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**Higher English Close Reading Skills Builder**

**Reading for Understanding Analysis and Evaluation**

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*It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it.*  ~Oscar Wilde

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** Part One**

Getting to know quality newspapers and journalism is one of the best ways to prepare for Higher English Close Reading. You need to be able to quickly identify each of these language features.

* Different registers (i.e. formal and informal language; dialect; jargon)
* Different kinds of sentence structures (lists; build-up to climax; use of colons, semi-colons and dashes)
* Paragraph construction (e.g. the use of topic sentences and linking methods)
* Imagery (particularly similes and metaphors)
* Other special effects (alliteration, onomatopoeia, etc.)
* Rhetorical questions
* Tone (humorous, serious, ironic, etc.)
* Exaggeration (hyperbole)
* Effective word choice.

You may find the following links to a variety of articles useful:

[BBC NEWS](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/) - news from one of the world’s most reliable sources.

[BBC NEWS: Magazine](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine/) - a selection of interesting, fun and unusual articles, quotes and quizzes inspired by the news.

[BBC NEWS: Special Reports](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special_reports/) - articles grouped around major news topics.

[The Guardian: Comment is Free](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/uk-edition) - opinion pieces from Guardian columnists.

[The Observer: ‘The Debate’](http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/series/the-debate) - a series of articles debating controversial topics from both sides. Useful for discursive writing.

[The Telegraph: Comment](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/) - the opinion section of The Telegraph

[The Telegraph: Personal View](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/) - the latest opinion pieces by Telegraph columnists.

[The Herald: Columnists](http://www.heraldscotland.com/comment/columnists) - opinion pieces (with a Scottish focus) from The Herald.

[The New York Times: The Opinion Pages](http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html) - comment articles from one of America’s most respected newspapers

[ABC News](http://abcnews.go.com/) - the top stories from one of America’s less biased news organisations.

[Intelligent Life](http://www.moreintelligentlife.co.uk/) - sophisticated lifestyle magazine for thoughtful people. The language may be challenging at times, but some amazing and fascinating articles if you look for them. Includes excellent writing on pop culture, food, music, film, tv and art too!

[Focus Magazine](http://sciencefocus.com/) – a science and technology magazine.

**TASK**

Read the following articles and highlight and make notes on some of the language features used by the writer to engage the reader. pay particular attention to audience and purpose and some of the suggestions made at the start of part one.

# **Article 1:**

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/23/freshers-failed-experiment-higher-education>

**Note the use of sentence structure for effect and the consistent ‘voice’ and tone.**

# **Why this year's freshers are just part of a failed experiment**

Higher education is pumping out people with degrees into a jobs market that doesn't need them. It's blighting lives – and undermining the university system itself



[**Aditya Chakrabortty**](http://www.theguardian.com/profile/adityachakrabortty)

[The Guardian](http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian), Monday 23 September 2013 20.00 BST



What kind of future do 'typical' graduates have? Photograph: Alamy

Freshers, let's come clean: you are the latest batch of guinea pigs in an experiment that has already largely failed.

You've probably clocked the failure. You might have read about the Birmingham graduate despatched to stack shelves and clean floors in Poundland – for free. Or about how one in 10 students coming out of some Oxford colleges are still unemployed six months later. Or the official admission that, of the class of 2012 who have got a job, a third are in sectors that don't even require a degree.

British universities are producing more graduates than ever before. There's just one snag: there aren't the jobs for them to take up. And that's not only down to the economic slump, terrible though that is, but because of a political gamble by governments of right and left – one which will leave large numbers of young people indebted and underemployed.

From John Major onwards, successive leaders have flogged higher education as if it were some kind of personal and national cure-all. For Tony Blair, domestic politics all came down to the chant: "Education, education, education". According to the current universities minister, David Willetts, "Universities transform lives." Whether Labour or Tory, ministers shared some big assumptions about the value of a degree: that graduates get better jobs and have higher incomes; and that having more graduates helps countries grow faster and compete internationally.

The great game for Britain and other developed economies was to increase what was called "human capital": the employability of its workforce. Even if you agreed with these narrowly instrumental criteria by which to judge learning, that still left one glaring problem: where were these better jobs going to come from? Politicians focused on offering up newly minted BAs and BScs to the private sector, blithely assuming that it would provide suitable opportunities. Even the most addled casualty of freshers' week could have spotted the flaw in that plan.

Yet over the past couple of decades we've seen a big experiment in manufacturing more graduates. In 1989, 19% of school-leavers went into higher education; now it's over 40%. The politicians have got what they wanted: a generation clad in capes and mortarboards. But those leaving higher education have not got what politicians promised: the jobs to go with their qualification.

In his speeches, Willetts argues that getting a degree means higher wages. Much higher wages. "The typical graduate earns £31,000 a year as against £19,000 a year for a non-graduate." Were those claims about the "graduate premium" printed on a roadside billboard, I doubt the Advertising Standards Authority would let them stand.

Who is Willetts's "typical graduate"? Is it the mathmo from Magdalen who's already lined up a place at Goldman Sachs, or the would-be social worker fresh out of the University of East London? According to a 2011 paper commissioned and published by Willetts's own office, the department for business, a man who comes out of university with a BA in history or philosophy will earn an average of only 2.3% a year more than if he'd gone straight into the labour market. If he studies creative arts and design, he'd be 1% worse off.

Britain now has a generation of expensively educated graduates – without the graduate work for them to do. Instead, faced with all this surplus talent, employers who previously didn't ask for a degree now demand one. Nursing, policing, hotel management: these sectors now hire from university. Spicerhaart, the lettings agent, has its own graduate-training scheme. Only firsts and 2:1s need apply; stick it out for two years, and you can manage a local lettings agency.

A 2008 study by Francis Green and Yu Zhu at the University of Kentfound that a third of graduates were "overqualified", doing work that wouldn't usually require a university degree. One out of every 10 graduates was "really overqualified" – doing a job that didn't use any of their costly university training.

The people who end up in these careers know they've drawn the short straw. Interviewing 37 graduates from a mix of disciplines, Belgin Okay-Somerville at Aberdeen and Dora Scholarios at Strathclyde found that over half landed up on what one called "the wrong foot". They had typically got a job, but it wasn't the fast-track, high-flying position promised on graduate milk-rounds. Instead, they were doing routine work, usually without much training and often on temporary or insecure contracts. "Rubbish jobs", the graduates called them, "frustrating". One told the academics: "It's got mundane very quickly."

Once they were locked into this trajectory, it was difficult to get out. According to Okay-Somerville, a graduate on the wrong foot could expect to bob from crap position to crap position: from selling tickets, to being an HR assistant to redundancy. And on and on for years.

University isn't just about getting a job, you might retort. I couldn't agree more. But that's what the political class has reduced it to. All the stuff that makes learning worthwhile – broadening one's horizons, having daft but heavy arguments with new friends – all that just gets lip service from ministers. And in turn, they've shaped an higher-education system that allows less and less space for speculation and taking intellectual risks. How are you meant to do that when three years at uni can now easily cost 50 grand, and you need to do one or two part-time jobs to pay the rent? What you're left with now increasingly looks like the degree factories the critics always warned against – only without the degree-level jobs to go alongside them.

**ARTICLE 2:**

[**http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/hail-new-prince-george-unworthy-are-we-commoners-to-be-in-your-presence-8732026.html**](http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/hail-new-prince-george-unworthy-are-we-commoners-to-be-in-your-presence-8732026.html)

**Note the use of humour, satire and cynicism.**



[*MARK STEEL*](http://www.independent.co.uk/biography/mark-steel)

Thursday 25 July 2013

# Hail, new Prince George! Unworthy are we commoners to be in your presence!

We haven’t just gone back 20 years to when the monarchy was popular; we’ve gone back past Victorian times when the rise of democracy made royalty seem outdated

What a week! Oh such boundless joy that transports us to the very heavens! It began with Nicholas Witchell gasping statements such as: “I am informed the royal cervix has currently widened to 9cm, and the Queen is said to be ‘thrilled’ at this level of dilation.”

“The world waits” were the words the BBC put up, and indeed the whole world was thinking of nothing else. Somali fishermen abandoned their nets, saying: “Today I cannot concentrate on mackerel to feed my village, as we pray that Nicholas Witchell soon brings us news of the royal head emerging.” In shanty towns of Sao Paulo, the destitute stopped begging to mark the event, declaring: “The breaking of the royal waters certainly puts our trifles into perspective.”

Then he came, and even before we saw him we could tell he was majestic, glorious, divine, and the rest of us should show our gratitude by self-harming with scissors, as a sign of our pathetic humility next to his exalted magnificence. In Parliament, our representatives gave thanks, with speeches such as: “May we convey our sincerest, deepest, cosmic and interplanetary congratulations, that are yet miserably inadequate on such an orgasmic occasion, to the infinitely immaculate Royal Family upon [the birth](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/royal-baby-the-prince-meets-his-people-in-world-media-frenzy-8727931.html) of the perfect one, and may we on this side of the House offer a selection of limbs we have severed with rusty implements as a gesture of our gratitude to their everlasting marvellousness.”

[The BBC](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/bbc-defends-royal-baby-coverage-after-viewers-complain-over-unbalanced-broadcast-of-duke-and-duchess-of-cambridge-new-arrival-8730135.html) began hyperventilating at the unforgettable moment when the family left the hospital. “Prince William has put the baby in the car and driven off,” we were told. That’s royal upbringing for you. Because us commoners usually get everything mixed up, putting a nappy on the car and pouring petrol over the baby.

By now the merchandise was on sale, as thankful subjects bought royal baby mugs and tea towels, and even in deprived housing estates, joyous common folk celebrated by buying commemorative crack, stamped with royal approval to mark the event with regal hallucinations. Soon, we hope, it will be announced that the royal placenta will be put on display in Westminster Abbey, so ecstatic well-wishers can queue for several months to get a glimpse, with a special book in which they can leave their comments, which the new prince can read at his leisure once he becomes king.

Cannons were fired; guards played “Congratulations”, and it would have been quite believable if Huw Edwards had said: “Next, in keeping with the ancient tradition going back to the birth of King Henry III, a camel will be exploded within the grounds of Windsor Castle.”

The BBC informed us: “There will be updates throughout the night on our news channels”, which was an immense relief, because otherwise how would we know of any developments unfolding in the life of this one-day-old baby? What if, at three in the morning, he started to fly? Without regular updates throughout the night we’d have to wait until the morning to find out.

