

X270/301

NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2011

FRIDAY, 13 MAY
9.00 AM – 10.45 AM

ENGLISH
HIGHER
Close Reading—Text

There are TWO passages and questions.

Read the passages carefully and then answer all the questions, which are printed in a separate booklet.

You should read the passages to:

understand what the writers are saying about the appeal and influence of video games (**Understanding—U**);

analyse their choices of language, imagery and structures to recognise how they convey their points of view and contribute to the impact of the passage (**Analysis—A**);

evaluate how effectively they have achieved their purpose (**Evaluation—E**).



PASSAGE 1

Writing in The Times newspaper, Steven Johnson argues that valuable development in young people’s mental abilities can come from “popular culture” in general—and video games in particular.

MAKING OUR BRAINS SHARPER

Reading books enriches the mind; playing video games deadens it—you can’t get much more conventional than the conventional wisdom that kids today would be better off spending more time reading books, and less time zoning out in front of their video games.

5 For the record, I think that the virtues of reading books are great. We should all encourage our kids to read more. But even the most avid reader is inevitably going to spend his or her time with other media—games, television, movies, the Internet. Yet the question is whether these other forms of culture have intellectual virtues in their own right—different from, but comparable to, reading. Where most critics allege a
10 dumbing down, I see a progressive story: popular culture steadily, but almost imperceptibly, making our brains sharper as we soak in entertainment usually dismissed as so much lowbrow fluff. I hope to persuade you that increasingly the non-literary popular culture is honing different mental skills that are just as important as the ones exercised by reading books.

15 The most powerful example of this trend is found in the world of video games. And the first and last thing that should be said about the experience of playing today’s video games, the thing you almost never hear, is that games are fiendishly, sometimes maddeningly, hard. The dirty little secret of gaming is how much time you spend not having fun. You may be frustrated; you may be confused or disorientated; you may be
20 stuck. But when you put the game down and move back into the real world, you may find yourself mentally working through the problem you have been wrestling with, as though you were worrying a loose tooth.

In the typical game, the tasks themselves are more like chores than entertainment. And yet ironically the great bulk of the population performing these tasks every day is
25 composed of precisely the demographic group most averse to doing chores: kids whom you virtually have to lock in their room to get them to do their maths homework. You often hear video games included in the list of the debased instant gratifications that abound in our culture. But compared with most forms of popular entertainment, games turn out to be all about delayed gratification, sometimes so long delayed that you
30 wonder if the gratification is ever going to show.

So why does anyone bother playing these things? And why does a seven-year-old soak up, for instance, the intricacies of industrial economics in the game form of SimCity, when the same subject would send him screaming for the exits in a classroom? To date, there has been little direct research into the question of how games get children to learn
35 without realising that they are learning. But I believe a strong case can be made that the power of games to captivate largely involves their ability to tap into the brain’s natural reward circuitry. If you create a system in which rewards are both clearly defined and achieved by exploring an environment, you will find human brains drawn to those systems, even if they are made up of virtual characters and simulated sidewalks.
40 In the game world, reward is everywhere. The gaming universe is literally teeming with objects that deliver very clearly articulated rewards: more life, access to new levels, new equipment, new spells. Most of the crucial work in game design focuses on keeping players notified of potential rewards available to them, and how much these

rewards are currently needed. Most games offer a fictional world where rewards are
45 larger, and more vivid, and more clearly defined than life.

You may just want to win the game, of course, or perhaps you want to see the game's
narrative completed, or in the initial stages of play, you may just be dazzled by the
game's graphics. But most of the time, when you're hooked on a game, what draws you
in is an elemental form of desire: the desire to see the Next Thing. After all, with the
50 occasional exception, the actual content of the game is often childish or gratuitously
menacing. Much of the role play inside the gaming world alternates between drive-by
shooting and princess-rescuing. It is not the subject matter that attracts; it is the
reward system that draws those players in, and keeps their famously short attention
spans locked on the screen.

