in narrative texts, consider the passage's place and function in plot and narrative development. Context of poetic book may be important.

- structure of passage (coherence; development of argument)

- intertextuality (engaging with earlier works? Why?)

- does the passage follow literary conventions? (e.g. paraklausithyron; ekphrasis; locus amoenus)

The **style** of the passage must be examined as well as its content and context. The following list of features may be of help when discussing literary effects. However:

- do not expect all or even most of the features to appear in any one passage. Each author will have his own style. Some features are specific to poetry.

- technical terms are not necessary: they are a useful shorthand but will not win automatic brownie points.

- *always remember to consider **why** a stylistic feature is being used*: say, if possible, what its literary function within the passage is. A tick-box, train-spotting approach to stylistic devices will only get you so far.

A) Word order

Look out for artistic rearrangement of natural order, esp. in poetry. Is an important word placed prominently at the start of the line? Does the position of a word mimic its meaning (e.g. *prosilire* "to jump forth" often at beginning of line; *exire* "to leave" often at end)? Are words of contrasting meaning juxtaposed? Does the word patterning contribute to the sense of the line? Where applicable, consider the shape of the couplet or stanza.

Technical terms:

- tmesis i.e. splitting up a compound word (e.g. *interlego* at Verg. *Georg.* 2.366 *interque legendae*; mostly found in Ennius and Lucretius)

- hyperbaton i.e. dislocation of normal word order (e.g. Cat. 66.18 *non, ita me diui, uera gemunt, iuerint* i.e. *ita me di iuerint, non uera gemunt*; found e.g. in Greek tragedy and Alexandrian verse as well as in Latin lit.)

- Golden Line i.e. an arrangement of epithets and nouns in the sequence abCAB where C stands for the verb, a for the adjective which belongs to the noun A, b for the adjective which belongs to the noun B (e.g. Verg. *Georg.* 1.468 *impiaque aeternam timuerunt saecula noctem*; Sen. *Thyestes* 44 *effusus omnis irriget terras cruor*)

- Silver Line i.e. an arrangement of epithets and nouns in the sequence abCBA (e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 10.245 *ingentis Rutulae spectabit caedis acervos*)

B) Sound and metrical effects

Does the rhythm and sound reflect the content of the verse? In, say, hexameter, is there a preponderance of dactyls or spondees? Any point? Note e.g. the elision and spondees of Verg. *Aen.* 3.658 which describes the blinded Cyclops blundering about: *monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum.*

Technical terms:

- alliteration i.e. repetition of same initial letter. Not always worth remark (avoid noting “sinister ‘s’ sounds” etc)
- assonance i.e. repetition of similar sounds
- homoeoteleuton i.e. similar case endings in juxtaposition. Generally avoided. (e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 5.81 *animaeque umbraeque paternae*)
- enjambement i.e. sentence carries onto following line (e.g. Cat. 68.57-8 *qualis in aerii perlucens vertice montis / rivus ... prosilit* - mimetic of water trickling down?)
- elision i.e. where the vowel at end of word doesn’t count as a syllable in scansion because there is a vowel at the beginning of a next word. These run together. (e.g. in the first four words of Verg. *Aen.* 3.658 cited above. Note that ‘m’ at the end of a word and ‘h’ at the beginning do not count)
- hiatus i.e. where elision doesn’t occur in the above position (e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 1.617 *Dardanio Anchisae*)
- hypermetre i.e. elision over the line (e.g. at Verg. *Aen.* 10.895 *Troesque Latinique*, the final *que* elides before *advolat* in the next line. Only in Greek literature at Callim. *Ep.* 41.1-2; quite common in Vergil)
- fifth foot spondee. Rare in Latin hexameter verse; when occurs, often with a Greek name. An Alexandrian feature brought in by the neoterics (popular in Catullus 64). May involve hiatus (e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 1.617 cited above)

C) Verbal style

Note the general linguistic register. Are there sudden or surprising changes (low, colloquial tone in high style or *vice versa*)? What kind of vocabulary is being deployed? Newly coined? Archaic? (Note an archaic tone can be created by using archaic grammatical forms such as syncopated genitive plurals (*equum* for *equorum* at Verg. *Aen.* 7.189) as well as old fashioned diction)

D) Imagery, including metaphor, similes and personification

E) Rhetorical devices e.g.:

- apostrophe i.e. an appeal to a person or thing. Can evoke pathos and raise emotional intensity (e.g. Verg. *Ecl.* 6.47 *a, virgo infelix, quae te dementia cepit!*)
- tricolon i.e. three successive phrases in crescendo, often increasing in length

F) Miscellaneous technical terms

- asyndeton i.e. omission of connectives
- historic infinitive i.e. infinitive used instead of a past tense. Can be vivid (e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 10.267 *uideri*)
- metonymy i.e. a related word conveying the same idea is used for another (e.g. “Mars” for “war”; “lion” for “lion-skin”)
- hendiadys i.e. two nouns joined by a conjunction used for a noun and adjective (e.g. Verg. *Georg.* 2.192 *pateris libamus et auro* for *pateris aureis libamus*)