So Nicholas Witchell heroically appeared whenever you switched on, to tell us: “The Palace has confirmed the royal baby’s latest poo was a darker green than his first one, but just as runny, and Prince Charles is said to be ‘delighted’ at the consistency.” In between the most exciting points, the news channels discussed the implications of all this with objective commentators, such as the editor of *Majesty* magazine, and a spokesperson from Debrett’s. Some stuck to constitutional matters, such as whether [Chris Froome](http://www.independent.co.uk/sport/cycling/va-va-froome-chris-froome-wins-tour-de-france-and-englands-ashes-cricketers-bask-in-success-but-lee-westwood-washes-out-8724845.html) and Andy Murray should hand their trophies to the royal baby, as they are in truth the prince’s achievements.

Others just beamed with submissive glee, and one chap from a New Zealand royal magazine was so excited he made a sort of “Wheeey” noise, though I think what he was trying to say was: “It’s so wonderful that I’ve ejaculated, on behalf of Her Majesty’s loyal subjects of my humble dominion nation.”

One point they agreed on is that the current adoration of the Royal Family assures the monarchy’s survival for generations, its popularity back to the level it commanded 20 years ago. But this is understating the situation. We haven’t just gone back 20 years; we’ve gone back past Victorian times when the rise of democracy made royalty seem outdated.

We’ve gone back past the 1790s, when Tom Paine’s *Rights of Man*became one of the biggest bestsellers ever, for declarations such as: “The idea of a hereditary ruler is as ridiculous as the idea of a hereditary mathematician.” In the current climate it seems certain they’ll give that a try, and next week we’ll be told: “Behold, for the future president of the Royal Society of Multiplication was born today.” Then in 60 years’ time he’ll give lectures that go: “Aren’t these squiggles wonderful? I’ve no idea what they mean but I was left them by my grandfather.”

We’ve gone back to before the 17th century, when every field of human activity was imbued with debate about the nature of monarchy. So as we rejoice that a newborn baby is worthier than the rest of us because we’re common, let’s take the rest of our ideas from the 15th century as well. To start with, let’s abandon gravity, which is nowhere near as much fun as believing that stuff stays on the floor because GOD keeps it there, and work our way along from there.

Occasionally, I confess, I’ve had the thought that if you really care for this newborn baby, you’d want the monarchy abolished so he could lead a human life, rather than one beholden to “duty” with no room for emotion, his every moment pored over by sycophantic idiots, every decision made for him according to the requirements of “the Palace”, and, worst of all, having to be in close proximity to Nicholas Witchell.

But then I banish these devilish notions, and run across fields shrieking: “All hail the royal baby, for we are mere lice upon the most rabid of mangy hounds compared with thee” and I thank the Lord we’re not like North Korea, where the way they fawn before their unelected head of state is clearly bonkers.

**ARTICLE 3:**

[**http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/24/25-will-never-be-the-new-18**](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/24/25-will-never-be-the-new-18)

**Note the use of linking and sophisticated vocabulary.**

# **25 will never be the new 18 – so parents, don't infantilise young adults**

Graduating amid a fog of debt in a lack of jobs doesn't help anyone grow up. Millennials need both support and respect



[**Daisy Buchanan**](http://www.theguardian.com/profile/daisy-buchanan)

* + [The Guardian](http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian), Tuesday 24 September 2013 14.48 BST

‘Parents who think their kids are in a state of arrested development should remember that their studies were paid for, and if they couldn't find a job, the state would support them.' Photograph: Kim Carson/Getty Images

It was only a matter of time before the problem of perpetual adolescence was formalised. After years of analysing the issues faced by Millennials, ranging from the collapsing job market, rising house prices, increased tuition fees and the pressure to work for free, to our decreasing ability to settle down with a nice partner and stop taking heavily filtered photos of ourselves, a solution has been found. "Let life begin at 25!" say the experts. According to new guidelines for psychologists, patients in their early 20s should be treated as adolescents – with neuroscientists advising that the period between 18 and 25 should actually be classed as "late adolescence", because the brain is still developing during that time.

For many readers aged 25 and under, this news may come as something of a relief. If the world seems terrifying at times, that's because you're technically still a child. Work, love and life can wait while you hide under the duvet for a bit. And perhaps it's a relief to some parents too. This month, thousands of new students in the UK set off to start studying in a new city, and thousands more returned home after graduating. It's hard to know how to relate to your grownup child when they've been living independently for the past three or four years. So it's easier for everyone if you're allowed to keep treating them as you did during their teens. As long as they're under their parents' roof, they will probably need reminding to wash behind their ears. I suspect many adult children in this country are asked to observe a curfew, if not an actual bedtime.

However, "young adult" is not an euphemism for "overgrown teenager", and once a person has turned 18, it's time for them to start setting off on the path that will eventually lead them to an independent life. It might be harder than ever for twentysomethings to live as adults in a practical and economic way, but there's no reason why they shouldn't be considered mature in other areas.

The teen years are often tumultuous, with adolescents experiencing extreme changes that affect their brains as well as their bodies. We expect teenagers to be moody, emotional and unpredictable. Although puberty affects young people in different ways at different times, most people find that the physical and emotional transformation starts to stabilise in their late teens. By the time they reach their 20s, most young people are starting to be sure of their opinions and feelings. It's disrespectful to hear their adult concerns and treat them as typical teen issues.

By the time most people reach 25, they will probably have experience of work, study, relationships, friendships, disappointments and triumphs. Even if they're still living in the family home, they will have experienced independence in other places, whether that's at school, university or among colleagues.

Yet we're so familiar with the fear that children are growing up before they're ready that we've become reluctant to let them grow up at all. Parents are pressured to give their kids everything but space. When you've worked hard to generate opportunities for your child, it's difficult not to claim those opportunities as your own achievements. But people in their early 20s need to feel that they can be proud of their accomplishments if they're ever going to lead their own lives.

Adult children do need support. And traditionally, that support came from the state. The problem of young people graduating amid a fog of debt and anxiety is a recent one. Parents who think their kids are in a state of arrested development would do well to remember that their studies were paid for, they received grants, not loans, and if they couldn't immediately find a job and pay their rent, the state would support them – they would not be forced to return to their teenage bedrooms and wait for their lives to get going as they watched the dust gather on the Meccano sets sitting on the tops of their old wardrobes.

Twenty-five will never be the new 18. Infantalising Millennials will not help them practically or psychologically deal with unemployment and debt. We need to acknowledge that young people might not be leading a life that we recognise as a traditional adult one, but they are still adults. Their emotional concerns stem from concrete problems, and they deserve a serious and respectful response. Treating young adults like teenagers is not an effective solution. Instead of writing off their offspring's emotions, parents should be getting very angry too.

**ARTICLE 3:**

[**http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/21/american-gun-out-control-porter**](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/21/american-gun-out-control-porter)

**Note the use of statistics and use of evidence to support arguments.**

# **American gun use is out of control. Shouldn't the world intervene?**

The death toll from firearms in the US suggests that the country is gripped by civil war



* + [**Henry Porter**](http://www.theguardian.com/profile/henryporter)

[The Observer](http://observer.guardian.co.uk/), Saturday 21 September 2013 22.12 BST

A man on a rifle range: 'More Americans lost their lives from firearms in the past 45 years than in all wars involving the US.' Photograph: Scott Olson/Getty Images

Last week, Starbucks asked its American customers to please not bring their guns into the coffee shop. This is part of the company's concern about customer safety and follows a ban in the summer on smoking within 25 feet of a coffee shop entrance and an earlier ruling about scalding hot coffee. After the celebrated Liebeck v McDonald's case in 1994, involving a woman who suffered third-degree burns to her thighs, Starbucks complies with the Specialty Coffee Association of America's recommendation that drinks should be served at a maximum temperature of 82C.

Although it was brave of Howard Schultz, the company's chief executive, to go even this far in a country where people are better armed and only slightly less nervy than rebel fighters in Syria, we should note that dealing with the risks of scalding and secondary smoke came well before addressing the problem of people who go armed to buy a latte. There can be no weirder order of priorities on this planet.

That's America, we say, as news of the latest massacre breaks – last week it was the slaughter of 12 people by Aaron Alexis at Washington DC's navy yard – and move on. But what if we no longer thought of this as just a problem for America and, instead, viewed it as an international humanitarian crisis – a quasi civil war, if you like, that calls for outside intervention? As citizens of the world, perhaps we should demand an end to the unimaginable suffering of victims and their families – the maiming and killing of children – just as America does in every new civil conflict around the globe.

The annual toll from firearms in the US is running at 32,000 deaths and climbing, even though the general crime rate is on a downward path (it is 40% lower than in 1980). If this perennial slaughter doesn't qualify for intercession by the UN and all relevant NGOs, it is hard to know what does.

To absorb the scale of the mayhem, it's worth trying to guess the death toll of all the wars in American history since the War of Independence began in 1775, and follow that by estimating the number killed by firearms in the US since the day that Robert F. Kennedy was shot in 1968 by a .22 Iver-Johnson handgun, wielded by Sirhan Sirhan. The figures from Congressional Research Service, plus recent statistics fromicasualties.org, tell us that from the first casualties in the battle of Lexington to recent operations in Afghanistan, the toll is 1,171,177. By contrast, the number killed by firearms, including suicides, since 1968, according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the FBI, is 1,384,171.

That 212,994 more Americans lost their lives from firearms in the last 45 years than in all wars involving the US is a staggering fact, particularly when you place it in the context of the safety-conscious, "secondary smoke" obsessions that characterise so much of American life.

Everywhere you look in America, people are trying to make life safer. On roads, for example, there has been a huge effort in the past 50 years to enforce speed limits, crack down on drink/drug driving and build safety features into highways, as well as vehicles. The result is a steadily improving record; by 2015, forecasters predict that for first time road deaths will be fewer than those caused by firearms (32,036 to 32,929).

Plainly, there's no equivalent effort in the area of privately owned firearms. Indeed, most politicians do everything they can to make the country less safe. Recently, a Democrat senator from Arkansas named Mark Pryor ran a TV ad against the gun-control campaign funded by NY mayor Michael Bloomberg – one of the few politicians to stand up to the NRA lobby – explaining why he was against enhanced background checks on gun owners yet was committed to "finding real solutions to violence".

About their own safety, Americans often have an unusual ability to hold two utterly opposed ideas in their heads simultaneously. That can only explain the past decade in which the fear of terror has cost the country hundreds of billions of dollars in wars, surveillance and intelligence programmes and homeland security. Ten years after 9/11, homeland security spending doubled to $69bn . The total bill since the attacks is more than $649bn.

One more figure. There have been fewer than 20 terror-related deaths on American soil since 9/11 and about 364,000 deaths caused by privately owned firearms. If any European nation had such a record and persisted in addressing only the first figure, while ignoring the second, you can bet your last pound that the State Department would be warning against travel to that country and no American would set foot in it without body armour.

