ADJECTIVES AS A WORD CLASS

C2 — Mastery

English Grammar Worksheets | Types of Adjectives • Attributive & Predicative Use • Order of Adjectives

4 Worksheets: Stylistics of the Adjective • Syntax at the Edges • Discourse Analysis • Writing & Meta-commentary | Answer Key Included

Worksheet 1: Stylistics of the Adjective

Name: _____ *Date:* _____ *Level: C2 (CEFR)*

Reference: Rhetorical Devices

Device	Description	Example
Transferred epithet (hypallage)	adjective grammatically modifies one noun but logically another	a sleepless night; a condemned cell
Synaesthetic transfer	adjective from one sense domain applied to another	a loud shirt; a sharp taste
Litotes	affirmation by negating the contrary adjective	not unkind; no small achievement
Asyndetic stacking	unpunctuated or comma-joined chains for rhythm/accumulation	a vast, grey, indifferent sea
Literary postposition	adjective after the noun for archaic or elevated effect	the forest primeval; times past

Exercise A – Identify the device and comment on its effect in one or two sentences.

1. "He smoked a thoughtful cigarette by the window."

_____

_____

2. "The plan was not without a certain reckless elegance."

_____

_____

3. "She wore a quiet perfume."

_____

_____

4. "They drove through the rain, black, relentless, biblical."

_____

_____

5. "He spoke of battles long ago and kingdoms lost."

_____

_____

Exercise B – Compose. Write one original sentence for each device: (1) a transferred epithet, (2) litotes with an adjective, (3) a three-adjective asyndetic stack with deliberate rhythm.

1.

_____

_____

2.

_____

_____

3.

_____

_____

Score: _____ / 16

Worksheet 2: Syntax at the Edges

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Part A – Structural ambiguity. Bracket both readings and paraphrase each. Example: [old [English teacher]] vs [[old English] teacher].

1. a small arms dealer

_____

_____

2. an old English teacher

_____

_____

3. a Russian history professor

_____

_____

4. more beautiful paintings

_____

_____

5. a light blue coat

_____

_____

Part B – The a- adjectives (asleep, afloat, askew, awry, ajar, alight). Answer each question.

1. What positional restriction do these adjectives share, and what is its historical source?

_____

_____

2. Some tolerate premodified attributive use ("a half-asleep child"). What makes this acceptable?

_____

_____

3. Supply idiomatic attributive alternatives: asleep → ___, alight → ___, afraid → ___.

_____

4. "The door was ajar" vs "*the ajar door": rewrite the second acceptably in two different ways.

_____

_____

Part C – Acceptability judgments. Mark each string fully acceptable (✓), marked but licensed (?), or ill-formed (✗). Justify with reference to order, gradability or position.

1. "a big old friendly dog" (child speaking)

_____

_____

2. "the most main reason"

_____

_____

3. "a very married man" (ironic dialogue)

_____

_____

4. "nice big cold glass of lemonade"

_____

_____

Score: _____ / 22

Worksheet 3: Discourse Analysis: Two Texts, One Event

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Read both reports of the same planning decision, then answer the questions.

Text 1 (tabloid): *"Greedy developers have won the fight to dump a monstrous 40-storey tower on a quiet, leafy neighbourhood. Furious locals say the hideous glass slab will destroy their charming historic streets forever."*

Text 2 (broadsheet): *"The council has approved a 40-storey residential tower in a low-rise district. Supporters call the scheme a necessary response to an acute housing shortage; residents present at the meeting described the design as intrusive and the consultation process as inadequate."*

1. Contrast the density and placement of opinion adjectives in the two texts. What does each pattern signal about intended stance?

_____

_____

_____

2. Text 1 stacks opinion + size adjectives attributively ("monstrous 40-storey tower"). Text 2 confines evaluation to reported predicative uses ("described the design as intrusive"). Explain the rhetorical difference.

_____

_____

_____

3. Identify one classifying adjective per text and explain why neither can naturally be intensified.

_____

_____

4. Find the postpositive adjective in Text 2 and explain what it adds that an attributive placement would lose.

_____

_____

5. Rewrite Text 1 in the register of Text 2 (40–60 words), neutralising or attributing every evaluative adjective.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Score: _____ / 20

Worksheet 4: Extended Writing and Meta-commentary

Name: _____ *Date:* _____ *Level: C2 (CEFR)*

Part A – Close reading. Read the excerpt (original, written for this worksheet) and answer.

The house kept its shabby, obstinate dignity. Paint peeled in long grateful strips, as if relieved of some old obligation; the windows, blind with dust, still held the shape of afternoon light. It was not an unloved place. It was merely a place that had outlived the particular people who had loved it.

