

Text analysis 11

“Hala Madrid! Hidden gems and where to mooch about in the Spanish capital”, Octavia Walker

- 1 Octavia Walker finds that Madrid's less about seeing the sights, more about experiencing the Spanish way of life.
- 2 Soak up the atmosphere of Spain's capital.
- 3 It was a terrible choice for a capital... no cathedral, no university and no navigable river.
- 4 High on a barren, weather-beaten plateau, Madrid only got the job because it's in the middle of the country.
- 5 Branded centuries ago as nine months of “invierno” (winter) and three months of “infierno” (hell), this off-putting description has stuck and has been deftly keeping down tourist numbers for decades.
- 6 But it is the most Spanish of Spain's cities. It's not about seeing stuff... glitzy castles, cathedrals or sights, it's about experiencing it: wandering back streets, discovering the world-famous galleries, stopping for a glass of vermouth in a local cafe, eating long, late lunches and staying out drinking, talking and dancing until 3am – or even 9am on summer nights...
- 7 Linger over lunch in one of the quaint cafes.

Culture vulture

- 8 Museums and galleries always have free days during the year and free evenings during the month, so check out their websites to avoid the entrance fee. Picasso's Guernica (Reina Sofia Gallery) is a harrowing interpretation of the pain of the Spanish civil war and always has such a crowd of amazed onlookers that you can hear its buzz before you see it.
- 9 The Prado Gallery has one of the largest art collections in the world. You could spend days there, but you can also just drop in and see the world's favourite, Velazquez' Las Meninas, and mine, Goya's Saturn Devouring His Son.

Hidden gems

- 10 If you're into churches, wander to the little Capilla de San Isidro (on Plaza San Andres) for an interior so sumptuous it could convert you to Catholicism. Watch the world go by from the cafe with a view, El Ventorrillo, over the bridge from the cathedral (Calle Bailén).
- 11 Take a stroll through the Plaza Mayor.
- 12 The city is buzzing and bright at any time of year, but in July and August it's hot! Go just before Christmas to see lavish street decorations and big nativity displays, or head over in May when the *terrazas* start coming out for summer.

Answer the following questions:

1. What does the writer mean by *Madrid only got the job [...]* (par. 4). (80-100 words).
2. Explain the word-formation process in *navigable* (par. 3). Include 5 more suffixes to form adjectives, and exemplify them.
3. Explain the word-formation process in *off-putting* (par. 5). Also indicate its meaning. (80-100 words).
4. Why does *off-putting* contain double <t>? (80-100 words).
5. Comment on the plural formation of *lunches* (par. 6). Indicate all the cases in which this happens and exemplify them.
6. Explain the meaning of:
 - *deftly* (par. 5)
 - *linger* (par. 7)
 - *quaint* (par. 6)
 - *glitzy* (par. 6)
 - *harrowing* (par. 8)
 - *onlookers* (par. 8)
 - *lavish* (par. 12)
7. Explain the formation of the word *onlookers* and give more examples of nouns following a similar pattern of formation. (80-100 words).
8. Include at least one synonym for the following phrasal verbs: *soak up* (par. 2), *check out* (par. 8), *drop in* (par. 9), *head over* (par. 12).
9. Comment on the following two constructions: [...] *has such a crowd that* [...] (par. 8) and [...] *for an interior so sumptuous it could convert you* [...] (par. 10). (80-100 words).
10. The word *stroll* (par. 11) appears in the text. Include at least 5 more ways of walking accompanied by an example.

Suggested answers

1. What does the writer mean by *Madrid only got the job [...]* (par. 4).

In this instance the writer makes use of a metaphor to mean that Madrid was chosen as the capital of the country, that it “got the job”. Metaphors are creative and fascinating figures of speech whose overriding objective is to provoke a feeling and induce a cluster of persuasive associations.

English is very fond of transferring expressions from different semantic fields, as the following two sentences also exemplify: e.g. *they’re always moving the goalposts* (= changing the rules of something; from the field of football); *the ball’s in your court now* (=it is your decision; from the field of tennis). In the example under study, the writer resorts to the semantic field of the working environment.

2. Explain the word-formation process in *navigable* (par. 3). Include 5 more suffixes to form adjectives, and exemplify them.

The word *navigable* is a clear example of affixation (also called ‘derivation’), which is a highly productive means of creating new words in English. Affixation occurs when an element is added before (prefix) or after (suffix) the base. The word dealing with here, *navigable*, is a case of deverbal suffixation, where the suffix *-able* has been added to the verbal base *navigate* – more concretely, from the stem root is *navig-*, which is also the base for the noun *navigation* and the verb *navigate*.

NOTE: Adjectives in *-ible* and *-able* are characterized by being postpositive, *i.e.* they immediately follow the noun, postmodifying it, when they have temporal meaning: *the river navigable at this time of the year*.

Other very productive suffixes to form adjectives include the following (*you should only include five, and include one example for each of them*).

- From nouns (denominal): *-ish* (*feverish, childish*), *-ous* (*dangerous, nervous*), *-less* (*hopeless, useless, endless*), *-ful* (*beautiful, doubtful*), *-y* (*creamy, chatty*), *-ly* (*lovely, friendly, cowardly*)
- From verbs (deverbal): *-ible* (*visible*), *-ent* (*different*).
- From adjectives (de-adjectival): *-ish* (*yellowish, oldish*)

3. Explain the word formation process in *off-putting* (par. 5)

Topic 45

Off-putting is an adjective resulting from a rather complex word-formation process given its relationship with the phrasal verb *to put off*. Therefore, we might more tellingly refer to it as a “phrasal adjective”, just as there are phrasal nouns such as *onlooker, outcome, outlook* or *downfall*. In all these cases, the verb+particle order is reversed, and then a suffix is sometimes added. In this case, we find the suffix *-ing*, typical of adjectives, which gives rise to the adjective *off-putting*.