But no nation sees itself as outsiders do. Half the country is sane and rational while the other half simply doesn't grasp the inconsistencies and historic lunacy of its position, which springs from the second amendment right to keep and bear arms, and is derived from English common law and our 1689 Bill of Rights. We dispensed with these rights long ago, but American gun owners cleave to them with the tenacity that previous generations fought to continue slavery. Astonishingly, when owning a gun is not about ludicrous macho fantasy, it is mostly seen as a matter of personal safety, like the airbag in the new Ford pick-up or avoiding secondary smoke, despite conclusive evidence that people become less safe as gun ownership rises.

Last week, I happened to be in New York for the 9/11 anniversary: it occurs to me now that the city that suffered most dreadfully in the attacks and has the greatest reason for jumpiness is also among the places where you find most sense on the gun issue in America. New Yorkers understand that fear breeds peril and, regardless of tragedies such as Sandy Hook and the DC naval yard, the NRA, the gun manufacturers, conservative-inclined politicians and parts of the media will continue to advocate a right, which, at base, is as archaic as a witch trial.

Talking to American friends, I always sense a kind of despair that the gun lobby is too powerful to challenge and that nothing will ever change. The same resignation was evident in President Obama's rather lifeless reaction to the Washington shooting last week. There is absolutely nothing he can do, which underscores the fact that America is in a jam and that international pressure may be one way of reducing the slaughter over the next generation. This has reached the point where it has ceased to be a domestic issue. The world cannot stand idly by.

**Close Reading – The Essentials**

One of the most important things you can do to improve your skills in Higher English is to practise close reading question types. These are the different kinds of questions that make up a close reading paper – question types you can learn strategies for tackling.

This booklet is designed to help you do just that. You’ll find advice on how to approach individual question types – those important strategies – as well as examples of each question to try out.

**Question Types and Strategies**

**Own words questions**

These questions are designed to test your UNDERSTANDING of the passage. You do this by putting the writer’s ideas into your own words.

**Your strategy is to …**

* **Find the relevant line(s) in the passage and highlight them**
* **Put the line(s)/idea(s) into your own words**
* **Check you have given sufficient detail for the number of marks available**

**Context**

Context questions require you to work out the meaning of a given word from its context – the other words and phrases that surround it.

**Your strategy is to …**

* **Discuss how the context of the word helps you to understand its meaning**
* **Arrive at a definition for the word**

**Link**

Link questions also focus on your understanding of the text – in this case how arguments are joined together.

**Your strategy is …**

* **Quote word(s) or phrase from the link sentence /paragraph and show how it links back to previous ideas**
* **Quote from the link sentence /paragraph and show how it links forward to ideas in the next section.**

**Imagery**

Imagery questions only ever refer to three techniques – similes, metaphors or personification. These are all comparisons – and you must analyse the people, objects or places that are being compared.

**Your strategy is …**

* **Quote and name the comparison (unless the technique is in the question)**
* **Say what is being compared to what**
* **Use ‘Just as … so too …’**
* **Explain what the comparison helps you understand (or whatever focus the question takes)**

**Sentence Structure**

Sentence structure questions may strike fear into your heart but they really needn’t. Remember you’re looking for one of three things: punctuation that develops understanding, sentence types that develop understanding or sentence patterns that – yes – develop understanding.

**Your strategy is …**

* **Identify the sentence structure that is helping to make meaning (make sure it’s clear what you’re talking about)**
* **Suggest why the writer has used it**
* **Explain what it has helped you to understand**

**Word Choice**

Word choice questions ask you to examine the words used by the writer to either persuade you to a point of view, or to make you feel a particular emotion. That means they are generally the more unusual or ‘stand out’ words in the passage. You should think about how effective the author’s word choice is and how the impact would be changed if different words were to be used instead.

# **Your strategy is …**

* **Identify the word you want to comment on**
* **Provide the connotations for the word**
* **Explain what it helps you to understand**

**Tone**

When you think about tone, think about how the writer would sound if reading the extract aloud, and how the writer feels about his or her subject matter (there may be a clue to this in the italicised blurb at the start of the passage).

It’s likely the tone of the passage will be sarcastic or at least humorous – though it may be ironic, sardonic (mocking), bitter, angry etc. Whatever, the mood will be obvious.

# **Your strategy is …**

* **Identify the tone**
* **Follow word choice or sentence structure strategies to show how it is created**

**The Final Question**

The final question in the Higher close reading paper asks you to address the main ideas from both passages – either looking for agreement or disagreement between the writers.

# **Your strategy is …**

* **Always begin with a short summary statement**
* **The first writer thinks that …….. However the second writer differs by saying …..**
* **OR**
* **Both writers agree that ……**
* **Then try and add three or four bullet points stating where the agreements or disagreements are.**

**Part 2: Putting the skills in to Practice**

**Focus on question types**

Often you are asked to pick out a fact from the text and express it **in your own words.**

For example:

 It is increasingly clear that the Internet is going to be a transformative moment in human history as significant as the printing press. A decade after Johannes Gutenberg invented it, even the most astute watchers could have only begun to squint at the changes the printing press would spur. In time, it made popular nationalism possible, because linguistic communities could communicate with each other independently, in one language, and form a sense of community. It dissolved the medieval stranglehold of information held by churches and Kings, making it possible for individuals to read the Bible for themselves – and to reject violently the readings used by authority to strengthen its rule. Communications technologies rewire our brains; they make us into a different species.

1. In what two ways, according to the writer, was the invention of printing “a transformative moment in human history”? (2U)

Sample Answer

* It increased people’s sense of national/racial identity – because it allowed them to share ideas in a common language.
* It reduced the ability of organised religion and monarchs to control information and/or increased people’s freedom to think for themselves because they could read the Bible for themselves.

**Practice Own word Questions**

1. The consensus on what constitutes public good manners has broken down to the extent that Transport for London is now running a multimillion-pound campaign just to remind us not to eat stinking burgers on the Tube and to give up our bus seats for old folk.

I suppose we should be grateful that, instead of threatening more penalties, they are calling upon our better nature. The Government, on the other hand, seems to live under the delusion that if just one more pleasure is prohibited, another set of draconian rules introduced, 1,000 more speed cameras installed, a CCTV mounted on every corner, human beings will at last fall into line.

**Q.** What, according to the writer, is the fundamental difference in approach between Transport for London and the Government? **2**

2. The film *Wall-E* is over-rated. After the first 20 minutes, the Pixar animation is essentially a standard Disney cartoon. It is technically brilliant, slick and witty, but it follows the well-worn formula of cute anthropomorphic creatures (albeit robots instead of animals) struggling against overwhelming odds, finding love, winning through and delivering the anticipated charge of sentimental uplift.

But those first 20 minutes are really something. It is not just the relative courage of the dystopian vision of an uninhabitable earth or the visual richness of the imagery. It is the fact that a company as mainstream as Disney has returned to wordless story-telling. The fascination of *Wall-E* is that it is stunning up to the point when dialogue is introduced, after which it becomes clever but familiar entertainment.

**Q** Why does the writer prefer the first 20 minutes of the film to the rest of it?

**4**

3. JK Rowling will never win the Nobel Prize for Literature. On any technical level, her writing is not brilliant. But what use is brilliant writing if - the usual result – it isn’t read? Fiction isn’t supposed to be grand opera. It has only recently pretended to be art.

Dickens knew all about these things. He offended his betters by making absurd amounts of money. He flogged cheap editions on railway platforms. They called him a hack, and denounced “Dickensian” as a marketing game. He didn’t deny a word of it. His only answer was that he was a writer, first and last: his job was to make people read.

Rowling’s glory is that she caused an epidemic of childhood reading in a digital world.

Q. What, according to the writer, makes JK Rowling and Dickens similar? **3**

4. Of course, those born since the 1970s may find celebrity on the Taylor scale hard to understand. The whole concept of celebrity has been degraded, over the last two decades, by an avalanche of media coverage which makes no pretence of interest in the actual work that well-known people do, but instead focuses entirely and insidiously on the personal lives, and most particularly the personal appearance, of anyone who has ever been in the public eye for anything, from behaving like an idiot on reality television to having sex with a Premier League footballer.

**Q** What three main criticisms does the writer make of the way the media treat celebrities today? **3**

**Summary Questions**

You will be familiar with these questions from National 5. These questions are very popular also in the new Higher exam.

For example:

**Despite Google we Still Need Good Libraries**

It may well be that public demand and technical change mean we no longer need the dense neighbourhood network of local libraries of yore. But our culture, local and universal, does demand strategically situated libraries where one can find the material that is too expensive for the ordinary person to buy, or too complex to find online. Such facilities are worth funding publicly because the return in informed citizenship and civic pride is far in excess of the money spent.

Libraries also have that undervalued resource—the trained librarian. The ultimate Achilles’ heel of the internet is that it presents every page of information as being equally valid, which is of course nonsense. The internet is cluttered with false information, or just plain junk. The library, with its collection honed and developed by experts, is a guarantee of the quality and veracity of the information contained therein, something that Google can never provide.

**Question:**

In your own words, as far as possible, give four reasons the writer presents in lines 35-46 in favour of maintaining traditional public libraries. **4**

**Possible Answers:**

1. idea of accessibility (ie acceptable gloss on “strategically situated”)
2. idea of free access (ie acceptable gloss on “too expensive … to buy”)
3. idea that resources are more sophisticated (ie acceptable gloss on “too complex to find online”)
4. idea of supporting democratic responsibilities (ie acceptable gloss on “informed citizenship”)
5. idea of community awareness/cohesion (ie acceptable gloss on “civic pride”)
6. idea of professional support (ie acceptable gloss on “trained librarian”)
7. idea of informed/refined selection (ie acceptable gloss on “honed and developed by experts”)
8. idea of high standard of material (ie acceptable gloss on “quality … of information”)
9. idea of authenticity (ie acceptable gloss on “veracity of information”)
10. idea of selectivity of information (in contrast with junk online)

**Practice Summary Questions**

1. Fred “The Shred” Goodwin and Jade Goody may have come from very different backgrounds, but they have more in common than the passing similarity of their surnames. Both creatures of the zeitgeist, the Paisley-grammar-schoolboy-turned-banker and the Essex-chav-turned-reality-TV-princess knew how to play a world which turned on greed and fame to their advantage, and made bucketloads of filthy lucre as a result. Focused and ambitious, they seemed untroubled by the distress of those on whose backs they trod as they clambered to the top. Both ruthless; both self-obsessed; both fallible. Yet Jade was mourned as a national treasure and lauded by everyone from the Prime Minister to the Archbishop of Canterbury, while the smashing of windows at Sir Fred’s £2m Edinburgh mansions as part of a hate campaign by a group called Bank Bosses are Criminals was greeted with unconcealed glee.

