

Teaching Non-fiction for the GCSE Exam New EMC Approaches



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Stop! Read me!

1. What does this EMCdownload publication include?

This EMCdownload publication includes two separate PDFs and a folder of images.

- A PDF called ‘GCSENonFic_Print’.

This PDF includes the activities in a print-friendly form.

- A Video PDF called ‘GCSENonFic_Video’, with video clip embedded.

This second Video PDF provides a video clip modelling ‘The First Encounter’ with a text (Activity 3). Click on the video icon in the screen-friendly Video PDF to go directly to the video page.



The Video PDF also provides a screen-friendly version of the publication for showing on a whiteboard via your computer and data projector. The screen-friendly versions of the activity pages look like this:




- A folder of images called ‘GCSENonFic_Pics’.

The images in this folder will allow you to complete activities 11 and 13 as shared activities on a whiteboard, or digitally as an individual or group. The PDF ‘GCSENonFic_Print’ includes the resources for doing them as paper activities.

2. How do I play the video clip?

First make sure you have saved the file to your desktop.

To play the audio clips you need to open the file in Adobe Reader 9 or above. NB: The files will not display or play if you open the PDF in Adobe Reader 8 or below. You can download this free application by clicking here. 

Follow the instructions to install the latest version of the Adobe Reader program. Once it is installed and you have agreed the license, open the program.

Go to ‘File – Open’ and navigate your way to the PDF you have downloaded: ‘GCSENonFic_Video’.

Move your cursor onto the image. Click and the video clip will begin to play within the page.

To play the audio clips to a class you will need a computer, data projector and screen.

3. How can I play the video clips full screen?

Position the cursor on the video image. On a PC: right click. On a Mac right click or ‘Control+click’.


4. How do I stop the video clip playing?

Either move to another page in the PDF or click the Play/Pause button on the control panel. NB: The control panel is visible only when you move your cursor over the video image.

5. What do I do after the video clip has finished playing in full screen mode?

To exit full screen mode, press the escape button on your computer.

Contents

	In this print PDF	In the Video PDF	Video Clips
Teachers' Notes	2	-	
Extracts for Activities 1 and 2	6	3	
1. Sorting Activity – What is a Non-fiction Text?	8	7	
2. Continuum Lines	9	9	
3. The First Encounter	10	11	Video Screen 1 
4. The 6 O'Clock News	11	12	
5. Questioning the Text	12	14	
6. Holiday Carousel	13	15	
7. A Close Look at Language	15	20	
8. A Close Look at Language – the Best Words	17	25	
9. A Close Look at Language – Writing an Answer	18	27	
10. Structure	19	28	
11. Website Jigsaw	20	29	
12. Experimenting with Fonts	23	32	
13. Choosing an Image	24	34	
14. Comparative Work	29	43	
Resources	31	46	
Activity 5 – Annotated Text 1	32	47	
Activity 6 – Holiday Carousel Titles	33	51	
Activity 7 – Aspects of Language cards	34	53	
Activity 9 – Sample Answer	35	54	
Texts	36	55	
1. Meat eaters	37	56	
Meat eaters (text only)	38	-	
2. from <i>At Home</i>	40	60	
3. Visit Liverpool website	41	63	

Good for...

Introductory/General Work on Non-fiction	Activities 1 & 2
Understanding Texts	Activities 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5
Inference	Activities 6 & 8
Language Choices	Activities 6, 7, 8 & 9
Presentational Devices and Layout	Activities 11, 12 & 13
Speaking and Listening	Activities 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 11 & 13
Practising Written Responses	Activities 6, 7, 9 & 14
Independent Revision	Activities 2, 4, 7, 10 & 14

Teachers' Notes

This resource seeks to offer some fresh and engaging ideas on reading and interpreting non-fiction as a way of preparing students for the examination component for GCSE English Language and GCSE English for three exam boards (AQA, WJEC and OCR).

The activities do not provide a scheme of work and do not have to be done in a particular order – they have been designed to be used flexibly depending on the needs of your students (though some are obviously more general than others and it makes sense to begin with one or more of those). You can use the 'good for...' index on page 1 to guide you towards what you need. The activities can be done in pairs, groups or individually. We have made suggestions on how they might be organised but again this but can be altered depending on what fits with the needs of your class.

We have aimed to offer opportunities for students to think for themselves, work independently and use talk to develop their written responses.

The activities are accompanied by a collection of short extracts from non-fiction texts and three whole texts. All of the activities can be easily adapted for use with different texts and we make some suggestions of where to find non-fiction texts at the end of these notes.

For Activity 11 (Website Jigsaw) to work successfully, we recommend that you ensure students have not seen Text 3 www.visitliverpool.com webpage before they do it.

