



The Smarter & Effective Learning Approach

IGCSE ENGLISH PROGRAMME

READING MODULE 12

Name:

YEAR 8

In the previous lesson, you learned how to read an informative text, an instruction or guide, and an argument text.

In this lesson, you will learn how to read an informal article, then revise all the skills you have learned so far.

Reading an Informal Article

There are a variety of articles to come across when you open a magazine or log onto a news website. These articles are different from newspaper reports as reports give an account of something that happened with no opinions included. Informal articles still contain information, but they are written in a more engaging way and writers may also include their own biases.

As you read and understand informal articles, it is important for you to differentiate what is fact and opinion.

Task 1 [16] (Estimated time: 25 minutes)

In this article, the writer explains the dramatic changes that take place during adolescence, as young people become teenagers. She also reports on how recent research is beginning to offer new explanations of why adolescents behave as they do. Read the article, then answer the questions that follow.

What's really going on in a teenager's brain?

1 Can you believe your eyes? Is it the same person? When you look at a photograph of a teenager as a small child, it is hard to believe that it is the same person. For parents, it can be difficult to accept that their cute little toddler has become a complete stranger. Steve Johnson, the father of a teenage boy, says he doesn't understand it: 'He's changed – overnight. He won't get his hair cut and never finishes any homework. And as for getting him out of the house in the mornings...'

[...]

2 So what's really happening? Obviously, adolescence is an important period of change when young people develop emotionally and physically, becoming independent and establishing their own identities. At the same time, they have to go to school, take exams and think about their futures. But why do teenagers who are usually friendly and thoughtful sometimes become grouchy for no reason, slam doors or forget to phone home?

3 For many years scientists blamed hormones. It was believed that the brain was fully developed by the age of three. But now, in ground-breaking work, scientists have discovered that the teenage brain is actually undergoing a dramatic transformation. 'We used to think that if there were brain changes in adolescence, they were slight,' says Elizabeth Sowell, one of the USA's top researchers in the area. 'Now we are **bowled over** by what we discover about the teenage brain every day.'

4 So, it is the brain, not hormones, that is behind the baffling behaviour of teenagers. Research has shown that the teenage brain is a **giant**

construction project. In fact, the changes taking place in the brain at this time are so great that adolescence may be as important as early childhood in terms of brain development.

5 The teenage brain may be maddening and muddled but it is also amazing. After all, it is the teenage brain which begins to grapple with complicated ideas such as honesty and justice. It develops empathy, the ability to understand other people's viewpoints. It also has to absorb huge amounts of knowledge and develop independent ways of thinking.

6 'I love teenagers,' says one woman with two grown-up children. 'I like their ability to think for themselves, to argue and get excited by ideas. Most of all, I like the way I can learn from them!' Perhaps this view, and the knowledge that the adolescent brain is still growing and changing, will give some reassurance to teenagers and parents alike.

1. What is the purpose of this text? [1]

2. Who do you think is the intended audience of this text? Explain your answer using evidence from the text. [2]

3. Write three reasons why the writer states that adolescence is “an important period of change”. [3]

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

4. Write down two ways in which the writer convinces us that the information provided in the text is reliable and trustworthy. [2]

i) _____

ii) _____

5. “Now we are **bowled over** by what we discover about the teenage brain every day.” (Para. 3)

Explain in your own words what ‘bowled over’ means. [1]

6. “Research has shown that the teenage brain is a **giant construction project.**” (Para. 4)

Quote three evidence from the text to support the idea of the brain being a ‘giant construction project’. [3]

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

7. “So, it is the brain, not hormones, that is behind the **baffling behaviour** of teenagers.” (Para. 4)

a) Which figurative language is the bolded words an example of? [1]

b) Find another example from the text. [1]

8. Does the article end with a positive or negative view? Explain your answer using evidence from the text. [2]

Task 2 [18] (Estimated time: 30 to 35 minutes)

Read the following text, then answer the questions which will help you revise the skills you have learned thus far.

In Mountains of the Mind, Robert Macfarlane gives an account of his adventures in the mountains. In this extract, he sums up why he finds mountains challenging and inspiring.

