Read the two extracts below, taken from Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* and Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White*. Both extracts describe a character in lots of detail.

**Task one**

Highlight and annotate the differing techniques that the writers use in their descriptions.

**Task two**

Answer the following questions.

- Do both writers create the same effect or have the same impact on the reader?
- Which extract do you think is more effective and why?

**Task three**

Write a description of either:

- somebody that you know really well
- somebody that you have only just met.

Make sure that you use a range of descriptive techniques in your writing.

**From White Teeth:**
Clara Bowden was beautiful in all the senses except maybe, by virtue of being black, the classical. Clara Bowden was magnificently tall, black as ebony and crushed sable, with hair plaited in a horseshoe which pointed up when she felt lucky, down when she didn’t. At this moment it was up. It is hard to know whether this was significant. She needed no bra – she was independent, even of gravity – she wore a red halterneck which stopped below her bust, underneath which she wore her belly button (beautifully) and underneath that some very tight yellow jeans. At the end of it all were some strappy heels of a light brown suede, and she came striding down the stairs on them like some kind of vision or, as it seemed to Archie as he turned to observe her, like a reared-up thoroughbred.

**From The Woman in White:**
All I could discern distinctly by the moonlight was a colourless, youthful face, meagre and sharp to look at, about the cheeks and chin; large, grave, wistfully-attentive eyes; nervous, uncertain lips; and light hair of a pale, brownish-yellow hue. There was nothing wild, nothing immodest in her manner: it was quiet and self-controlled, a little melancholy and a little touched by suspicion; not exactly the manner of a lady, and, at the same time, not the manner of a woman in the humblest rank of life. The voice, little as I had yet heard of it, had something curiously still and mechanical in its tones, and the utterance was remarkably rapid. She held a small bag in her hand: and her dress — bonnet, shawl, and gown all of white — was, so far as I could guess, certainly not composed of very delicate or very expensive materials. Her figure was slight, and rather above the average height — her gait and actions free from the slightest approach to extravagance. This was all that I could observe of her, in the dim light and under the perplexingly strange circumstances of our meeting. What sort of a woman she was, and how she came to be out alone in the high-road, an hour after midnight, I altogether failed to guess. The one thing of which I felt certain was, that the grossest of mankind could not have misconstrued her motive in speaking, even at that suspiciously late hour and in that suspiciously lonely place.