Notes on Specific Activities

1. Sorting Activity – What is a Non-fiction Text?

The extracts come from the following texts:

- a. Spacemaker (furniture company) promotional leaflet – non-fiction
- b. Plan Sponsor a Child leaflet – non-fiction
- c. *Metro* newspaper front page 25/1/12 – non-fiction
- d. Recipe for a Reuben sandwich – non-fiction
- e. Charlie Brooker Comment is Free article *The Guardian* website 4/4/11 – non-fiction
- f. *Memoir* by John McGahern (p.84) – literary non-fiction
- g. 'The Bat in the Wet Grass' from *Postcards* by Annie Proulx (p.59) – fiction
- h. *The Curious Incident of The Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon (p.5) – fiction
- i. Instructions on 'How to Treat Frostbite' from *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook* by Joshua Piven and David Borgenicht (p.104) – non-fiction
- j. *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde Act 1 – fiction
- k. *The Etymologicon* by Mark Forsyth (p.45) – non-fiction
- l. *Tony Adams: Addicted* with Ian Ridley (p.31) – non-fiction

The more students can be pushed to clearly articulate their ideas and explain their decisions and reasoning, the more successful this activity will be.

2. Continuum Lines

Once again, the more students can be pushed to clearly articulate their ideas and explain their decisions and reasoning, the more successful this activity will be. During feedback, you may want to draw students' attention to the similarities and differences between texts and encourage them to revisit the concepts of purpose, audience and format. If students interpret the opposition 'simple/complex' as 'easy/difficult', this would be a good opportunity to explore exactly what is meant by simple and complex when applied to texts.

If you have the opportunity to try this activity with complete non-fiction texts, including leaflets, posters, website home pages and so on, it would be interesting to add a further pair of headings: text-based/ image-based.

The blank continuum line can be used as a springboard for a discussion about what are useful judgements to make about a text – boring/interesting might be one idea students come up with and could lead to an exploration of how these are subjective judgements and do not necessarily develop our understanding of the texts.

3. The First Encounter

Two variations of the activity are offered so that you can choose which best suits your students or offer them the choice. The modelled discussion is embedded within the Video PDF.

4. The 6 O'Clock News

To perform the *6 O'Clock News* you can introduce it, for example 'This is the *6 O'Clock News* on Tuesday 28th February'. You can perform the bongs between each pair's headlines too!

Once students become familiar with this activity, it could be done at the beginning of every lesson for a period of time, enabling students to read a variety of texts, practise quickly summarising a text and building their confidence.

For the follow-up activities, you may want to share the following checklist with the students.

Have you:

- used your own words?
- kept your summary short and to the point?
- included all the key information?
- used Standard English?

5. Questioning the Text

This activity encourages students to think critically about what is important about the text, both in terms of its content and its construction and to consider the text analytically.

A text with model questions is provided on page 32. You could use this in several ways: to start the discussion off, part-way through the activity to model for students the type of question they need to be asking, or to help less confident students interrogate the text.

6. Holiday Carousel

You will need to set your classroom up in advance for this task. You will need six 'stations'. Each station must:

- be big enough for a group of four or five students to gather round to look at the text
- have an enlarged copy of one of the holiday names (included on page 33)
- have either a sheet of sugar paper and some marker pens or post-its and pens for the students to record their ideas.

You can do this task without students moving round the room if you prefer (by passing the text round instead) but moving around the room generates a 'buzz' and tends to engage students more actively in the task.

You will need to be strict about timing how long is spent at each station and ensuring students move on to keep the activity focused and productive.

It is important that students are given an opportunity to evaluate the ideas that have been generated and consider the quality of points that have been made. Encourage them to reject ideas which are too tenuous.

At various points you may want to offer opportunities to pull together the skills students have been developing and practising with writing tasks similar to the ones they will have to do in the exam. We have provided a couple of suggested points where this might be done.

The extract from Text 1 Barbara Ellen 'Meat eaters – you are daredevils or dumb. Or both' can be accessed on a number of levels: at the most basic some students might infer that Barbara Ellen does not like eating meat; a more sophisticated response might also suggest her commitment to vegetarianism 'my years of vegetarianism'; more sophisticated still might be the idea that she implies she is routinely criticised for her vegetarianism 'childish aversion'; 'grow out of it' etc.