Q Summarise three key similarities and one key difference the writer points out between these two people. 4

2. New technology has made is simple to record on camera almost any trivial event. And it’s the work of a mouse-click to distribute those images to all and sundry. Yet just because something is technically possible doesn’t automatically make it desirable. I wonder if it is starting to impair the transient joy and spontaneity of daily life. This ubiquitous, almost obligatory obsession with capturing even the most private thing in life for posterity is starting to rob us of our ability to savour the moment. And if we don’t fully savour the moment as it happens, we may miss its significance, pungency and richness. That makes the process of recalling it later much harder. Paradoxically, our click-click obsession with photographing everything may be sapping, rather than enhancing, our brain’s ability to revisit old events with pleasure or nostalgia.

“You had to be there” isn’t just a cliché. It’s also good advice. We should stop tryingto freeze-frame treasurable moments for some tomorrow that may never come, or some absentee audience that probably isn’t interested anyway, and just enjoy them as they come and go. God knows, they come and go quickly enough.

Q Summarise the key points in the writer’s argument against the practice of capturing everything on camera. 4

1. The cost of cleaning up the mess at Fukushima is going to be immense – early estimates put it at one trillion yen for the reactors alone. Then, there are all the businesses that will have to be compensated for losses. Add in the damage to exports – America has now banned the import of Japanese milk and vegetables – plus the cost of relocating families whose homes are contaminated and you have another trillion or two. But the biggest bill will come from the rest of the nuclear industry. Japan has 55 nuclear power plants and those that aren’t actually closed forthwith will need billions spent on additional safety measures. The long tail of a nuclear accident stretches across decades. Estimates of the cost of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 vary around £200bn, and the sarcophagus that was built around the still radioactive mass is already needing to be replaced. By comparison, the Gulf of Mexico oil spill is a fleeting event.

Q. Summarise the reasons for the “immense” financial cost of the damage to the Fukushima reactor**. 5**

4. There is an increasingly anxious debate about London as a place of social fragmentation; a lament that it’s a city of so many languages we can no longer find the everyday solidarities of sharing pubic space. Our politics of migration and integration is still beholden to the myth that multiplicity of languages is a curse – a language test is now imposed on prospective British citizens. There’s a media campaign excoriating the cost of the translation service that ensure access to public services for ethnic minorities.

Yet the historical reality is that almost all successful societies have been multilingual, and many are today. Across Africa and Asia, it is routine for people to speak more than one language. Britain’s monolingual culture of the past century has been entirely atypical, apart of a standardisation and centralisation of culture dominated by the state that obliterated dialects and other languages.

Far from being a curse, multiplicity of language is a blessing, an expression of the huge range of human imaginative capability. It does not confuse, but rather enriches our understanding of human nature.

Q. Summarise the three key points the writer is making about more than one language being spoken in a city. **3**

**Word Choice Questions**

Public service broadcasting means a network that produces a range of well-made programmes, particularly in less popular genres, which are financed according to their intrinsic needs and not the size of the audience. Chasing ratings is not what the BBC should be doing. Yet the BBC schedules are stuffed with cheap, populist rubbish which can hardly be said to be needed since commercial producers make them with even greater enthusiasm and vulgarity. Intoxicated with the popularity of such genres, BBC1 and BBC2 have allowed them to run rampant like some nasty kind of pondlife and crowd out other programmes.

**Q. Show how the writer’s word choice in this paragraph makes clear her disapproval of the type of programme currently on the BBC schedules. 4**

**Possible Answers:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Quote** | **Connotations + Answer the question** |
| “stuffed” | Suggests the schedules are filled to overflowing and it is done in a careless, thoughtless way |
| “cheap” | Suggests not just inexpensive but low quality |
| “populist” | Suggests undiscriminating, appealing to the lowest common denominator |
| “rubbish” | Suggests totally valueless, no better than junk waste |
| “pondlife” | Suggests unpleasant, destructive, parasitical, lowest of the low |
| “crowd out” | Suggests aggressive, bullying, disregard for others |

**Practice Word Choice Questions**

#### 1. We had a power cut on Tuesday evening. I sat in the dark, oddly relaxed. No e-mail. No telly. Not enough torchlight to read by.

Meanwhile, my younger son thrashed from room to room, between Wii console, computer and TV, fretting that the shows he had Sky-plussed wouldn’t record, scrabbling to see how much charge was left in his brother’s laptop so that he might, at very least, watch a movie.

When I laughed at his techno-junkie despair he exclaimed in white-hot fury: “It’s all right for you. To me it’s…it’s like living in poverty.”

**Q**. Show how the writer’s word choice in the second paragraph conveys how much the loss of electricity affected the writer’s son.

2.When I was a teenager, I spent almost three years straight in psychiatric hospitals being treated for severe anorexia nervosa. Unlike some newspaper columnists, I do not feel compelled to talk about my personal experiences with the mental health profession in every article I write. In fact, I try to avoid talking about them altogether, mainly because I hope that I have something more to offer than my history.

However, the nonsense that has been spouted of late in the media about eating disorders is too ubiquitous and too stupid, even by the low standards of the media’s usual coverage of the illness. And while I would never claim that my personal experience makes me an expert on the subject, maybe it gives me a different perspective than, say, a lazy news reporter churning out clichés under a deadline or a columnist in search of easy outrage.

**Q.** Show how the writer’s word choice in the second paragraph makes clear her contempt for sections of the media.

3. A new sight puzzles winter ramblers in East Suffolk: a bold hand-lettered sign declaring “Say no to sea eagles here”. Baffling, at first: not much point in saying “no” to that flying fortress of the bird world, the white-tailed sea eagle. It wouldn’t listen.

That, however, is not what the “no” suggests. It is a cry raised by farmers, landowners and level-headed bird-lovers horrified at a plan hatched by the quango Natural England and the RSPB. They want to spend more than £600,000 to introduce the birds to Suffolk. They claim “vast” popular support – though you could doubt the validity of a sample of 500 people asked some saccharine question about whether they fancy seeing one.

**Q**  How does the writer’s word choice in the second paragraph make clear her low opinion of the plan?

4. Last week it was proposed that parents should be exhorted to adhere to the following five-a-day childcare check-list: read to your kids for 15 minutes; play on the floor with them for 10; talk to them for 10 minutes; praise them regularly; and give them a nutritious diet.

The problem isn’t the checklist itself, but the “nudge” principle behind the campaign. This politically trendy word litters the report. Governments are becoming overly fond of nudging, manipulation, beguiling and frog-marching us towards the kinds of personal change they say would lead to better health, reduced crime and other grand objectives.

**Q**  Show how the writer’s word choice in the second paragraph shows her disapproval of the campaign.

5. Homework has a lot to answer for. It doesn’t mess up every child. But the mental oppression of leaving school for the day, and then facing hours of slog, alientates many. Piling mountains of homework on children is the surest way to turn education into drudgery.

In the 40 years since I last wore a blazer, the culture of excessive homework has become far worse, denying children the time to discover the infinite richness and possibilities of life. The narrowing of the curriculum over the past 30 years – pushing art, music, sport and drama to the margins – is shocking.

**Q**. Show how the writer’s word choice in these paragraphs makes clear his disapproval of homework.

6. Research by the RSPCA has found that a quarter of schools own pets, ranging from a hermit crab to a horse. Hurrah! A small piece of chaos, of life, amid the regimented drilling that we call school.

But not for much longer, for the RSPCA believes there is a danger that the kids might be too noisy, or the lighting conditions could be wrong, and that the classroom pet may receive variable care from different families at evenings or weekends.

If the RSPCA has its way, no more generations of kids will be taught to care for the school guinea pig or rabbit, or hermit crab; no more learning responsibility and respect for animals, no feeling the joy of holding a live thing in their hands. Laughably, the charity suggests that schools should get a soft toy instead to teach children about animal welfare.

**Q** Show how the writer’s word choice emphasises the positive side of having pets in schools.

**Imagery Questions**

Remember that when you’re answering an imagery question, you must give the literal meaning of the word (the “root” of the image) and then go on to show how the writer is using this idea to explain what (s)he is saying.

To gain full marks in Close Reading, when analysing an image, you must:

1. identify what it is being compared to (the root image)
2. what that suggests
3. answer the question.

It’s a lot of work but will gain you 2 marks every time.

For example:

**“He fell 12 stories, hitting the pavement like a paper bag filled with vegetable soup.”**

Question:

How effective do you find this description of the falling man? (2A)

Answer:

1. **Just as** a paper bag filled with vegetable soup **(= root image)**
2. would hit the ground with a tremendous splat, leaving a terrible mess behind **(=analysis)**,
3. **so too** would the man after falling 12 stories onto a pavement creating a visually disgusting but powerful image for the reader. **(= answer to the question)**

**Practice Questions**

1. Twitter is the latest social networking craze to have conquered the ageing mainstream media, and using it is like sending out a universal text message to the whole planet. For many, this orgy of technology-enhanced wittering is simply something that we indulge in during our spare time, but it’s not without its uses. Its coming of age is generally dated to the Mumbai terror attacks at the end of November, when minute-by-minute updates of the unfolding chaos zipped around the world from eye-witnesses armed with Twitter on their laptops and mobile phones. It was given another fillip on the geopolitical stage in January, when the Israeli Government use Twitter to snipe at the mainstream media and get across its reasons for invading Gaza.

**Q** Show how the writer uses imagery in this paragraph to support the points he is making about Twitter in general and the media in general.

1. Britain now has the longest work hours in the developed world after the US – and in a recession, those of us with jobs scamper ever faster in our hamster-wheels. Yet the economists and thinkers of, say, the 1930s, assumed that once we had achieved abundance – once humans had all the food and clothes and heat and toys we could use – we would relax and work less. They thought that by now work would barely cover three days as we headed en masse for the beach and the concert hall.

Instead, the treadmill is whirling ever- faster. We don’t stop primarily because we are locked in an arms race with our colleagues. If we relax and become more human, we fall behind the person in the next booth down, who is chasing faster. Work can be one of the richest and most rewarding experiences, but not like this.

**Q.** Show how the writer’s imagery makes clear his disapproval of current working practices.

**6**

1. Of course, those born since the 1970s may find celebrity on the Taylor scale hard to understand. The whole concept of celebrity has been degraded, over the last two decades, by an avalanche of media coverage which makes no pretence of interest in the actual work that well-known people do, but instead focuses entirely and insidiously on the personal lives, and most particularly the personal appearance, of anyone who has ever been in the public eye for anything, from behaving like an idiot on reality television to having sex with a Premier League footballer.

