

Havoc in Haiti?

Understanding the difference a single word can make.

Last week we looked at the Media questions that ask you to retrieve factual information from the article. This week things hot up a bit with the second type of question commonly set: what the writer thinks of the topic, their feelings or point of view. Not harder, just different. Read *A Daily Battle for Survival in Haiti* and then we'll show you one way of working this out.

Most people who watched news stories about the earthquake that struck Haiti would probably agree that it was an awful catastrophe. There is no doubt about the facts of this article: Amnesty International is a highly respected organisation, and finding and speaking the truth is at the heart of its important work in tackling injustice. However, by taking the teacher's fat red pen to the article, you can see some of the ways in which the writer has presented his or her point of view pretty strongly. That's not a problem: the readers of this magazine are likely to be supporters of Amnesty already, and their opinions are probably quite similar to the writer's.

To answer the question about the writer's thoughts and feelings about the disaster in Haiti you could mention his/her view that the earthquake wasn't just bad, but catastrophic; it "devastated" the capital, the damage was "severe". You could comment on the writer's concern for women and girls, or their belief in people having a right to "international humanitarian standards". You could mention the writer's horror at the conditions in Haiti, or their sympathy for the frustration of the ordinary Haitian people. And if you did all that by making a point, backing it up with evidence, and explaining how the evidence supports your point, you would be well on your way to a very good answer.

Question type two: What are the writer's thoughts and feelings about this topic?

This article was originally published in the November/December 2010 edition of the *Amnesty* magazine. Amnesty International is an organisation that runs campaigns to protect people wherever justice, fairness, freedom and truth are denied.

Points of view about a topic...
For, against, sympathetic,
unsympathetic, objective, subjective,
neutral, biased, involved, detached,
emotional, unemotional

All camps are makeshift, because, well, they're camps...

Emotive adverb piles on more sympathy

REPLACE WITH 'SMALL NUMBER': Turning up the emotional heat

REPLACE WITH 'ACCEPTABLE': Making those standards sound frightfully full of their own importance

REPLACE WITH 'LARGE': Large is big enough

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➤ **Revision in 14:00 minutes:**

Take a red pen to any magazine article and cross bits out and change words to change the point of view, toning it down or pumping it up to see what happens.

Hyping up the numbers

A Daily Battle for Survival in Haiti

More than ten months after the earthquake, 1.3 million people live in crowded tent cities, vulnerable to bad weather, contagious diseases and violent crime. People told Amnesty researchers about their daily struggle to survive, and the dangers facing women and girls in the camps.

The January 2010 earthquake, in which more than 200,000 people died, devastated Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, and caused severe damage to many outlying towns. More than eight months later, over 1.3 million women, men and children still live in makeshift camps and more than 600,000 have left the affected areas and are living with host families. Their former homes, reduced to rubble by the earthquake, remain in ruins.

Resources need to be mobilised on a massive scale. Yet, the clearing-up operation has been largely carried out by hand for lack of heavy lifting equipment. Steps towards reconstruction to enable people to rebuild their homes and livelihoods remain painfully slow.

So far, only a tiny fraction of those displaced by the earthquake (between 10,000 and 12,000 people) have been relocated to settlements that meet international humanitarian standards and where access to basic services are, for now, guaranteed.

People living in the camps told Amnesty International of their frustration at the lack of progress. Many voiced bitter disappointment with the Haitian government and officials. Reports of huge sums of aid pledged by the international community to help rebuild Haiti, and no sign of this money reaching those in desperate need, intensify feelings of injustice and disillusionment. Many said that they feel the world has abandoned them.



Tents, blue tarpaulins and improvised shelters of sheets and blankets

dominate the capital's landscape, from the steps of the Presidential Palace to the heart of the most deprived neighbourhoods. Conditions in the camps were dire from the outset. And they have deteriorated, despite the efforts of humanitarian organisations. At the mercy of intense heat and flooding, the camps cannot provide adequate shelter.

Piling up the negative adjectives

REPLACE WITH 'LIFE':
A bit over-stated after 10 months?

Hyping up the numbers

REPLACE WITH 'MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN':
More usual to write "men, women and children" -

Check out the alliteration - is this an advertising jingle for some hard-sell sympathy?

Adding to those adjectives

Tugging on the heart strings by association with bedtime-related cosy words

REPLACE WITH 'FACED BY':
Personification of all-powerful sun and rain like some vengeful God... but hey, it's just weather

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➤ **Revision in 23:00 minutes:**

Have a go at writing a letter to the editor of *Amnesty* magazine either praising this article for its powerful appeal, or complaining about its bias.

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