Beyond the Mountain

1 Why are millions of people drawn to mountains every year? Perhaps it is because mountains challenge our belief that the world has been made for humans by humans. Mountains remind us that there are places which do not respond to the flick of a switch or the push of a button, as I discovered one day in late January.

2 Three friends and I went climbing on a mountain near Loch Laggan in Scotland. The day began magnificently. Clouds sailed in the sky, racing across the blueness. The sunshine was hard and bright, the whiteness of the snow reflected by its light. The forbidding cliffs of the mountain were dense with ice, which flashed and glittered in the sunlight. Despite the coldness of the air, I could feel the blood pulsing warmly in my toes as we ‘roped up’ ready to climb.

3 We began to ascend one of the east-facing ridges of the mountain. As we climbed, the weather changed its mood. The clouds thickened and slowed in the sky. The light changed from silver to dirty grey. After an hour of climbing, it began to snow heavily. Approaching the top of the mountain, we were in near white-out conditions: the snow was falling so heavily that it was difficult to separate the air and the land. It had also become much colder. My gloves had become frozen shells, which clunked hollowly when I knocked them together.

4 A few hundred yards from the summit, the ridge flattened out and we were able to unrope safely. The others stopped for something to eat but I moved on ahead, wanting to enjoy the solitude of being lost in the snow. Millions of particles of snow dust streamed just above the ground in a

continuous flow. Rounded chunks of old hard snow skidded over the surface of the ridge. And the big soft flakes which were falling from the sky were being driven into me by the wind. They walloped almost soundlessly against my clothing and I built up a thin fur of snow on one side of me. It seemed as though I were wading in a loose white river. I could see no more than a few metres in any direction, and felt utterly and excitingly alone. The world beyond the whirling snow became unimportant, almost unimaginable. I could have been the last person on the planet.

5 After several minutes' walking, I stopped. A few paces away, sitting and watching me, resting on its huge hind legs, its tall ears twitching, was a snow hare. It seemed curious at seeing me on its territory, but not alarmed. The hare was gleaming white all over except for its black tail, a small patch of grey on its chest and the two black rims of its ears. For half a minute we stood there in the strange silence of the snow storm: me with my thin layer of fur and the hare with its magnificent white coat and polished black eyes. Suddenly, the hare kicked away and zigzagged off into the blizzard, its black tail bobbing long after its body disappeared.

6 Crossing paths with the snow hare reminded me that it had its own path too, as much as I had mine. I was also reminded that the true blessing of mountains is not that they provide us with a physical challenge, something to be conquered and controlled. It is much more than this. Mountains encourage us to recognise what is marvellous, unchanging and inspiring in the world, while also making us aware of our own unimportance. I thought of the snow falling across range after range of invisible hills, and I thought that there was nowhere at that moment I would rather be.

1. a) Why does the writer begin with a question? [1]

b) Using your own words, explain the writer's answer to his own question. [1]

2. Look at paragraph 2.

Find examples of the following literary devices and techniques. [4]

Literary Device/Technique	Example from the Text
Metaphor	
Sense of sight	
Use of vivid adjectives	
Use of verbs	

3. Give a phrase from the text which shows the weather changes dramatically. [1]

4. What is the purpose of the colon in paragraph 3? [1]

5. a) Why did the writer move on ahead when the others stopped for something to eat? [1]

b) Explain in your own words what the writer experienced in paragraph 4. [2]

6. a) What does the writer encounter after several minutes of walking? [1]

b) Is the encounter a positive or negative one? Explain your answer using evidence from the text. [2]

7. How does the writer end the text? Tick (✓) **two** boxes. [2]

An inspiration	
Advice for the reader	
A teaser for the next chapter	
A positive message	
A warning	

8. Looking at the last paragraph, what is the purpose of this text? [2]

Task 3 [25] (Estimated time: 30 to 35 minutes)

This extract is from a short story by Doris Lessing. It is about a 14-year-old girl who chooses a puppy against the wishes of her mother. Read the extract, then answer the questions that follow.

Chosen

1 It was my father who decided we must have a dog, but choosing one turned out to be more difficult than we thought. After my mother had turned down a dozen puppies, we asked ourselves if any dog, anywhere in the world, could possibly be good enough. But, when we found it, this new puppy was to be my dog. I had decided this. And the fact was that I didn't want a good,

noble and well-bred dog – the kind that my mother longed for. I didn't know what I did want, but the idea of such a dog bored me.