**Q.** Show how the writer’s use of imagery clarifies what she is saying about media coverage of celebrity over the last two decades. **4**

**Sentence Structure**

**When you’re answering a Sentence Structure question, you have to identify the feature (for example, parenthesis, list, parallelism, punctuation marks) but you don’t get any marks for this alone. The marks will come from how well you explain the effect the feature creates in the sentence or paragraph in which it appears.**

**For Example:**

What surprises me most is just how much we are deceiving ourselves. For previous generations, alcohol was the most toxic substance around and they treated it with caution and respect. Our society’s increased affluence and the supermarkets’ role in demystifying wine, have lulled us into believing that alcohol is a wholly benevolent product. We are on the brink of conning ourselves that drinking very high quantities of alcohol on a very regular basis is not only normal but an essential part of staying young and sexy.

The normalisation of excessive drinking is everywhere. Look at something as anodyne as messages on greeting cards. Look at the effect Ibiza culture is having back home. Look at the rise of the superpub. Look at the number of new alcoholic products coming on to the market. Look at the space and prominence supermarkets give to alcohol. Look at television.

We won’t change the culture overnight, but we could start to change direction. It’s not just about drinking less; it’s about thinking more.

Q. Show how the writer’s sentence structure in the second and third paragraphs emphasises the points she is making.

**Possible Answers:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Feature** | **Effect** |
| Short simple sentence to open paragraph 2 | Unambiguous statement of the situation acts as a clear introduction to the “evidence to follow” |
| Repeated use of “Look at…” | Suggest widespread availability of evidence, the problem is everywhere and overwhelming |
| Repeated use of the imperative | Suggest writer is urging reader to wake up, pay attention |
| Repetition/balance in “change…change” | Draws attention to the concession “We won’t …but we could” |
| Semicolon in last paragraph | Balances the tow ideas, emphasising there’s more to it than just reducing consumption |
| “drinking less… thinking more” | Parallel structure and use of rhyme and rhythm provides a final flourish, again emphasising there are two things to be done |

**Practice Sentence Structure Questions**

#### 1. Conventionally, after a huge police effort like this, the response is to sit back in one’s armchair happy in the knowledge that the streets have been cleared of an evil scourge that ruins lives. Good has triumphed over evil. Credits roll.

Except that real life doesn’t always work that way. Drug raids, to put it bluntly, don’t tend to work in reality. They look good on telly. They help senior police officers reach targets. They reassure the public. They may stop a few clubbers enjoying ecstasy this coming weekend. There the benefits end. Unless there is a massive input of drug rehabilitation resources to coincide with the raids (and there almost never is). Without that, these police operations leave communities ultimately worse off. With more crime, more misery and more death.

Q Show how the writer’s sentence structure in both paragraphs adds impact to the points she is making.

2 When I was eight, I watched *Marine Boy* because on a wet Thursday afternoon in October there was absolutely nothing else to do. Now, kids have got YouTube, Xbox, MSN, MySpace, text, e-mail, PSP, DVD and Sky+. All the world’s ones and noughts have been harnessed for their edification and you’re not going to drag them back to the box with a bunch of jolly-what-tally-ho Enid Blyton kids in big shorts getting into scrapes with smugglers. That was then, and it’s as gone as the ruff and tuberculosis.

Q Show how the writer’s sentence structure helps clarify the point he is making.

3.I recently read through the sections on reading in stages 1 to 3 of the national literacy strategy. I was very struck by something about the verbs. I wrote them all down. They included “reinforce”, “predict”, “check”, “discuss”, “identify”, “categorise”, “evaluate”, “distinguish”, “summarise”, “infer”, “analyse”, “locate” …and so on: 71 different verbs for the activities that come under the heading of “reading”. And the word “enjoy” didn’t appear once.

Q Show how the writer’s sentence structure adds impact to the point he is making.

4. John Lennon was a man of peace who could be at war with himself. He was a strong-willed man who became weak from abused substances. He was a rich man who felt for the poor. He made love to many women, but he loved only three. His life was constantly reinvented, his genius sometimes sapped by his own demons. In life, he was a creator and inventor. In death, he became an icon. He was a man who carried one single passport, but was always, without doubt, in life and death, a citizen of the world.

Q Show how the sentence structure of this paragraph conveys the writer’s personal opinion of John Lennon.

**Practice Papers**

**Practice 1**

[**http://moreintelligentlife.co.uk/content/ideas/ann-wroe/handwriting-elegy?page=full**](http://moreintelligentlife.co.uk/content/ideas/ann-wroe/handwriting-elegy?page=full)

 **HANDWRITING: AN ELEGY**

**As more and more of our words are tapped out on keyboards, Ann Wroe celebrates a dying art**

From INTELLIGENT LIFE magazine, November/December 2011

TAKE A SHEET of paper. Better still, take a whole sheaf; writing prospers with comfort and cushioning. The paper may be deliciously thick, with ragged edges and a surface capillaried with tiny fibres of the rags that made it. It may be thin, blank, industrial A4, one of a thousand in a cut-price pack from Staples. It may be wove paper, vellum-smooth and shiny, or a bit of scrap, torn not quite straight, with a palimpsest of typed meeting-minutes showing through. But write.

The instrument matters but, for the moment, seize anything. The old fountain pen, so familiar that it nestles like a warm fifth finger in the crook of the thumb, its clip slightly shaky with over-use; the pencil, its lead half-blunt and not quite steady in that smooth cone of wood; the ultra-fine felt tip from the office cupboard, with its no-nonsense simplicity, or the ancient mapping pen, nibbed like a bird’s claw, which surely writes only in copperplate, scratching fiercely as it goes. Seize even a ball-point, though its line is mean and thin, and though teachers will tell you that nothing ruins writing faster. Dip, fill or shake vigorously; and write.

For most adults the skill is an instinctive one. Yet cursive handwriting takes a while to master. At primary school our small, wide writing books opened on a forbidding grid of lines, red ones an inch apart, blue ones set close together between them. These cradled the bodies of the letters, while the descenders and ascenders made for the reds like pegs for a washing line. So easily, almost showily, Teacher formed the letter with her black pen: clumsily, with our large sharpened pencils, we tried to follow. It was hard. An "m", "n" or "u" settled cosily between the lines; but "a", with its one flat side, was tricky, and "e" rocked over on its back. Tall letters looked simple, but when one leaned all the rest sloped off towards disaster. The tail of a "p" groped fearfully as it descended through empty space. When a whole line succeeded it looked splendid, like a marching battalion with faint band-music playing, and a gold star shining at the end. If I half-closed my eyes, flicking fast through the pages, the rhythms and patterns arranged themselves in fascinating ways. But once the scaffolding was removed the letters collapsed alarmingly. They still do, unless they have a line to aim for.

At secondary school, surprisingly, we had to learn to write all over again. The teachers found fault with our plain rounded hand; we had to move up to italic now, together with oblique-nibbed pens and dangerously abundant blue ink. Italic was all thicks and thins, diagonal joins and elegant serifs, imposed by nuns who could flick a ruler quicker than an upstroke when faced with a careless piece of work. I came to like the new style for its angularity and boldness, and the way you could dot your “i” with a perfect diamond if you held your pen just right; though it took years to make my backward-sloping letters stand up straight and then lean forward, as both the manuals and the nuns required. All this took far more effort than tapping a computer keyboard.

Writing involves not only the hand and wrist but also the arm, the shoulder, sometimes the whole body. Quill-users were well aware of this, and would choose from the right wing or the left—ideally the third or fourth feather of a goose-wing, but possibly the finest feathers of swans, or ravens, or crows—to make the quill curve towards the hand or away from it, whichever felt more natural. Words could fly that way. Left-handers especially demonstrate the exertion of writing, curling their entire bodies round their pens as they write, smearing their words as they go. Children forming letters sit hunched with concentration, small fingers clenched round crayons, little pink tongues darting out of mouths. After a page or three of writing against the clock, the ablest college student flaps his wrist to ease the ache in it. A script like italic or copperplate is explicitly formed from the shapes made in engraving; pens as they write not only impress the paper, but dig into it, as surely as Sumerians dug their cuneiform letters into tablets of damp clay, or as Roman masons chiselled their magisterial capitals, ancestors of all ours, into the base of Trajan’s column. This can be hard physical work; which is perhaps why Gutenberg, when he devised his printing press, was especially keen to boast that no labouring pen had made his blackletter, but a smoothly oiled machine.

Printing did not harm handwriting, though it gradually replaced the calligraphic uncial and gothic of silent, patient monks in their scriptoria. In fact, because it encouraged literacy, printing helped writing to become a more universal skill. Typewriters (though greeted with jeremiads much like this one) did not hurt handwriting too much, because they were used mostly in offices or by sweating beat journalists whose cigarette ash powdered the keys. The rot started when keyboards were allowed, then required, in schools, and when they became small and light enough to slip in a pocket, replacing the notebook and even the jotted to-do list—milk, bread, call garage—which remains, for many people, the greatest boon of writing.

HANDWRITING IS STILL taught in schools, but in America over the past 50 years the time spent teaching it has fallen dramatically. Though private and charter schools may still make a point of it (as of discipline, and uniforms), many public-school systems are abandoning cursive altogether. Even where taught, it is so soon replaced by typing, for all assignments, that the skill never sets. Teachers tend to agree that most schoolchildren’s writing may now be graded “terrible”, and is better avoided. From this year the writing test of America’s National Assessment of Educational Progress requires composition not on paper, but on a computer.

Pupils remember capitals because they tap at them all day on keyboards; many now write with them, unjoined, ungainly and loud as they are, forgetting that the Romans soon abandoned majuscule as laborious and impractical, and that a letter entirely in capitals still bears the mark of the seriously deranged. In 2006 in America, 85% of those who took the handwritten-essay SAT test for college entry preferred to print their letters. Young people are swiftly losing cursive, using it only to sign their names or write the odd cheque. Most signatures, with long use, develop into ciphers or symbols; some of the young, though, now start off that way, appending their personal signs in the form of a spiral or a heart.

Typing (or, now, horribly, “keyboarding”) is more convenient. Typing is what we do, all the time, on the marvellous little gizmos we keep in our pockets. Typing is how love is written now, rather than on perfumed notepaper—and presumably that tell-tale e-mail address causes the same leap of the heart as that backward-slanting hand, with its careful serifs and looped “d”s, ever used to do. With typing we can copy, and paste, and search, and deliver a piece of work as polished as if second thoughts and errors had never occurred to us. And, perhaps most important, we can read what we, or others, intended to say.