55 Playing down the content of video games shouldn't be seen as a cop-out. We ignore the
content of many other activities that are widely considered to be good for the brain. No
one complains about the simplistic, militaristic plot of chess games. We teach algebra
to children knowing full well that the day they leave the classroom 99 per cent of those
kids will never again directly employ their algebraic skills. Learning algebra isn't about
60 acquiring a specific tool; it's about building up a mental muscle that will come in handy
elsewhere.

So it is with games. It's not what you're thinking about when you're playing a game,
it's the way you're thinking that matters. Novels may activate our imagination and may
conjure up powerful emotions, but games force you to analyse, to choose, to prioritise,
65 to decide. From the outside, the primary activity of a gamer looks like a fury of clicking
and shooting. But if you peer inside the gamer's mind, the primary activity turns out to
be another creature altogether: making decisions, some of them snap judgements, some
of them long-term strategies.

PASSAGE 2

*Writing on his own website, the politician and journalist Boris Johnson blames video games for a
drop in reading standards.*

STRIKE A BLOW FOR LITERACY

It's the snarl that gives the game away. It's the sobbing and the shrieking and the
horrible pleading—that's how you know your children are undergoing a sudden
narcotic withdrawal. As the strobing colours die away and the screen goes black, you
listen to the wail of protest from the offspring and you know that you have just turned
5 off their drug, and you know that they are, to a greater or lesser extent, addicts.

Millions of seven-to-fifteen-year olds are hooked, especially boys, and it is time
someone had the guts to stand up, cross the room and just say no to Nintendo. It is
time to garrotte the Game Boy and paralyse the PlayStation, and it is about time, as a
society, that we admitted the catastrophic effect these blasted gizmos are having on the
10 literacy and the prospects of young males.

We demand that teachers provide our children with reading skills; we expect the
schools to fill them with a love of books; and yet at home we let them slump in front of
the consoles. We get on with our hedonistic 21st century lives while in some other
room the nippers are bleeping and zapping in speechless rapture, their passive faces

15 washed in explosions and gore. They sit for so long that their souls seem to have
been sucked down the cathode ray tube.

They become like blinking lizards, motionless, absorbed, only the twitching of their
hands showing that they are still conscious. These machines teach them nothing.
They stimulate no ratiocination, discovery or feat of memory—though some of them
20 may cunningly pretend to be educational. I have just watched an eleven-year-old
play a game that looked fairly historical, on the packet. Your average guilt-ridden
parent might assume that it taught the child something about the Vikings and
medieval siege warfare. Phooey! The red soldiers robotically slaughtered the white
soldiers, and then they did it again, that was it. Everything was programmed,
25 spoon-fed, immediate—and endlessly showering the player with undeserved praise,
richly congratulating him for his bogus massacres.

The more addictive these games are to the male mind, the more difficult it is to
persuade boys to read books. It's not that these young people lack the brains; the
raw circuitry is better than ever. It's the software that's the problem. They have not
30 been properly programmed, because they have not read enough. The only way to
learn to write is to be forced time and again to articulate your own thoughts in your
own words, and you haven't a hope of doing this if you haven't read enough to
absorb the basic elements of vocabulary, grammar, rhythm, style and structure; and
young males in particular won't read enough if we continually capitulate and let
35 them fritter their lives away in front of these drivelling machines.

So I say now: go to where your children are sitting in auto-lobotomy in front of the
console. Summon up all your strength, all your courage. Steel yourself for the
screams and yank out that plug. And if they still kick up a fuss, then get out the
sledgehammer and strike a blow for literacy.

[END OF TEXT]

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Close Reading Passage 1—Article is adapted from “Want to exercise your mind? Try Playstation” by Steven Johnson, taken from *The Times*, 13 May 2005. Permission is being sought from The Times, News International.

