

TASK:

Complete the analysis by reading the article and writing detailed information under the following headings:

1. Name of newspaper and date.
2. Headline
3. What the article is about
4. Audience and purpose of the article
5. Examine 4 language techniques used - identify, then use appropriate formula + quote (simile, metaphor, word choice, sentence structure, link etc).
6. Select five new words - denotation, connotation, impact
7. Identify TONE - explain how you know
8. Summarise, in your own words, five key ideas.

Each homework to be completed and handed in to teacher - by date given by class teacher. Note the dates in your diary.

CLOSE READING 1.

Tipping the scales.

This passage, written by Polly Toynbee, discusses some of the causes of obesity in Britain and how it might be reduced. It was written for "The Guardian", a newspaper which is commonly regarded as having a "middle class" readership.

This obesity debate is full of humbug and denial. Fat is a class issue, but few like to admit that most of the seriously obese are poor. This is not about the nanny state telling toffs to keep off the claret in their clubs. It's about people like us telling people down there in the underclass to eat up their greens. Health professionals say "we" must take more exercise and stop eating fast food, but mostly they really mean "them".

True, many of us middle classes are overweight, but most of the dangerously obese - the 22% with a body-mass index in the red zone - are to be found carless on council estates and not in the leafy suburbs where kids are driven to school in supertankers 4x4s. It is poor children at most risk of swelling up like balloons, in danger of losing limbs and eyesight to diabetes as they grow up. It's wrong to talk about "fat cats" when the privileged are usually thin and sleek with bodies well-exercised by gyms and personal trainers on diets of radicchio and sparkling water.

Some experts, reluctant to appear over-critical, look for sympathetic reasons why the poor are so fat and unhealthy. Fresh fruit and vegetables are so expensive, they say. There is no transport to get from estates to the good food shops. Poor women are too hard-pressed to have time to cook proper family meals, so they snack. It's hard for poor children to exercise in dangerous concrete jungles, with no cars to take them to ballet or judo lessons. Or maybe, sadly, these people just don't know what's good for them.

All these may be contributory factors. The uneducated may not read small print on deliberately incomprehensible food labels to detect the difference between kJ kcal. Unlike neurotic middle-class mothers, they may not follow every scare about tartrazine and GM or dream up hypochondriacal allergies for lack of anything else to worry about in what is, remember, the safest and healthiest time ever.

So why are the poor getting dangerously fat? They are, mainly, a little better off and food has got cheaper. They are not ignorant. Every woman alive has spent her life obsessing over body size, perusing every diet in magazines and daytime TV shows. Never has there been more information about what food is fattening and what is not. Public health advice is puny beside this great surfeit of diet and fitness info.

What's more, these messages are vigorously reinforced by every fashion and celeb page telling us thin is beautiful, fat is horrible. Tabloids spend fortunes on paparazzi snaps of some celeb on the beach who has "let herself go". Star-cellulite-in-bikini is worth as much as star-in-illicit-love-nest. No child needs to be told fat is bad when right from nursery school it's the fat kids that get tormented for being slow, ugly and undesirable - often reinforced by the teachers who see them as losers too. From Charlie and the Chocolate Factory to Harry Potter, heroes are skinny and lithe, while nasty children are fat porkers.

So what's gone wrong? Most of us wrestle with food, torn between denial and desire, between fridge and gym, eating and regretting. It is very hard and girth grows by the decade. Most people I know live in an endless cycle of boom and bust with the weighing scales. But mostly the middle class stays the right side of dangerously obese. In the highest echelons, those superthin lettuce-eaters know that thinness radiates high status. "You can't be too rich or too thin," said Dorothy Parker.

Fat mans poor and out of control. People who feel they have no control over their own lives give up. What's there to struggle and make sacrifices for? No job, no prospects, no point. A little of what you fancy compensates for life's big disappointments. So drinking and smoking and eating the wrong things become small treats in desolate lives. Being out of control becomes a mindset ever harder to climb out of. No job becomes no status, no hope and, rapidly, unemployable semi-despair, whatever the job market out there.

Poor children know their low status from the day they walk in. The little girl with perfect kit, sparkly trainers and lovely lunchbox is always admired over the shabby kid who never went to ballet and only had a packet of Wotsits for breakfast. The rest of us have very good social incentives not to give in

to temptation - and even then often fail - but those who have nothing easily give up.

The traditional middle-class reaction is to teach poor mothers how to become better managers; a family can eat on very little, they opine. See how low-paid vicars bring up their brood on a pittance. Though when I recently tried living on the minimum wage, even without children, I found I couldn't manage, counting every penny and eating nothing but lentils, rice, potatoes, pasta, cabbage and oranges. Even with more money, the poor would probably eat themselves into an early grave if there was not much else to live for. Why defer gratification if there isn't going to be any compensating gratification?

It is inequality and disrespect that makes people fat: obesity took off 25 years ago, up 400% in the years when inequality has exploded. People will only get thinner when they are included in things that are worth staying thin for. Offer self-esteem, respect, jobs or some social status and the pounds would start to fall away.