In my days as a medieval historian, I spent much of my time deciphering handwriting. This was where treasure lay, as surely as miniatures nestled like jewels in their orderly setting of black or gothic letters: the unexpected fact, the revelatory connection, truth itself. I came to love the neat, sharp-sided, airy script of 14th-century account books, and to admire the delicately rounded humanistic hand of Renaissance Italian ambassadors. Other hands I dreaded. Faced with a page of crabbed 15th-century notarial scrawl I would have to attack it like a thicket, scanning it for glimpses of light, pushing through the branches of intermeshing ascenders and descenders in case a strange or fascinating word flashed there, like a deer. Some words still refused to reveal themselves. Even when lifted out as if with tweezers, even when magnified and written out afresh, as if copying the action of writing might unlock them, they remained mere patterns without meaning. Perhaps hawk, perhaps handsaw. Somewhere, faintly, a man in a dusty clerk’s robe would flick his quill and laugh.

Part of the charm and frustration of handwriting is its scope for ambiguity, and its ability to baffle. Letters that are obvious to us become, to other eyes, a cipher as mysterious as the Rosetta Stone. This can be comic, as the scrawled postcard from Auntie Flo in Blackpool is passed round the supper table (was it the water she rode on last night, or the waiter?). But it is tiring over ten sides on the phenomenology of Hegel, and downright dangerous on a doctor’s prescription. It can be tragic, too, as when the lover with only the evidence of a letter tries to interpret, dares not interpret, tries to leave unread, the scrawl that suggests goodbye.

We have come to think of typing as faster than writing. That may or may not be so. Some research suggests that the conjunction of brain and writing hand is possibly more efficient. A study by the University of Washington in 2009 found that schoolchildren wrote faster, and wrote more, when they had to compose essays for ten minutes with pen on paper rather than on computers. The word “cursive” means running; it was invented to avoid time-wasting lifting of the stylus or the pen, with a series of fluid joins and, in the most hectic styles, looping ascenders and descenders. In the early 19th century, when people corresponded several times a day by letter, quasi-tweeting the state of nerves, weather and tea-invitations from hour to hour, quill and pen must have raced across the paper at prodigious speeds. The handwriting of Percy Shelley sometimes approached horizontal in the effort to seize inspiration on the wing. It raced, dived and disappeared like a river under thickets of deletions. In that age of poets, though, the Muse was often hindered by the pen, blunting, splitting, spitting ink or, as John Keats complained, making blind “e”s. The sheer act of writing caused so much frustration that any maker of a primitive computer might have been besieged. And who is to say that the poetry would have been worse?

Whatever the truth of it, handwriting is now consigned, like hand-carried post, to the realm of snails. It is used for special things, for first drafts of books and thank-you notes. It is becoming, like its properly artistic cousin calligraphy, a craft and a rarity, rather than a useful and quotidian skill; in years to come it may, perhaps, be as treasured as the lettering of Imperial China, brushed slowly onto bamboo paper in ink pressed out from jade and pomegranates.

Already the word “handwritten” has acquired a cachet it never had before. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, when Cadbury and Kellogg used a handwritten logo to sell chocolate and cornflakes, it suggested the founder’s personal commitment to quality, a reputation on the line. In the 1970s and 1980s scrawled cursive on record sleeves evoked bands who couldn’t be bothered with bourgeois capitalist print, who tossed down titles as they threw out songs, perhaps on the back of a cigarette packet in some soot-stained warehouse studio. Now it suggests care, leisure, individuality and beauty. “Handwritten” is the name of a new fashion range, by Tanya Sarne, that seeks to evoke luxury and craftsmanship. In Britain an online Letter Lounge arranges events around the country, taking over tranquil spots with cupcakes, embroidered cushions and cups of herbal tea while would-be writers ponder what they will write, and how they will write it. It all takes blissful hours. In Britain and America there are now shops, modelled loosely on the Il Papiro chain in Italy, selling nothing but exquisite papers, tiny cork-stoppered bottles of ink, quills and leather-framed blotters and beautiful marbled pens. Customers wander round, scarcely daring to touch.

Everything displayed in such shops expresses the idea of handwriting as ritual. It involves an almost sacramental assembling of equipment at the end of which letters, like magic runes, will be conjured from the blank of the page. The very names of Pelikan’s gold-chased range of fountain pens, “Majesty”, “Ductus” and “Souverän”, suggest magisterial acts; the names of letter-writing tablets, Eclats d’Or and Three Candle-sticks, Cream Laid and Vergé de France, imply a noble and receptive setting, like a deep-laid carpet. Only ink slums it, a decoction of lamp-black, vitriol, glue and galls.

The fundamental magic of alphabets—that certain signs, gathered in certain permutations, can create and recreate the world—is common to keyboards too, but the gods of alphabets are more properly honoured with paper and pen, seals and sealing wax. Whether anyone actually unscrews a bottle, dips a pen, dares to sully these lovely artefacts with use, is harder to say.

LAST YEAR SALES of fountain pens in Britain rose by 70%, and sales of quality writing paper at the John Lewis department store in London rose by 79%. Demand for calligraphy classes soared at City Lit, a popular London college. In America the Writing Instrument Manufacturers Association reported that between 1998 and 2004 fountain-pen sales rose from 12m to 17m, and held steady thereafter. But the trend is less healthy than it seems. It is not hard to track down an exquisite luxury fountain pen, or even an antique model, for which the market is still lively; but anecdotal evidence on both sides of the Atlantic suggests that fewer ordinary retailers are stocking the basic Shaeffers and Parker Vectors that Joe Sixpack used once, when everybody wrote by hand. As the basic tools of handwriting disappear from the wall behind the till, so too does the notion that forming letters on paper is a routine way to communicate with other people.

At a pen-and-paper shop that has done business for 50 years in an English university town, business is slow. The manager nonetheless says he has seen an increase, over the 12 years he has been there, in people buying fountain pens. A pen is a statement or fashion accessory now, like cufflinks or a boutonnière: slightly nostalgic, slightly pretentious, certainly not everyday. The manager thinks it may be smoothness the customers are after, the sheer relaxation of a good nib after years of stressful, pressing ballpoints (the thinner the pen, the greater the stress)—though whether they will write, or simply doodle and squiggle like artists, is less clear. Luxury pens are bought as presents, though the manager agrees that the would-be user needs to weigh it in his hand first, get the heft and spring of it, try it with this nib and that, send it running over the paper with “thequickbrownfoxjumpsoverthelazydog”, to be sure it feels right. He continues to marvel at the different ways people hold pens: straight as a ruler, sideways, clenched in a fist, no two alike. Increasingly, though, they don’t know how best to approach the task of making letters. Does he use a fountain pen himself? With a burst of embarrassed laughter, he admits that his first tool is a keyboard.

A fine pen, after all, almost assumes that a lovely hand will flow from it. But most people’s handwriting is not beautiful. Very few can aspire to the Renaissance italic script of Niccolò Niccoli or Ludovico Arrighi, perhaps the most elegant ever devised, so pure and pleasing that it became the fons et origo not only of the best modern handwriting but of the lower-case typefaces that were then being invented. It was later adopted by William Morris to make his illuminated books in the 19th century, a nice example of progress running backwards. Few today (and perhaps few then) can emulate the lovely italic of the young Elizabeth I, taught to her by Roger Ascham, or the measured copperplate of George Washington. Spiders crawling out of inkwells come closer to what many of us achieve. And we like that, because for all the talk of fluency, balance, harmony and beauty in handwriting—for all the distrust of serifs, curlicues and fussiness in it—it is distinctiveness that we treasure it for: the degree to which it falls away from the copybook, and becomes part of ourselves.

Like a fingerprint, our script expresses us uniquely, and in a way that lasts. The more metaphysically minded might say that it transmits the soul to paper. It is odd that it should, when school writing lessons were meant to make everyone write alike. But within weeks, none of us was writing like anyone else. Only the French, with goodness-knows-what writing drills on their small-squared paper, seem still to impose a rounded, open, characterless national hand.

Handwriting is a personal, intimate thing. Many believe, without much scientific evidence, that creativity is linked to it. Graphologists believe it reveals the character. A forward-sloping hand is said to denote ambition, a backward-sloping one shyness or deceit (a reading that seems hard on left-handers, whose letters naturally tend that way). Looped descenders, they say, mean covetousness, looped ascenders spirituality, unjoined-up letters a surfeit of imagination. The fascination of a literary manuscript lies not only in the deletions and emendations, which show a Wordsworth poem or a Dickens novel in the chaotic making, but also in the clues it seems to offer to the character of the writer, and his or her mood when it was written. A line of poetry that tails off, squashed into the margin and falling downwards, may suggest merely temporary annoyance that the words were too many and the notebook was too small; or it may mean terminal melancholy.

WHATEVER THE SUBSTANCE of graphology, the character is there nonetheless. Though ostensibly silent, a handwritten letter from someone we know speaks with the voice—querulous, joking, ardent, tinged with an accent from Padua or Bulawayo—of its author. Though still, the letters on the page live and breathe as the writer does, crotchety and shaky with old age, hectic with youth, comfortably embracing as a mother. A handwritten envelope (the first we seize on, among the mailouts and bills) announces itself from the doormat as unmistakably as if the sender had walked through the door; and we are accordingly happy or irritated, intrigued or fearful.

Of course, we can talk on Skype now, summoning up the other person before us as though we had rubbed a magic lamp. We don’t need to prove our affection or our interest by making signs in ink on paper. It is all too indirect, too dilatory, and rather a performance. Better to communicate straight away, before we get distracted by something else.

And yet. On June 15th the UK Payments Council announced that handwritten cheques would continue to be accepted in Britain as long as needed. Though cheques are declining along with handwriting (their use has fallen by 70% since 1990) there is, as yet, no practical alternative for a private payment. A promise to pay, which is also an appeal for trust and a statement of sincerity, is better written by hand, however clumsily; and once written, it is better signed.

It may be that in decades to come this will be all that survives of common cursive: our monetary promises, and our names. Bearded eccentrics in cluttered attics, and lavender-scented maiden aunts, will continue to practise it, just as there will still be people who bake their own bread or scythe the meadow grass. But many more of us will be laid at last under headstones inscribed with the lovely lettering we almost managed to master for a while, until we decided that scratching our ideas in characters upon a surface was a task too primitive for us.

Ann Wroe is the obituaries editor of The Economist and author of "Orpheus: The Song of Life" and "Being Shelley: The Poet's Search for Himself".

