

# Help with the Imagery Paragraphs

## Question Two from the Okri Assignment

***The way that Okri describes the town and people who inhabit it help establish the point of view of the dead. Choose one such description of either the way something looks, sounds, feels, tastes, or smells and explain how it helps to create this point of view. You should use evidence from the text (quotation) in support of your answer.***

### Student Example One

“I feed on the air and on the quest. Every day, as I grow leaner, I see more things around us. I see the dead all who had died of starvation.” This explains how he looks and what he sees around with people and himself from them having nothing, not even food for one another. He explained the fact of starvation.

#### **Problems**

- Missing an answer (*The way the dead are described shows their point of view.*)
- Evidence is not terribly descriptive (though one could work with the idea of growing leaner)
- Explanation is not focused on the way things are described, though it does try to address point of view.

#### **Solutions**

- Focus on what you are trying to prove. If you’re not trying to prove something, you’re not doing it right.
- Introduce evidence as both an example and an image. Add context so that the reader understands what you’re talking about.
- Discuss the connotation of the image. This cannot be emphasized enough.

### Example One (improved)

The way the dead are described shows how they feel. For example, the narrator sees his body changing every day, saying, “I feed on the air and on the quest. Every day, as I grow leaner, I see more things around us. I see the dead all who had died of starvation.” This explains how he looks and what he sees around with people and himself from them having nothing, not even food for one another. He explained the fact of starvation. This can be seen in the visual image of becoming “leaner,” which has very negative connotations, since the people desperately need food. It shows how negative physical changes in the body change the way one sees the world. The narrator sees the dead because he is wasting away to nothing, becoming like the dead himself.

### Student Example Two

Okri describes the townspeople who inhabit it to help establish the point of view of the dead through imagery. For example, “The only people who weren't dead were the dead. Singing

golden songs in chorus, jubilant everywhere. They carried on their familiar lives.” This part of the story helps create this point of view because Okri is explaining how he hears the dead people “singing joyfully” as if they didn’t know they were dead.

#### **Why This Received More Credit**

- It has a reasonable answer (recognizing that all you had to do was rephrase the question)
- The example is an actual image (“singing joyfully”)
- The explanation is thin, but it strongly implies the most reasonable analysis for this image (showing how being dead is better than being alive)

#### **How It Could Have Received More Credit**

- Make the answer more specific
- Add context for the evidence
- Eliminate repetition of the answer in the explanation
- Make the connection to the answer clearer

#### **Example Two (improved)**

Okri describes the townspeople who inhabit it to help establish the point of view of the dead through imagery: that they are happier in death than those who are still living. For example, when the narrator enters the town of the dead, he describes it by saying, “The only people who weren’t dead were the dead. Singing golden songs in chorus, jubilant everywhere. They carried on their familiar lives.” Here, Okri is explaining how he hears the dead people “singing joyfully” as if they didn’t know they were dead. The positive connotation of “singing” is more associated with life, than death, since death usually suggests misery and weeping. However, in this world, it is the dead who are joyful, not the living. War has reversed the usual way of seeing things, to the point that death is actually preferable to life.