1. Identify the transferred epithet and explain what it displaces.

_____

_____

2. "shabby, obstinate dignity": comment on the coordination of a physical and a characterological adjective.

_____

_____

3. Analyse the litotes and its tonal contribution.

_____

_____

4. "the particular people": what work is the attributive-only adjective doing here?

_____

_____

Part B – Register transformation. Rewrite the sentence below three times — (a) estate-agent listing, (b) structural survey report, (c) elegy-like literary prose — changing only what register requires. Sentence: "The old house is in bad condition but people still find it attractive."

a.

_____

_____

b.

_____

_____

c.

_____

_____

Part C – Essay introduction (200–250 words). Proposition: "In skilled hands, the position of an adjective is as meaningful as its choice." Requirements: engage at least five phenomena from this pack (transferred epithet, postposition, meaning-shift pair, litotes, marked order, a- adjectives ...), each exemplified; sustained formal-academic register; explicit line of argument.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Word count: _____ Phenomena engaged: ____ / 5

Score: _____ / 30

Answer Key & Teacher Notes

For teacher use only

Worksheet 1

#	Item	Answer / Guidance
A	Devices	**1 transferred epithet (thoughtful → smoker). 2 litotes ("not without") + oxymoronic pairing (reckless elegance). 3 synaesthetic transfer (sound → smell). 4 asyndetic/appositive stacking, postposed for accumulation and escalation. 5 literary postposition ("battles long ago", "kingdoms lost") — archaic elevation.**
B	Composition	**Accept any accurate original sentences; check the epithet is genuinely displaced, the litotes negates a contrary, and the stack shows deliberate rhythm.**

Worksheet 2

#	Item	Answer / Guidance
A	Ambiguity	**small [arms dealer] / [small arms] dealer; old [English teacher] / [old English] teacher; Russian [history professor] / [Russian history] professor; [more beautiful] paintings / more [beautiful paintings]; light [blue coat] / [light blue] coat.**
B	a- adjectives	**1 Predicative only; historically preposition + noun (on slæpe → asleep), so they behave like reduced prepositional phrases. 2 Premodification (half-, fast-, sound-) shifts them toward participial/adjectival status. 3 sleeping; burning; frightened. 4 The door that was ajar... / The slightly-open door...**
C	Judgments	**1 ? — child register licenses size before age variation and loose order. 2 ✗ — "main" is attributive-only and non-gradable. 3 ? — coercion of a classifying/absolute adjective for irony. 4 ✓ — opinion, size, temperature order is natural in informal speech.**

Worksheet 3

#	Item	Answer / Guidance
1	Stance	**Text 1 front-loads stacked attributive opinion adjectives (greedy, monstrous, hideous, charming), asserting evaluation as fact; Text 2 has near-zero unattributed opinion adjectives, signalling detachment.**
2	Attributive vs reported predicative	**Attributive stacking presupposes the evaluation (part of the noun phrase); predicative evaluation inside reported speech is asserted by a named source and thus deniable.**
3	Classifying	**e.g. 40-storey / residential, historic (Text 1, borderline), low-rise, housing; category-denoting, hence *very residential fails.**
4	Postpositive	**"residents present" — restricts to those in attendance at the meeting; attributive "present residents" would mean current residents.**

#	Item	Answer / Guidance
5	Rewrite	**Model: "Developers have received permission for a 40-storey tower in a predominantly low-rise, residential area. Opponents describe the design as out of scale with the district's older streets; the developers argue the scheme addresses a housing shortage." Check: every evaluative adjective removed or attributed.**

Worksheet 4

#	Item	Answer / Guidance
A	Close reading	**1 "grateful strips" — gratitude belongs to the house/paint personified, not the strips; relief displaced onto the physical detail. 2 Zeugma-like coordination forces the reader to unify surface decay and moral persistence in one head noun. 3 "not an unloved place" asserts past love while withholding sentimentality — restraint as pathos. 4 "particular" (attributive-only here) individuates: not people in general but those specific, now-absent lovers of the house.**
B	Registers	**Model: (a) "A characterful period property with enormous potential, in need of some modernisation." (b) "The dwelling, of late-19th-century construction, exhibits significant deterioration; remedial work is required." (c) "The house is failing, and is loved no less for it." Check adjective choice, position and hedging shift with genre.**
C	Essay rubric	**Phenomena engaged & exemplified 0–10; analytical precision 0–8; register 0–6; coherence & argument 0–6.**