

## Write about McCarthy's methods of telling the story from the top of page 284 to the end of the novel (21 marks)

Cormac McCarthy uses many different techniques to tell the story in his novel 'The Road'. He uses a very limited palette in an attempt to make the reader interrogate the plot themselves, as I found myself doing so whilst reading it for the first time. The book itself is one of a dystopian nature, and this is applied through McCarthy's choice of setting. The location itself isn't specified at all throughout the book, but the reader is poised to believe that it is set in a post-apocalyptic America, but other than that it is unspecified. The use of the title is used to provide us with the image that all is left is this 'road' which leads to the coast, believed to be on the south of the country which may aid the character's bid for freedom. Other than this, McCarthy uses day and night, so that the reader comes to the realisation that time is the only thing that the characters have left, as the majority of the continent has suffered. He also uses flashbacks so that we have a better concept of the time that the book is set in. By using these, it shows that the year of the story is within the man's lifetime (pre-apocalyptic setting, normality) and therefore not too far into the near future.

On the topic of a dystopia, McCarthy uses the idea of 'drama' and 'tragedy' as techniques within the book to symbolise the fact that the two characters involved are only human, and will therefore deal with the same scenarios expected by the reader. It also shows that they are liable to make mistakes and more importantly show and feel emotion towards either one another, or other participants in the story. Although the setting may be different to that of every day life in the reader's case, it is still possible to inflict or feel pain and happiness.

As mentioned earlier in the essay, McCarthy uses flashbacks as a method of telling the story, but other than this he uses linear chronology in a way that makes it less confusing for the reader to follow. This is the case at some points in the book, as there are no chapters or methods to split the story into sections, therefore if it wasn't in chronological order it would be considerably hard to comprehend what's occurring within the story. There is the occasional lapse in time however, where time leaps forward days at a time.

There is also the main issue of narrative. The narrator within 'The Road' is detached from the characters, and will therefore give an unbiased view towards the

genre

These are good general comments on setting but it asks you to focus on p284-the end

This is too broad - 'drama' and 'tragedy' are genres not techniques; you could discuss how he uses conventions from these genres...

proceedings of the plot. There are events in the story, such as the 'man struck by lightning', that can cause emotional distraught to the reader. The question may be asked, would the reader feel their own emotions towards these events if the narrator was biased? This allows the reader to draw their own interpretation throughout the story, without having their view shadowed by others. McCarthy also uses the man as the focal point throughout the story, following him through the surroundings as well as using his flashbacks to tell the story. This changes at the end of the book, where McCarthy then makes the boy the focal point, as the man unfortunately passes away.

McCarthy is also good at using descriptive elements in his writing, using words such as 'granite' which provides the reader with the thoughts of cold, hard, grey and other words as such. This is a good method as post-apocalyptic America would be those words. Also, the use of ash is repetitive throughout the book. Ash in some cases may be used as a symbolic reference to a new beginning, e.g. the phoenix rising from the ashes. Although, in this instance, it is used as a method of representing destruction. Ash being the only thing left behind through debris and weathering. He also uses smaller sentences in comparison to other authors such as Scott Fitzgerald, which also provides a smaller dialogue between the two characters. The repetition of words such as 'Okay', 'Yes.' and 'No.' shows that in a world where everything has been destroyed, conversation has also suffered with a lack of the societal necessities such as standard dialogue between a father and son.

To conclude, McCarthy uses many different techniques to tell his story. These range from the simple use of setting (post apocalyptic America, dystopia), descriptive elements of writing such as concrete and abstract nouns and the ideology of a broken society within the book.

## Band 2

**You demonstrate effort here and you are beginning to show that you understand how narrative devices are used by McCarthy and make some interesting points about setting and language. Your writing style is sophisticated.**

**However the essay is too generalised. The questions asks you to look at p284--the end of the story, but you are looking at the book overall. You also make wide statements about the novel, rather than identifying and exploring specific examples.**