### **Questions**

1. Consider the passage as a whole. How effective do you find the structure of the opening paragraph in introducing the passage’s main ideas? **2**

1. In paragraph the writer describes the diversity and range of writing implements available to us. How does her use of **imagery** emphasise the contrast between different kinds of pens? (lines 7-14) **2**

1. How, in lines 15-25, does the writer’s **use of language** emphasise the difficulty or effort involved in learning to write by hand as a child. (You may wish to consider the use of **word-choice**, **contrast**, **sentence structure** or **imagery**.) **4**

1. Explain **in your own words** why keyboards have been a more damaging influence on handwriting skills than printing or typewriting, according to lines 38-46. **2**

1. Show how the writer’s use of **imagery** and/or **word choice** helps to convey both the love and frustration she experienced when deciphering medieval handwriting. Refer in your answer to lines 60-69. **4**
2. Read lines 91-103.
	1. In her description of exclusive stationery shops, what atmosphere or mood does the writer evoke? **1**
	2. How does she achieve this through **word choice** and **imagery**? **4**

1. Read lines 132-136. Explain in what ways handwriting can be considered “like a fingerprint” (line 132). **2**

11.

* 1. Which word best describes the writer’s tone in the final paragraph: **2 U**

* 1. Show how this tone is created. **2**

**Passage 2**

**http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/8080511/How-Twitter-made-handwriting-cool.html**

**How Twitter made handwriting cool**

**From the rise of 'journalling' to the world's greatest pencil, notes are now in vogue**

By Kevin Braddock

*Wohlgefühl*: it’s one of those enigmatic words the German language excels in constructing. It can mean ‘wellbeing’ or ‘good feeling’, but it is the word Meike Wander, owner of Berlin’s RSVP stationery shop, uses to describe the timelessly simple delight of handwriting: of pen in hand, ink on paper and skin on surface as thoughts and images transfer from the imaginative to the material.

‘It’s a physical experience, it’s your body doing something,’ Wander says in her hesitant English. ‘Handwriting produces a good feeling – a *wohlgefühl*.’

The atmosphere in the pine-floored showroom is still and studious, like a place devoted to patience and craft. Displayed on the shelves are jotters, cahiers, journals, diaries and notebooks from all around the world – the rare Mead composition pads, yellow Cambridge block legal jotters, anonymous classroom books by the Korean brand O Check, and bijoux Caderno notebooks by Serrote, a press who reissue classic Portuguese school pads in limited-edition runs.

There are the distinctive black and orange Bloc No13 pads by the French brand Rhodia, and rows of Italian Moleskines in every format, size and colour, from black A5 journals with elastic fasteners to city-break guidebooks and tiny pocket-sized notebooks in pretty pinks, greens and blues (popular with girls, apparently).

Then, there are shelves of elementary writing instruments offered not for the status they impart, but simply for being items that are really good at what they do: attractive little boxes of coloured Kaweco ink cartouches, chunky brass M&R pencil sharpeners and colourful Caran d’Ache 849 ballpoints.

Wander opened the shop eight years ago, she says, ‘for no logical reason’. ‘I’m like most of my customers: I can’t pass a stationery shop. I always have to go in and touch everything. I love the tactility of paper and different surfaces.’

For such rational, rudimentary and often downright plain products, stationery can exert a powerfully emotional pull. Shoppers at RSVP tend to be devoted stationery fetishists – apparently customers rush into the shop and grab an armload of Cambridge pads for fear of never finding them again.

Yet even for less engaged customers, the simple utilitarian beauty of RSVP’s stock is enough to make anyone renounce the iPad, find somewhere furtive, and just sit and think and extemporise on whatever happens to arrive: notes, thoughts and memories, letters to loved ones, diary entries and reflections upon sights and events, or just scribbled to-dos.

Paper, pens and pencils may scarcely seem like aspirational items – they are often more redolent of the agonies of the classroom than anything else. But if there is a halo around handwriting, its tools, techniques and joys, it would only make sense today; handwriting and notebooking is a trend where austerity meets posterity.Writing is cheap and simple, and won’t get lost if your laptop crashes.

There’s even a new word for the urge to scribble that shops like RSVP and brands like Moleskine sell to: ‘journaling’. In an age dominated by the dizzying proliferation of digital communications, of iPhones, iPads, BlackBerrys, Twitter, Facebook, email, SMS and hundreds of other technologies, the simplicity of pen and paper suddenly commands a timeless attraction.

Ancient communication technologies are current like never before. Boutique stationers like RSVP and The Paperie in Chester are thriving: people haven’t stopped handwriting today any more than they eat lunch in pill form or commute to work in electric maglev cars.

The long, slow decline of penmanship is often lamented, and not without reason. A 2006 report published by the Institute of Education termed handwriting the neglected, ‘Cinderella skill’ of literacy. The ability to handwrite legibly, the report said, ‘is essential for everyone even in this age of computer technology’.

According to Angela Webb of the National Handwriting Association, there was once no formal education policy on handwriting for schools. For the past seven years, however, handwriting has been part of the national literacy strategy. Far from dying out, she argues, handwriting is resurgent.

‘We’ve seen a reverse of the trend in the last two to three years, and people are much more keen to handwrite now. Research is coming though from skilled authors who use handwriting to get ideas flowing and then move to the keyboard to develop them.’

Patricia Lovett, a judge on the National Schools Handwriting Competition, says she is constantly surprised by the popularity of handwriting among schoolchildren and, at the same time, she notes a resurgence of interest in handwriting that chimes with other craft-based hobbies and manual pursuits.

‘There is every parallel in the importance of handwriting, and hand writing well, with the Slow Food movement, heritage crafts, after-school knitting and craft clubs,’ she says. ‘There are things in life which have to be taught and learnt, but are worth doing, and worth doing well.’

While some were surprised that Tony Blair handwrote his recent memoir, he is far from alone in authoring longform texts by hand: James Ellroy, JK Rowling and John le Carré all write by hand, as does a promising, computer-shunning novelist named Dawn French.

‘Something handwritten shows that you care and that it is important to you,’ Lovett argues. ‘And, may I say, nothing beats the pleasure of being able to actually tick something off a list by hand rather than it simply disappearing from a screen because it has been done.’

Sales figures in the growing notebook market tell their own inky tale. According to Moleskine’s creative director Maria Sebregondi, the Italian-owned brand of oilskin notebooks, famously popularised by Bruce Chatwin from its Rive Gauche roots, sold 12 million journals in 2009 and expects to sell 14 million this year.

The company has attracted criticism in the past for claiming unverified associations with literary and artistic greats (Hemingway and Picasso among them), yet there is no denying that since the mid-Nineties, Moleskine has pioneered a market for covetable, carryable stationery.

They inspire profound devotion, yet the humble notebook is as far from ostentation as it gets. While Old Bond Street’s Smythson position stationery as a luxury item – time to reflect and consider is a luxury in itself today – the popularity of Moleskine and the lines offered by RSVP suggest the real contemporary fetish is for simple, functional and enduring products that haven’t changed in a long time.

‘We want our customers to perceive notebooks as everyday objects, not something impenetrable or demanding,’ Sebregondi says. ‘Notebooks are not luxuries but cultural items – culture is always inclusive, while luxury is exclusive. That’s the difference.’

And in positioning the cahier as ‘a book yet to be written’, Moleskine tapped a modern aspiration towards creativity; they might not make you be creative, but they certainly make you *feel* creative. Today the company offers 300 different notebooks, cahiers, folios and diaries, while last year they caused a splash by launching a range of candy-coloured ‘volant’ pocket carnets.

And après Moleskine, *le déluge*. According to Angela Young of The Paperie, more and more entrepreneurs are spotting an opportunity to expand the market and offer innovative stationery products. ‘The renewed interest in journaling and notemaking is driven by people’s desire to use pen and paper,’ she says. ‘We use computers and mobile phones so much these days, and I believe that people don’t always want to be looking at an electronic screen. They want to be hands-on and connect with what they are writing.’

Young mentions Field Notes, a popular new American brand offering pocket notebooks in proletarian brown card covers, inspired by postwar American agricultural memo books and attractively reminiscent of ration books. Field Notes’ corporate blurb makes the delightfully prosaic claim that they offer ‘an honest memo book, worth filling up with good information’.

Stuart Kirby, of the British company JOTTRR, offers notebooks with radiused, numbered pages, alternately lined and blank, plus perforated, pull-out grid leaves and elastic fasteners with yellow, fuchsia or black covers. JOTTRRs have been ‘flying off the shelves’ according to Young.

For Kirby, a self-confessed hard-core notebook user, they are the chance to capture something in a different way. Rather than diminishing the importance of the notebook, he says, digital has enhanced it.

‘In the digital age there is so much information, but using notebooks is a very different process to writing on a screen – you go back over notes, cross things out, amend and review. You remember it,’ Kirby says. Indeed, there are endless scientific studies proving that taking the time to form a letter - instead of just hitting a key – – promotes neural activity, creativity, memory and fine motor skills.

Just as they can be particular in their choice of paper, stationery fetishists can be exacting about their pencils. But from the mundane to the exotic, the tools of writing have not radically changed over the years.

With the exception of mechanical pencils, which ratchet leads through a plastic case, the pencil in particular remains fundamentally the same: a shaft of graphite encased in two semi-hexagonal sections of aromatic incense cedar. Yet on the internet, these utilitarian tools inspire a devotion bordering on the obsessional (try the Dave’s Mechanical Pencils blog for everything you never knew there was to know about pencils).

A few years ago, a number of pencil bloggers announced that the discontinued Eberhard-Faber Blackwing 602 was, not to put too fine a point on it, the greatest pencil ever. A sleek black object with an oversized ferrule (eraser holder) and the charismatic epithet, ‘half the pressure, twice the speed’ embossed on its shaft, it was declared ‘the world’s best pencil’ by American author Joseph Finder.

The Blackwing’s claim to perfection and authenticity was sealed after a character was seen using one in *Mad Men*, and to tremendous applause from pencil devotees around the world, an American company, CalCedar, recently reissued and renamed the product as the Palomino Blackwing.

The world’s greatest pencil is back. According to John F Gamber, editor of the Pencil Revolution blog, the new Blackwing is ‘one of the darkest and smoothest pencils I ever used. The graphite core is unreal.’

Amateurs take a professional interest in artistic tools and techniques today, and if you doubt that, try asking a professional. British artist Stephen Walter pencil-draws huge, intricate city maps overlaid with microscopically detailed handlettering of street names, cartographic symbols and his own subjective, psychogeographic impressions.

His work featured in the British Library’s recent *Magnificent Maps* exhibition, while his studio is festooned with the detritus of creative practice: his laptop sits aside Moleskines, piles of Post-its and A4 notes cascading off the table, and Sellotaped to walls are the sketches, details, scribbles, sentences, thoughts and ‘workings-out’ that eventually coalesce into his mesmerising, forensically elaborate maps.

Walter is an aficionado of the Staedtler Mars Lumograph in gradiations from H9 down to 2Bm. His studio houses hundreds of them, sharpened, blunted, chewed, snapped, unused or worked down to a stub.