2 That summer we went to stay on an isolated farm with my father's friend, Mr Barnes. It was night when we arrived, and an almost full moon floated above the farm. The land around was black and silent, except for the small incessant noise of the crickets. The car drew up outside the farm and as the engine stopped there was the sound of a mad, wild yapping. Behold, around the corner of the house came a small black wriggling object that threw itself towards the car, changed course on almost touching it, and dashed off again. 'Take no notice of that puppy,' said Mr Barnes. 'It's been stark staring mad with the moon every night this last week.'

3 We went into the house and were fed and looked after. I was sent upstairs so that the grown-ups could talk freely. All the time came the mad high yapping. In my tiny bedroom, I looked out onto the space between the house and the farm buildings, and there hurtled the puppy, crazy with the joy of life, or moonlight, weaving back and forth, snapping at its own black shadow – like a drunken moth around a candle-flame, or like ... like nothing I've ever seen or heard of since.

3 That, of course, was my puppy. Mr Barnes came out of the house saying, 'Come now, you lunatic animal...', almost throwing himself on the crazy creature, which was yapping and flapping around like a fish as he carried it to its kennel. I was already saying, like an anguished mother watching a stranger handle her child: 'Careful now, careful, that's my dog.'

4 Next day, after breakfast, I went to announce my decision. My mother at once said: 'Oh no, not that puppy. We'll never be able to train him.' Mr

Barnes said I could have him with pleasure. My father said he didn't see anything wrong with the dog, if a dog was healthy that was all that mattered: my mother sighed and sat silent. The atmosphere of adults disagreeing with each other was familiar to me. I didn't say a word. I simply knew that things would work themselves out, and the puppy would be mine. Was right on my side? It was. Should anybody but myself choose my dog? No. Very well then, I had chosen. I chose this dog. I chose it. Too late, I had chosen it.

5 Three days and three nights we spent at the Barnes' place. On the last night of our stay, I crept out in the cold moonlight to sit and watch the tiny, black, hurtling puppy. When I finally went to my bed, I fell asleep dreaming of the little dog with brown, buttony, beautiful eyes, and I knew I couldn't leave him behind.

6 We took him away next morning. It was a long drive home and all the way the puppy yawned and wriggled on my lap, then lay on its fat back, its four paws sprawled every-which-way. My father demanded irritably that the dog should be 'thoroughly trained', and I answered 'yes', only half hearing him. My head ran in circles like the puppy's own wild movements, dizzy with a mixture of joy and alarm. This was my dog. My responsibility.

1. a) Which point-of-view is this narrative written in? [1]

- b) What effect is created by using this point-of-view? [2]

i) _____

ii) _____

2. Describe the disagreement between the narrator and the mother about having dogs. [1]

3. “The car drew up outside the farm and as the engine stopped there was the sound of a **mad, wild yapping.**”

a) Who or what is responsible for the ‘mad, wild yapping’? [1]

b) What effect does the writer create by introducing a sound to the readers rather than revealing who or what is creating it? [1]

4. Identify the literary devices and techniques for the following phrases and write down the effect these quotes create. [6]

Phrase	Literary Device/ Technique	Effect
“hurtled”		
“crazy with the joy of life, or moonlight,…”		

“like a drunken moth around a candle-flame”		
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5. What do you learn about the characters in the text? Use evidence to support your answer. [8]

Character	Character Trait	Evidence
Narrator		
Mother		
Father		
Mr Barnes		

6. “Was right on my side? It was. Should anybody but myself choose my dog? No. Very well then, I had chosen. I chose this dog. I chose it. Too late, I had chosen it.” (Para. 4)

a) Why does the writer use question and answer? What effect is she trying to create? [2]

b) What effect do the short sentences at the end create? [2]

7. Quote a phrase from the text that tells readers how the narrator feels about the responsibility of having a puppy. [1]

Conclusion

In this lesson, you learned how to read an informal article. You learned that informal articles contain fact and information, but the writer also adds in his or her point-of-view when writing. You also reviewed the skills you have learned so far from the previous modules.

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