

The language of Twitter

Objectives: To be able to explain how the purpose of Twitter has changed over time.
To be able to analyse how context affects language use in tweets.

Teacher note: Starter discussion - What is the purpose of twitter?

Development Questions that could be used: The question at the top of the twitter homepage has changed from 'What are you doing?' to 'What is happening?'

What does this suggest about the purpose of twitter?

Can the same be said of other social media sites?

Twitter used to be called twttr – why do you think they moved to conventional orthography?

Use the printable resource – *From the Twitter blog*.

Teacher note: Showing them this extract after they have discussed the change outlined above can help students to explore the language use on social media sites as the various platforms used have expanded in their purpose. It is no longer merely a platform for self expression as many use it as a way of sharing their own social commentaries.

Text analysis – The first ever tweets

Use the interactive resource – *The first ever tweets*

Teacher note: Show students the first tweets and ask them to compare these first tweets to tweets that are trending currently on the twitter homepage.

Who uses Twitter and why?

Use the interactive resource – *Who uses Twitter?*

Teacher note: Possible responses are listed below.

Self-expression

Celebs having arguments

News programmes sharing updates

Business for advertising, marketing and networking

Social commentaries

Seeking advice/common experiences

Categorising tweets

Use the interactive resource - *Categorising tweets*

Teacher note: Use the click and drag activity to encourage students to analyse the purpose of tweets.

Prompt questions to help:

- What is the **purpose** of this message?
- Who is the **intended audience**?
- What **form** of communication is it?
- How has the **21st Century influenced** the way that the author/sender uses language?
- What do you notice about **sentence structure**?
- What do you notice about **Standard and non Standard constructions** used?
- What do you notice about **lexis**?
- How is the text organised (**discourse**)?
- Are there any implied meanings (**pragmatics**)?
- What do you notice about **graphology**?
- What do you notice about the **register** used?
- Are there **expected norms of behaviour** or methods of communicating in this form of writing?

Analysis task

Use the printable resource - *Analysis task*

Teacher note: Have students categorise the tweets so that they can analyse the tweets in groups rather than individually (this will help when it comes to the exams). Get them to annotate the tweets, analysing how language has been used to suit form. Ask them to consider how language use differs based on context.

Once the students have completed the task, give them the article from which most of the Trump tweets were taken (link below). It is interesting how they list information and make their sentence structures simpler. Ask students to consider why they think this is. Has the development of technology and the use of the internet weakened our reading stamina?

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/donald-trump-memes-reaction-wins-9224489>