In this word we might also refer to compounding, since the word is hyphenated, which only happens in compound nouns. From this we might gather that English understands the word as the combination of two base roots (*off + put*).

Finally, as concerns meaning, *off-putting* means “something unpleasant, which prevents you from liking it”. This way, we can see that only one meaning from the original phrasal verb *put off* has been transferred to the adjective, that of “detering”. However, the meaning of “postponing” has disappeared.

4. Why does off-putting contain double <t>?

Here we find final consonant doubling (*off-putting*), since the word *put* complies with all three compelling rules for the doubling of the final consonant: (i) the word finishes in one single consonant, (ii) preceded by one single vowel and (iii) the stress falls on the last or only syllable.

5. Comment on the plural formation of lunches (par. 6). Mention all the cases in which this happens and exemplify them.

Topic 39

In English the default suffix to indicate plural inflection is *-s*, but we might also find the allomorph *-es* for nouns ending in *-ch*, as is the case of *lunches*. Actually, this also happens with all nouns ending in a sibilant:

- *-s*: *bus - buses*
- *-ss*: *cross – crosses*
- *-x*: *box – boxes*
- *-z*: *whiz - whizes*
- *-sh*: *clash – clashes*

A note should also be made on nouns ending in *-o*, which are rather complex. Generally, nouns ending in *-o* preceded by a vowel usually take the suffix *-s* (*kangaroos, studios, videos*), but if the *-o* is preceded by a consonant, both *-s* and *-es* may be possible (compare *pianos* and *photos* with *tomatoes, potatoes, echoes, heroes*). As we can see, in these last instances, the suffix *-es* is employed. Finally, there are also some nouns which may take either of them (*-s* or *-es*): *volcano, archipelago, buffalo, tornado*.

6. Explain the meaning of *deftly, linger, quaint, harrowing, onlookers, lavish*.

- *deftly* (par. 5): “skillfully”.
- *linger* (par. 7): “to stay somewhere for long because you are very comfortable and do not want to leave”.
- *quaint* (par. 6): “attractive in an unusual or old-fashioned way”
- *glitzy* (par. 6): “glamorous, fashionable, intended to attract attention”
- *harrowing* (par. 8): “very painful or upsetting”.
- *onlookers* (par. 8): “observers”, “people that watch an activity or event, normally without being involved in it”.
- *lavish* (par. 12): “abundant and impressive, usually costing a lot of money”.

7. Explain the formation of the word *onlookers* and give more examples of nouns following a similar pattern of formation.

This is indeed an interesting instance of word-formation: at first sight it gives the impression the noun “onlooker” has been derived from the verb *look* after the addition of the nominal suffix *-er*. However, there is more to it, since it has not been derived from the simple verb *look*, but rather from the phrasal verb *look on*, which means “to observe”. In the noun, however, the order verb+particle has been reversed, so that the final result is *onlooker*.

This could be considered a relatively productive word-formation process in English, as these other instances evince: *outcome*, *outfit*, *outlook*, *downfall*, *downpour*, *outburst*, *bystander*.

8. Include at least one synonym for the following phrasal verbs: *soak up* (par. 2), *check out* (par. 8), *drop in* (par. 9), *head over* (par. 12).

- *Soak up*: *absorb*;
- *Check out*: *look at*, *check*;
- *Drop in*: *pop by*, *pop in*, *visit quickly*;
- *Head over*: *come around*.

9. Comment on the following two constructions: [...] *has such a crowd that* [...] (par. 8) and [...] *for an interior so sumptuous it could convert you* [...] (par. 10).

In both instances we find examples of result clauses with the pairs of correlatives *so ... that* and *such ... that*. Both of them combine the notion of sufficiency or excess with the notion of result (note that the conjunction *that* may be omitted):

What determines whether we opt for *so* or *such* purely depends on syntactic issues: *so* is always followed by an adjective or adverb (*so sumptuous*), whereas *such* is followed by a noun (*such a crowd*).

10. The word *stroll* (par. 11) appears in the text. Include at least 5 more ways of walking.

*(You should only include 5 examples.
I have included more so that you may have a choice
The definition is not necessary either).*

- *March*: “to walk with stiff regular steps like a soldier” → *Soldiers were marching up and down outside the government buildings.*
- *Tiptoe*: “standing or walking on the front part of your foot, with your heels off the ground, in order to make yourself taller or to move very quietly” → *Being so late, she tiptoed to her bedroom.*
- *Crawl*: “to move forward on your hands and knees, with your body close to the ground” → *A man was crawling away from the burning wreckage.*
- *Wander*: “to walk slowly around or to a place, often without any particular sense of purpose or direction” → *She wandered aimlessly around the streets.*

- Ramble: “to walk for pleasure, especially in the countryside” → *We spent the summer rambling in Ireland.*
- Stride: “to walk with long steps in a particular direction” → *She came striding along to meet me.*
- Stomp: “to walk or move with very heavy or noisy steps” → *She stomped angrily out of the office.*
- Stagger: “a weak unsteady way of walking, as if you are about to fall” → *She staggered over to the sofa.*
- Creep: “to move slowly, quietly and carefully, because you do not want to be seen or heard” or “to move with your body close to the ground; to move slowly on your hands and knees” (=crawl) → *She crept toward the edge of the roof and looked over.*
- Limp: “to walk slowly or with difficulty because one leg is injured” → *She had twisted her ankle and was limping.*
- Parade: “to walk as part of an organized group in order to celebrate or publicly protest about something” → *War veterans were parading through the streets to commemorate the victory.*