

The following extract is taken from the novel The Silence of the Lambs by Thomas Harris. In the novel, the FBI trainee agent Clarice Starling has been asked to interview Dr Hannibal Lecter, a serial killer.

Dr Lecter's cell is well beyond the others, facing only a closet across the corridor, and it is unique in other ways. The front is a wall of bars, but within the bars, at a distance greater than the human reach, is a second barrier, a stout nylon net stretched from floor to ceiling and wall to wall. Behind the net, Starling could see a table bolted to the floor and piled high with softcover books and papers, and a straight chair, also fastened down.

Dr Hannibal Lecter himself **reclined** on his bunk, **perusing** the Italian edition of **Vogue**. He held the loose pages in his right hand and put them beside him one by one with his left. Dr Lecter has six fingers on his left hand.

Clarice Starling stopped a little distance from the bars, about the length of a small foyer.

'Dr Lecter.' Her voice sounded all right to her.

He looked up from his reading.

For a steep second she thought his gaze hummed, but it was only her blood she heard.

'My name is Clarice Starling. May I talk with you?' Courtesy was **implicit** in her distance and her tone.

Dr Lecter considered, his finger pressed against his pursed lips. Then he rose in his own time and came forward smoothly in his cage, stopping short of the nylon web without looking at it, as though he chose the distance.

She could see that he was small, sleek; in his hands and arms she saw wiry strength like her own.

'Good morning,' he said, as though he had answered the door. His cultured voice has a slight metallic rasp beneath it, possibly from **disuse**.

Predicting: Based just on this introduction, to which genre do we think this novel belongs? Why? What do we expect from this Dr Lecter? What does it suggest if he is a 'Dr'?

Skimming: Reading the first line of each paragraph, what does each paragraph focus on? What are your thoughts on these two characters? Why?

Scanning: Highlighted are some of the trickier, less common words.

Try to figure out what each means by reading around it or looking for parts of the word that you do recognise.

e.g If he 'reclined' on his bunk, a bunk is a bed so it is likely to mean something like leant, sat or lay.

If he is 'perusing the Italian edition of Vogue', the word 'edition' tells us that 'Vogue' is likely to be a magazine or newspaper, if he is 'perusing' it this must mean reading or browsing.

Later on, if his voice has become raspy from 'disuse', we recognise the part 'use' within this word- the addition of 'dis' if we think of words such as 'disappointed' means something negative so 'disuse' must mean lack of use.

Dr Lecter's eyes are maroon and they reflect the light in pinpoints of red. Sometimes the points of light seem to fly like sparks to his center. His eyes held Starling whole.

Questioning:

What sort of person is Dr Lecter? How do you know? Find some examples.

What is it about the description of his cell that tells us he is dangerous?

What would you like to know about these characters?

Empathising with characters:

How do you think Clarice feels in this scene? Why? What might she be thinking?

Write a diary entry from Clarice's point of view describing your thoughts and feelings.

1. Write down three quotations that show how secure Dr Lecter's cell is.
2. Explain why you think Dr Lecter's cell might be placed "well beyond the others".
3. What does the writer say that suggests how scared Agent Starling is?
Answer as fully as you can.
4. Does the description of Dr Lecter match what you would expect of a serial killer? Use quotations in explaining your answer.
5. What metaphor does the writer use to describe Dr Lecter in the following paragraph?

Dr Lecter considered, his finger pressed against his pursed lips.

Then he rose in his own time and came forward smoothly in his cage, stopping short of the nylon web without looking at it, as though he chose the distance.

6. Find two examples of when the writer switches from the past tense to the present tense. Explain why you think the writer has done this.
7. What else do we learn about Dr Lecter in the extract? Use quotations to explain your ideas.
8. What evidence can you find that might suggest that Dr Lecter is a dangerous serial killer? Use quotations when explaining your ideas.
10. How does the writer present the character of Dr Lecter? presented.

Comment on the following points:

- ☒ What you learn about the character of Dr Lecter.
- ☒ How the language used by the writer conveys what he is like.