Aberfan is a small village that ‘few people have heard of’. It is ‘tucked away’ in a Welsh valley. This suggests that it is almost hidden from view and would have been similarly forgotten in history had it not been for the tragedy. In contrast, London is described as a ‘colossal city’. It implies it is huge and filled with activity. A place that is so large that it should be safe from a natural disaster like an earthquake. Whilst both also have rivers running through them, in Aberfan it is ‘black as the Styx’ which differs from London with its ‘great river’. It is implied that in Aberfan its blackness comes from the natural seeping coal, but with London, it is ‘muddy and dull’ because of man-made waste from the many warehouses along its length.

Aberfan is a small village. At its ‘heart was the coal pit’ and it seems like a harsh place to live and work. The railway tracks are ‘decaying’ and there is ‘grime over roofs and gardens’. On the other hand, London is a ‘colossal city’ and has a ‘great river’ so it seems more vibrant. It seems fair to imply that London is noisy, with trains at ‘full speed’ and the constant ‘rumble’ of industrial activity. It differs not just in size but in what it would be like to live there. The impression being that, despite all its noise and ‘fog’ it is less harsh than Aberfan, not least because of its ‘well built’ houses.
The writer uses language to describe the coal tips as dark, dangerous and sinister for the reader and in doing so makes effective use of personification to single out coal tip number 7 as a ‘killer with a rotten heart’. Here, the emotive adjective 'rotten' creates the impression of a malevolent being. This is because 'rotten' can have several connotations, but all of them are negative. For example, it makes a link for the reader with decay, death, but just as importantly, is suggestive of evil intent. It is as if it sets out to deliberately kill the children. This is further added to by a verb phrase ‘inching ominously’ which suggests ongoing movement, slow, imperceptible but inevitable and the adverb, ‘ominously’ forewarns of the disaster to come. The writer appears to draw on conventions of the horror genre to pull the reader into his account – it has a clear villain and set of victims.

The writer personifies the tip as a ‘killer’ which implies that it is a dark and threatening figure. This impression is added to when he uses an adjective to describe its ‘rotten heart’. Importantly, ‘rotten’ makes a connection for the reader between the decay of the village and its build-up of waste in the coal tips, and a link with death. When the writer proceeds to describe the tip as ‘inching ominously’, his choice of verb captures its slow movement – that it was moving without being noticed with the word ‘ominously’ further implying that such movement was always going to lead to tragedy and couldn’t be stopped.
The writer of source A seems dispassionate at first as he paints the picture of gloomy, isolated Aberfan as it lies 'tucked away' from sight and mind. The verb 'tucked' is more usually associated with being tucked up in bed and tends to have more positive connotations of safety and warmth. But here, the writer uses it differently, perhaps to imply complacency. He reinforces this view when he creates the sense of a malevolent 'killer' stalking its victims. He sees this disaster as 'cruel' and a 'shame' on 'God and man'. This time, the emotive connotations of shame link with God to suggest a biblical connection as with the shaming of sinners. In contrast, the writer of Source B mocks the idea of the earthquake, which seems so minor it was hardly noticed in London. One method he uses is exaggeration where he describes the incident out of all proportion, with the Midlands for example, where it merely 'broke crockery'. The reference to broken crockery is hardly momentous yet through it, the writer cleverly understates the threat at this point, something he escalates later in his report when he asks the rhetorical question: 'who can say what strange trial ... may await us?' Here the reference to 'trial' reveals the writer's view of the potential dangers a future earthquake might bring. Just as a defendant is put on trial for life, so he seems to imply that next time a similar earthquake might lead to loss of lives and so should be taken more seriously.

In source A, the writer is concerned that the disaster is shocking and should not have happened in the first place. He describes the village as a dangerous place to live and work and makes the point about the tips 'Almost everyone has ... seen danger in them, but mostly they are endured as a fact of life'. His choice of the word 'endured' implies that its people have put up with a lot of hardship and are brave, but shouldn't have had to face the tragedy of the landslide. However the writer in source B is worried about more serious earthquakes happening in the future. He engages the reader more with rhetorical questions when he asks: 'who can say what strange trial ... may await us?' Here the reference to 'trial' reinforces the idea of hardships and dangers which may continue with future earthquakes.

In source A, the writer is shocked and saddened by what happened. He describes the events as a 'disaster' and gives the impression that the village is a dark and dangerous place. In comparison, in source B the writer is worried about more serious earthquakes happening in the future. One method he uses is a rhetorical question when he asks: 'who can say what strange trial ... may await us?' suggesting this kind of disaster or worse might happen again.

The writer of source A seems shocked about what happened at Aberfan. He wants us to feel sorry for the children who died. He tells us that 'disaster struck' the village and uses words like 'danger'. Whereas the writer of source B seems worried that another earthquake might happen again soon.