Close Reading Passage 2—Article is adapted from “The Writing is on the wall” by Boris Johnson, taken from *The Telegraph*, 28th June 2006. Reproduced by permission of Boris Johnson. Permission is being sought from The Telegraph.

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NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2011

FRIDAY, 13 MAY
9.00 AM – 10.45 AM

ENGLISH
HIGHER
Close Reading–Questions

Answer all questions.

50 marks are allocated to this paper.

A code letter (U, A, E) is used alongside each question to give some indication of the skills being assessed. The number of marks attached to each question will give some indication of the length of answer required.

When answering questions coded “U—Understanding”, use your own words as far as is reasonably possible and do not simply repeat the wording of the passage.



Questions on Passage 1

*You are reminded of the instruction on the front cover:
When answering questions coded “U—Understanding”, use your own words as far as is reasonably possible and do not simply repeat the wording of the passage.*

1. Read lines 1–14.
 - (a) Show how the writer’s word choice in lines 1–4 emphasises the “conventional wisdom” that reading books is better than playing video games. 2 A
 - (b) Explain “the question” the writer asks in lines 7–9 about “other forms of culture”. 2 U
 - (c) Show how the writer’s use of language in lines 9–14 (“Where . . . books.”) emphasises the contrast between his positive view of “other forms of culture” and the negative view held by “most critics”.
In your answer you should refer to specific language features such as imagery, word choice, sentence structure . . . 4 A
2. “. . . how much time you spend not having fun.” (lines 18–19)
Show how, in lines 15–22, the writer conveys the difficulty of playing video games by his use of:
 - (a) sentence structure; 2 A
 - (b) imagery. 2 A
3. Read lines 23–30.
 - (a) What is ironic about the situation described by the writer in lines 23–26 (“In the typical game . . . homework.”)? 1 U
 - (b) In lines 26–30 (“You often . . . show.”), what distinction does the writer make between video games and “most forms of popular entertainment”? 2 U
4. Read lines 31–45.
 - (a) According to the writer, why is “reward” so important to the learning process involved in playing video games? 3 U
 - (b) Show how the writer’s use of language in lines 40–45 (“In the game world . . . life.”) conveys the excitement generated by rewards in the world of video games. 2 A
5. Read lines 46–54.
 - (a) Give two criticisms the writer makes of the content of video games. 2 U
 - (b) Show how the writer’s use of language in these lines conveys a dismissive attitude towards the content of video games. 2 A
6. How does the example of algebra **or** of chess illustrate the point the writer is making in lines 55–61? 2 U

7. Read lines 62–68.
- (a) “Novels may activate our imagination and may conjure up powerful emotions, but games force you to analyse, to choose, to prioritise, to decide.” (lines 63–65)
- Show how the writer’s use of language in this sentence emphasises the contrast between novels and video games. 2 A
- (b) Show how the writer’s use of language in lines 65–68 conveys the contrast between what a gamer looks like from “the outside” and what is happening “inside the gamer’s mind”. 2 A
- (30)

Questions on Passage 2

*You are reminded of the instruction on the front cover:
When answering questions coded “U—Understanding”, use your own words as far as is reasonably possible and do not simply repeat the wording of the passage.*

8. Read lines 1–10.
- (a) In what ways, according to the writer, can young people be adversely affected by playing video games? 2 U
- (b) Show how the writer creates in these lines an impression of outrage in his condemnation of video games. 2 A
9. Show how the writer’s word choice in lines 11–16 reinforces the contrast he is creating between school and home. 2 A
10. Show how the writer’s use of language in lines 17–26 conveys his contempt for the claim that there is some educational value in some video games. 4 A
11. Read lines 27–35.
- Why, according to the writer, is reading important in the development of writing skills? 2 U
12. How effective do you find lines 36–39 as a conclusion to the writer’s condemnation of video gaming in the passage as a whole? 3 E
- (15)

Question on both Passages

13. Which passage gives you a more interesting insight into the appeal and influence of video games?
- Justify your choice by referring to the **ideas** of **both passages**. 5 U/E
- (5)
- Total (50)**

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

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NATIONAL
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2011

FRIDAY, 13 MAY
11.05 AM – 12.35 PM

ENGLISH
HIGHER
Critical Essay

Answer **two** questions.