Of course, we need tough labeling laws and a ban on advertising junk to children in schools and on TV. Of course it's a disgrace that there are virtually no safe cycle lanes in cities. Of course every school needs great dance, aerobics, sport and fun in after-school clubs. But let's not fool ourselves: only a genuine drive towards a society that doesn't leave out a quarter of its citizens will send the bathroom scales tipping the right direction.

CLOSE READING 2.

Fools, Damned Fools, and "Experts".

In this passage from "The Sunday Times" newspaper, novelist and journalist India Knight takes a look at people's reliance on so-called experts. She begins with a reference to a TV health "expert" who had been criticized for calling herself "Doctor".

"Doctor" Gillian McKeith, the unhealthy looking "health guru" who humiliates fat people on television, last week agreed to drop the "Doctor" part of her name in advertisements. This followed an investigation by the Advertising Standards Authority, which had come to the preliminary conclusion that the use of the word was likely to mislead the public. It is not the first time that McKeith has been censured by regulators and there seems to be a question mark over the validity of some of her qualifications. Ben Goldacre, the journalist and (real) doctor, pointed out last week that his dead cat, Hettie, was, like McKeith, a "certified professional member" of the American Association of Nutritional Consultants, the membership having been bought online for \$60.

What's interesting about this is how willing people are to suspend disbelief when it comes to "improving" themselves. I look at McKeith and I think, "If eating like you means looking as unwell as you, thanks, but no thanks."

Presumably this isn't that wildly unusual reaction - I mean, we all have eyes. And yet people appear to be queuing up to be humiliated by her on television, told that their insides are like cesspits and worse have their excrement examined in public. Perhaps they're just desperate - in which case it seems unkind, to put it mildly, to reduce some of them to tears of shame and self-disgust on national television.

But anyway, my point is: whatever happened to instinct? Do hundreds of thousands of people need to be told how to eat - to be told that guzzling vast quantities of chips is bad for you, or that drinking water is better than drinking the fluorescent fizzy stuff? I don't want to sound hypocritical here, having just written a diet book, but I do think that the reason that the book has done well is that my co-author and I make no claims of expertise

whatsoever - quite the contrary in fact. The approach is clearly not without appeal.

Yet elsewhere the public's appetite for "experts" seems insatiable. People who have babies get their knickers in the most terrible twist, agonizing over which "childcare expert" they should turn to for advice. In some childcare experts' hands, a three-month-old baby is no longer just a sweet little baby but a difficult and demanding creature that must be bossed into conforming to certain parent-pleasing patterns - instead of being left in peace to get on with its own baby-pleasing little routine of sleeping, eating, filling nappies and being kissed.

Once that's happened, the poor baby is quite likely to be dragged from one "expert" to another during its infancy - something that would be understandable if the child were ill, but that makes no sense at all given that it's healthy. And yet here they come: the osteopaths, the naturopaths, the homeopaths, the baby massage "experts", the child nutritionists, the sleep advisers, on and on. It's like a parallel universe populated by mad people. And yet the parents all have instincts, which they have decided not to trust. Why?

In some quarters I am sure that this loony kind of behaviour is born out of love - out of wanting one's child to have the best of everything and not taking any chances. But the end result is overcoddling to the point that an older child, already working incredibly hard at school, doesn't have time to play outside in the evening because of homework, music, drama, fencing, astrophysics, and so on.

Whatever happened to running about prodding things with sticks and getting muddy? And then, of course, when the child rightly rebels against this hot-housing onslaught - showing, at least, that its spirit hasn't been entirely crushed - its well-meaning parents call in the child psychologist. Because they trust an expert and they don't trust themselves.

They're everywhere, the experts. We can't cook anymore, apparently - we need armies of people telling us how to address the problematic question of vegetables. We can't have relationships without ludicrous self-help books in which complete strangers, usually American, usually low on charm, tell you

very specifically what to say or not to say to your boyfriend/ It's all very well making fun of them - I wish we'd do it more often - but these books, DVDs, guides and manuals sell by the million.

What's wrong with us? We can't even have sex. You'd think it wasn't that complicated and that in this department, if in no other, instinct might take over but apparently it's not simple at all. It's rocket science and we need TV shows to tell us how we're doing it wrong, more guidebooks, more "experts". It's like a collective form of hypochondria.

What I'd really like to know - unfortunately, there's no research available that I can find - is whether this Niagara of "expert advice" actually improves anyone's quality of life. From my observations, it just makes people anxious, stressed and dissatisfied. I could be wrong but our collective willingness to suspend disbelief and to dole out large sums for the privilege of "expert" advice would suggest some problem with self-esteem. Are we really that lost? Is everything really that confusing?

It would seem so. Our own opinions count for nothing until they have been backed up by some random bogus person banging on about "research" and "findings". We clearly feel that life is, or ought to be, reducible to a series of instructions, a bit like a self-assembly bookcase from Ikea, and that we couldn't possibly work out the instructions for ourselves using a mixture of instinct and experience. Like needy children, we need approbation at every turn.

Expertise used to be interesting. You'd listen, frowning with concentration, as some boffin on BBC2 explained some otherwise impenetrable piece of complicated science, and you'd go to bed feeling you'd learnt something. That still happens, thank God, but real experts have become the minority. These days everyone's an expert: no subject is too small, too insignificant or too ridiculous - and no qualification too bogus.