

## 6

## Short passages for comment

Now that we have examined some of the key ideas about language and linked them to the Assessment Objectives of the examination, it is time to bring all these ideas together by looking at examination questions. In this unit and in units 7 and 8 we will work with short passages of around 300 words, with their directed writing tasks. In units 9, 10 and 11 we will look at longer passages of around the length you should expect to find in the examination.

## 1

## Shanghai childhood

The passage below is written by an English adult, Christopher Banks, describing his memories of growing up in Shanghai with his Japanese friend, Akira.



## Task

Comment on the style and language of the passage.

At the rear of our garden in Shanghai there was a grass mound with a single maple tree rising out of its summit. From the time Akira and I were around six years old, we enjoyed playing on and around that mound, and whenever I now think of my boyhood companion, I tend to remember the two of us running up and down its slopes, jumping right off where the sides were at their steepest.

From time to time, when we had worn ourselves out, we would sit panting at the top of the mound with our backs against the trunk of the maple tree. From this vantage point, we had a clear view over my garden and of the big white house standing at the end of it. If I close my eyes a moment, I am able to bring back that picture very vividly: the carefully tended English lawn, the afternoon shadows cast by the rows of elms separating my garden and Akira's, and the house itself, a huge white edifice with numerous wings and mellised balconies. I suspect his memory of the house is very much a child's vision, and that in reality it was nothing so grand, certainly even at the time. I was conscious that it hardly matched the splendour of the residences round the corner in Bubbling Well Road.

*Christopher Banks, When We Were Children*

## Organising your response

Think of the key terms you have learned to describe language, and write them down. You should have something like this:

- writer's purpose and audience
- tone
- language features, for example vocabulary, figures of speech and structure.

Now take each of these key terms and try to match them to the passage. Don't think yet about your final answer, just jot your ideas down in note form.