Each question must be taken from a different section.

Each question is worth 25 marks.



Answer TWO questions from this paper. Each question must be chosen from a different Section (A–E). You are not allowed to choose two questions from the same Section.

In all Sections you may use Scottish texts.

Write the number of each question in the margin of your answer booklet and begin each essay on a fresh page.

You should spend about 45 minutes on each essay.

The following will be assessed:

- the relevance of your essays to the questions you have chosen, and the extent to which you sustain an appropriate line of thought
- your knowledge and understanding of key elements, central concerns and significant details of the chosen texts, supported by detailed and relevant evidence
- your understanding, as appropriate to the questions chosen, of how relevant aspects of structure/style/language contribute to the meaning/effect/impact of the chosen texts, supported by detailed and relevant evidence
- your evaluation, as appropriate to the questions chosen, of the effectiveness of the chosen texts, supported by detailed and relevant evidence
- the quality of your written expression and the technical accuracy of your writing.

SECTION A—DRAMA

Answers to questions on drama should address relevantly the central concern(s)/theme(s) of the text and be supported by reference to appropriate dramatic techniques such as: conflict, characterisation, key scene(s), dialogue, climax, exposition, dénouement, structure, plot, setting, aspects of staging (such as lighting, music, stage set, stage directions . . .), soliloquy, monologue . . .

1. Choose a play in which a character feels insecure about his or her position within the society or social group to which he or she belongs.
Show how the dramatist makes you aware of the character's insecurity and discuss how it influences your appreciation of character and/or theme in the play as a whole.
2. Choose from a play a scene in which manipulation, temptation or humiliation is an important feature.
Explain what happens in the scene and go on to show how the outcome of the manipulation, temptation or humiliation adds to your appreciation of the play as a whole.
3. Choose a play in which the dramatist creates tension at the beginning or at the end.
Explain how the tension is created and discuss how it contributes to an effective introduction or conclusion to the play.
4. Choose a play in which a power struggle is central to the action.
Explain briefly the circumstances of the power struggle and discuss the extent to which it contributes to your appreciation of theme and/or character in the play as a whole.

SECTION B—PROSE

Prose Fiction

Answers to questions on prose fiction should address relevantly the central concern(s)/theme(s) of the text(s) and be supported by reference to appropriate techniques of prose fiction such as: characterisation, setting, key incident(s), narrative technique, symbolism, structure, climax, plot, atmosphere, dialogue, imagery . . .

5. Choose a **novel** in which friendship or love is put to the test.
Explain briefly how this situation arises and go on to discuss how the outcome of the test leads you to a greater understanding of the central concern(s) of the text.
6. Choose a **novel** in which a central character is flawed but remains an admirable figure.
Show how the writer makes you aware of these aspects of personality and discuss how this feature of characterisation enhances your appreciation of the text as a whole.
7. Choose a **novel** or **short story** in which the writer explores feelings of rejection or isolation or alienation.
Explain how the writer makes you aware of these feelings and go on to show how this exploration enhances your appreciation of the text as a whole.
8. Choose a **novel** in which the narrative point of view is a significant feature in your appreciation of the text.
Show how the writer's use of this feature enhances your understanding of the central concern(s) of the text.
9. Choose **two short stories** in which setting plays an important role in developing your understanding of character and/or theme.
Which story, in your opinion, is more effective in developing your understanding?
Justify your choice by reference to the setting of both stories.

[Turn over for Prose Non-fiction]

SECTION B—PROSE (continued)

Prose Non-fiction

Answers to questions on prose non-fiction should address relevantly the central concern(s)/theme(s) of the text and be supported by reference to appropriate techniques of prose non-fiction such as: ideas, use of evidence, selection of detail, point of view, stance, setting, anecdote, narrative voice, style, language, structure, organisation of material . . .