The appeal of pencil, he says, ‘is the friction and rawness of it. You’ve got a chunk of base material from the inside of a mountain and the trail it leaves on paper – I like that directness.’

Notebookers and stationery fetishists stand firmly on one side of a modern social divide, representing intimacy and privacy; on the other side is the compulsive self-exposure of social networking, commenting and blogging. More reflective and considered than the digital diarrhoea of status updates, comments and tweets, less coldly perfunctory than emails and texts pecked out on an iPhone, iPad or BlackBerry, the vogue for notemaking returns writing to an act of expression instead of communication.

One question remains: what to write on those intimidatingly blank pages? Well, it’s up to you.

**Question**

10. Compare this passage by Kevin Braddock (‘*How Twitter made handwriting cool’*) to the previous passage by Ann Wroe (‘*Handwriting: An Elegy’*).

**Referring to the important ideas in the passages, identify the key areas on which they agree and/or disagree**

You may answer this question in continuous prose or in a series of developed bullet points.

**5**

**Practice 2**

**Passage 1**

<http://www.moreintelligentlife.com/content/lifestyle/will-smith/mission-well-grrroomed>

THE MISSION: WELL GRRROOMED



**Will Smith tries dog grooming ...**

From INTELLIGENT LIFE Magazine, Spring 2011

I am rubbing a blueberry and vanilla facial scrub into a beard. Not a human beard—I steer clear of ramblers, wizards and geography teachers—but the beard of a shih tzu called Gizmo. The only reason this doesn’t strike me as odd is that, as a dog groomer at a luxury “pet spa” in London, I’ve already given an Irish setter a blow-dry.

Human spas have never had much appeal for me. Spend £50 on an aromatherapy massage? I’d rather roll about on some marbles sniffing an air freshener. Yet the staff and animals at Harrods’ new salon seem so happy that I’m actually having a good time.

People tend to sneer at dog grooming. But we’d be outraged if someone said “I don’t wash my child’s hair. There’s no shampoo in the wild.” Dogs are covered in hair, which gets matted with food, eye gunk, mucus and dirt. So they need to be groomed. Likewise, you may find the idea of a canine fresh-breath treatment unnecessary. But only if you’ve never had a dog breathe on you. Their mouths are like landfill sites.

My first task was helping get Alfie, the Irish setter, into a large metal trough. Which of his ends should I hold? I have two fears connected to dog grooming: being bitten, and being urinated on. Since I’ve been given an apron, I opt for his stern. My fears prove unfounded. Alfie may look like a film star, with a barnet as glossy as Angelina Jolie’s, but he has a much less demanding temperament. Plus, he belongs to the spa’s manager, Stephanie, so he is used to weekly grooming. What’s not to like? Instead of being bathed like an emperor, he could be pointlessly chasing a stick round a damp field.

I soak him down with a shower attachment, then use a scrunchie to rub in a shampoo selected to bring out the red in his coat. You might think that, once rinsed, he’d just be left to shake himself dry, but in fact drying is a four-stage process. A brush with a seemingly magical “water magnet” towel draws off the excess, followed by a rub with a traditional towel. Then comes “The Blaster”. A twinge of disappointment that this is not named after Han Solo’s favourite sidearm is soon seen off by the sensation of aiming a powerful jet of air at a wet dog.

After whooshing a mist of water from his coat, we carry Alfie to a special table. Its height can be adjusted to suit all customers, from guinea pigs to those, like Alfie, who’d make decent mounts for a hobbit. He is happy to sit in the warm currents from two large mobile hairdryers while I comb the remaining damp out of him. He puts an occasional paw on my shoulder, but I feel he’s expressing kind thoughts: “Thank you, trusted groomer,” rather than “Run, or be eaten!”

Shoppers coo and ahh on the other side of the spa’s viewing window while I dry the outside of Alfie’s great floppy ears. I then lift them up to clean the insides. An Irish setter has an ear like the face of The Predator: there are some bits similar to a human’s, but they’re all back to front. Eventually I work out which fold leads to the actual earhole and start to delve, wiping around the insides with moistened cotton wool. It comes out thick with stygian smears of earwax. I decide not to ruin the magic by brandishing these at the glass. Would Angelina Jolie’s beauty therapist display the stubbly wax strips from her client’s newly silken legs?

I’m then asked to give a French bulldog puppy’s nails a manicure. With pink nail varnish. I’m not so sure about this. What advantage could it possibly give him? If I were in prison, I’d avoid a man with pink nails more than a man with tattoos; he’d have to be seriously tough to carry it off. Crazy, even. So perhaps pink nails will give this little creature a rep—“Mad Dog” McPuppy?—which will see him safely through the mean streets of London. Either way, it’s not difficult applying the varnish. The main stress is wondering if, once he’s grown to full strength, he will remember my face and hunt me down in vengeance.

My final task is the shih tzu facial. Gizmo turns his face up in delight as I work the scrub mix into his long silky beard. He looks so comical that I can’t get annoyed when he shakes himself off and soaks my un-aproned face and shoes. Both dog and owner seem thrilled with the results. Why wouldn’t they be? A shih tzu has a beard, and beards need washing. If you don’t believe me, take a look at the nearest rambler, wizard, or geography teacher.

**Questions**

1. **In your own words**, summarise the main points the author makes in the article.

4

1. Which word in the article’s subtitle indicates that the author has tried other unusual jobs *before* this one?

2

1. Comment on the effectiveness of the writer’s use of punctuation in the first paragraph? 2
2. How does the imagery support the point the writer is making in this paragraph?

4

1. In paragraph 4, the writer makes a comparison between the dog and a film star such as Angelina Jolie. How effective do you find his use of imagery. 4
2. Why are the words “The Blaster” in inverted commas?

1

7. Comment on the writers use of punctuation in paragraph 6. 2

8. . Look at paragraph 7.

a) Which word suggests that the dog’s ear hole is large and deep?

b) Comment on the word choice that suggests cleaning the dog’s ear is unpleasant.

2

c) Explain how the context helps you work out the meaning of the word ‘brandishing’ used in line 42.

2

9. Evaluate the final paragraph’s effectiveness as a conclusion to the passage as a whole.

2

**Passage 2**

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/mar/12/dog-for-life-crufts>

A dog is for life, not just Crufts

Lolly reeks like a sack of badgers and eats horse shit. She's no show dog, but she's still taken over our lives

The joke goes like this. How do you tell which loves you, your partner or your dog? Answer – lock them both in the boot of your car for an hour and see which is pleased to see you.

This weekend, Britain's annual canine love-in begins. [Crufts](http://www.crufts.org.uk/), which bills itself as "the greatest dog show on Earth", runs over four days at Birmingham's NEC. Apparently this is watercooler stuff, and not just for breeders of pedigree pooches.

Although I grew up with dogs and cats, I always instinctively thought of myself as a "dog" person. Cats are fine, don't get me wrong, but they don't really give much. If I'm shelling out for finest offal in cold jelly, I want some bang for my buck. When they're not out terrorising the local bird population, most cats are either sleeping or digging their claws into your gonads. Despite their occasional tendency to bite, dogs boast loyalty, affection and retrieving dead game prominently on their CVs.

It wasn't until I was in middle age that I actually thought of acquiring my own hound. My siblings have several – my younger brother seems to have a new one every time I see him. My parents-in-law are enthusiastic newfoundland owners, which is fine for my father-in-law who is six foot two; a different matter to see my mother-in-law, a diminutive figure, with two elephantine newfies straining at the leash. I do sometimes wonder whether she shouldn't have a skateboard.

Three years ago my wife and I started discussing getting a dog. The initial catalyst was regularly seeing a dog with which my wife became smitten. I do recall being just as enthusiastic as she; not difficult, really, when I would be at work during that part of the day when the dog would mostly be awake. Finally we settled on a make – sorry, [a breed](http://www.wheaten.org.uk/) – and no sooner settled than we were a proper nuclear family (two children and a dog).

For all that Lolly is a lovely animal to look at, one of her downsides was detectable early: it emanated from the end opposite her face. In two words – house training. At the time we had the builders in, so the occasional mistake was fine, since it was inevitably on a floor that would shortly be making friends with a skip. But when the builders had packed up and gone home, the noxious leavings remained, and it took at least a year to bring these under control. She's now pretty good, but I will never forget coming downstairs to find that Lolly had gone on a dirty protest, using her terrier digging skills to spatter the walls in a noisome pebbledash.

Another early argument for shipping her off to the glue factory was her predilection for chewing expensive electrical items. Like good owners, we gave her doggy chews, all contemptuously ignored in favour of the TV remote, several telephones and the iron. Yes, the iron.

Then there was her channelling of [Ronnie Biggs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronnie_Biggs). Considering the love, affection and money lavished on her, it was highly galling that she felt the need to hightail it over the nearest wall at any and every opportunity. We did, finally, manage to get the entire property escape-proofed, at vast expense and with a considerable loss of visual amenity, at which point she lost all interest in trying to get out. This rather contrary side of her nature made me wonder whether she actually had some cat genes.

Dogs need walking, and Lolly is no exception. Her daily perambulation has brought her into contact with a group of dogs with which she cavorts, and it's also provided a support group for my wife, Lolly's quotidian companion. She and the other dog walkers meet in the field behind the park, swapping horror stories of canine atrocities – the food stolen, the food hoicked up on the carpet, the shoes/clothes/books/cushions chewed and discarded, the vet's bills. Last year a friend in the village, blissfully dogless, made inquiries about the desirability of joining the club. "Don't do it!" they all cried, and all, like Cassandra, were fated to [speak the truth to deaf ears](http://milla-countrylite.blogspot.com/2007/09/dog-dog-my-sanity-for-dog-in-other.html). Good friend is now rueful owner of serially bonkers spaniel, the latest member of what other villagers call "The Hooligans".

I know dogs can and should be trained, and in truth Lolly is well-behaved – as long as you don't count eating and later regurgitating horse excrement. She's very affectionate with a sweet nature, doesn't bark, puts up with our youngest son's brand of tough love, and doesn't cost much to run. However, she does have one abiding attribute which I, for one, cannot get beyond. She smells. Reeks. Honks. Like a sack of rotting badgers, she alerts you to her presence minutes before her incessant shaking and scratching. We've tried everything – daily baths, never bathing (not us, her), and every dietary combination apart from starvation.

The English are a nation of dog lovers, and I would count myself one. It's just that I find that I rather prefer other people's; like grandchildren, you can hand them back when they get tiresome. A dog is, as they say, for life, and sometimes life really means life.

**Question**

**Question**

 **7. Both writers express their views about our relationship with dogs. Identify key areas on**

**which they agree. In your answer, you should refer in detail to both passages.**

**You may answer this question in continuous prose or in a series of developed bullet points**

**5**