- 10.** Choose a **non-fiction text** in which the writer expresses outrage or shock about an issue which you feel is important.
Show how the writer conveys the emotion and discuss to what extent this emotional approach enhances your understanding of the issue.
- 11.** Choose a **biography** or **autobiography** in which the writer brings more than one key incident vividly to life.
Show how the writer brings the incidents vividly to life and explain how they contribute to your overall understanding of the person involved.
- 12.** Choose a **non-fiction text** whose tone is either very optimistic or very pessimistic.
Show how the tone is created and discuss to what extent it is effective in developing the theme of the text.

SECTION C—POETRY

Answers to questions on poetry should address relevantly the central concern(s)/theme(s) of the text(s) and be supported by reference to appropriate poetic techniques such as: imagery, verse form, structure, mood, tone, sound, rhythm, rhyme, characterisation, contrast, setting, symbolism, word choice . . .

13. Choose a poem which seems to you to be critical of a person or a point of view.
Discuss how effectively this criticism is presented by the poet.
14. Choose a poem in which the poet blends narration and reflection.
Show how the poet blends these two aspects in such a way as to illuminate the central concern(s) of the poem.
15. Choose a poem in which **either** nature **or** time is presented as a destructive force.
Discuss how effectively the poet presents nature **or** time in this way.
16. Choose a poem in which the tone is sinister **or** seductive **or** cynical.
Show how the poem creates this tone and discuss its relative importance in your appreciation of the poem.

[Turn over

SECTION D—FILM AND TV DRAMA

Answers to questions on film and TV drama should address relevantly the central concern(s)/theme(s) of the text(s) and be supported by reference to appropriate techniques of film and TV drama such as: key sequence(s), characterisation, conflict, structure, plot, dialogue, editing/montage, sound/soundtrack, aspects of mise-en-scène (such as lighting, colour, use of camera, costume, props . . .), mood, setting, casting, exploitation of genre . . .

- 17.** Choose a **film** or **TV drama*** in which a character overcomes or gives way to temptation.
Discuss how the film or programme makers use this situation to influence your emotional and intellectual response to the text as a whole.
- 18.** Choose a **film** or **TV drama*** containing a sequence you find disturbing or unsettling.
Show how the film or programme makers achieve this response and go on to discuss the importance of the sequence to your appreciation of the text as a whole.
- 19.** Choose a **film** or **TV drama*** in which setting has a significant influence on mood and theme.
Show how the film or programme makers reveal this setting and discuss why it is so influential in terms of mood and theme.
- 20.** Choose a **film** or **TV drama*** which celebrates the triumph of the human spirit.
Show how the film or programme makers explore this theme and discuss how a sense of celebration is achieved.

*“TV drama” includes a single play, a series or a serial.

SECTION E—LANGUAGE

Answers to questions on language should address relevantly the central concern(s) of the language research/study and be supported by reference to appropriate language concepts such as: register, jargon, tone, vocabulary, word choice, technical terminology, presentation, illustration, accent, grammar, idiom, slang, dialect, structure, point of view, orthography, abbreviation . . .

21. Consider aspects of language within a specific interest group.
Identify aspects of language which are typical of this group and discuss to what extent these aspects of language operate to the advantage of its members.
22. Consider some of the ways in which language differs across generations.
Identify some of these differences and the factors which cause them. Go on to discuss to what extent this is advantageous to those involved.
23. Consider the language of television programmes **or** radio programmes **or** magazines **or** websites which are aimed at an audience defined by such features as shared cultural or leisure or political interests.
Identify some of the characteristics of the language and evaluate its effectiveness in communicating with its target audience.
24. Consider the spoken and/or written language used by people who exercise power effectively.
Identify what is distinctive about the language and discuss why it is effective in influencing its audience.

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

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