The extract from Text 2 *At Home* by Bill Bryson is more challenging (perhaps most suitable for higher ability students). Students might comment, amongst other things, on the way the writer seems to regard British tea-drinking fondly, for example 'the first [beverage] to have its own ritual slot in the day: teatime' and yet with slight bafflement: 'Britons came to adore sweet, milky tea as no other nation had (or even perhaps could)'. The bracketed phrase emphasises this while the use of 'Britons' as opposed to the personal pronoun 'we' leads us to infer that the writer is positioning himself as something of an outsider. In addition, the writer implies that tea-drinking is central to British identity: '...tea was at the heart of the East India Company, and the East India Company was at the heart of the British Empire.'

Activity 7. A Close Look at Language

This activity presupposes that students are at least broadly familiar with word classes and basic grammar.

The preliminary reading activity allows students to develop their own ideas to the text before subsequent activities support them in refining their responses.

The 'Aspects of Language' cards aim to help students to evaluate what might be useful comments and what are dead ends, supporting them in choosing the most fruitful elements of the text to comment upon.

9. A Close Look at Language – Writing an Answer

A sample answer is provided with this task (page 35).

10. Structure

You can collect comments from students around the class and then use them to annotate the text for structure on the IWB. Students can practise thinking about structure by using the list of techniques with different texts.

11. Website Jigsaw

For this activity to work successfully, we recommend that you ensure students have not seen Text 3 www.visitliverpool.com webpage before they do it.

This activity should lead students to consider how people read websites and how they can be organised for ease of understanding. The main purpose of the activity is to encourage students to articulate the reasons for the decisions they have made.

The images in the folder 'GCSENonFic_Pics' will allow you to complete the website jigsaw as a shared activity on the whiteboard, or digitally as an individual or group.

13. Choosing an Image

Students will need to consider purpose, audience and layout in order to come to a decision about which image would be best for their website. A key element of the activity is the opportunity students have to articulate their thoughts about *why* they have reached their decision, drawing on their understanding of these concepts to inform their responses. We have therefore limited the number of images to eight in order that students do not become caught up in arguing about which image to use and focus instead on the mini-presentation aspect of the task.

14. Comparative Work

The following is an extract from the AQA Examiners' Report, January 2011:

In the best responses, (and those sought by the examiners) candidates selected interesting, vivid, colourful or exciting phrases from [a] text and unwrapped their meaning and effect. They then found similar (or very different) examples from the chosen text explaining that the difference in language use resided, perhaps, in purpose and audience.

Both comparative activities should encourage students to choose their best ideas about how they can compare the texts, rather than producing a wide-ranging but superficial response.

Sources of Non-fiction Texts

If you are looking for good sources of non-fiction, these are some useful places to find texts to engage your students and provide them with a wide range of reading.

EMC *Best of Both* (KS3 but some texts suitable for KS4)

EMC *Klondyke Kate* (revised edition)

The Guardian and website

The Independent and website

The Telegraph and website

Free newspapers such as *The Metro*, *Evening Standard* and local papers

Supermarket newspapers and magazines

Information leaflets (from libraries, doctors' surgeries and so on)

www.creativenonfiction.org/brevity – examples of literary non-fiction

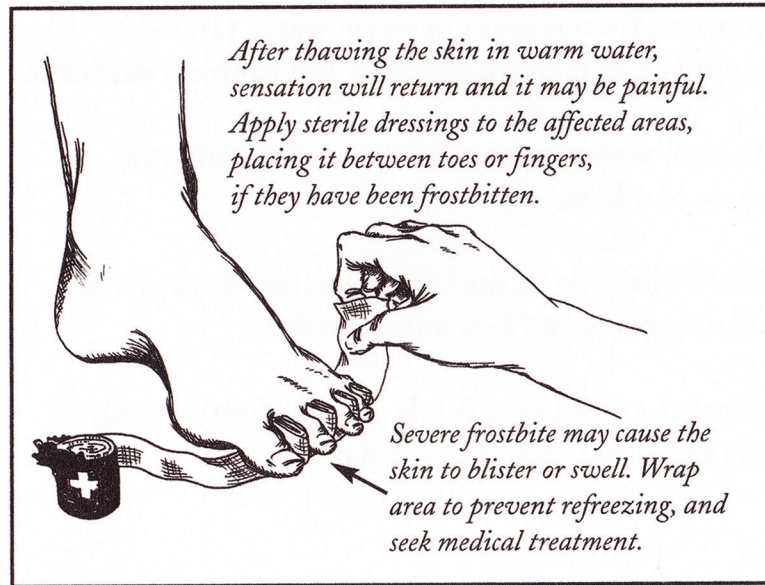
Extracts for Activities 1 and 2

A	Spacemaker: Get 2012 off to an Olympic start with a fantastic new fitted bedroom, bathroom or home office. We have lots of inspirational ideas to help you transform your home.
B	It's a tragic reality that one in five children born in the poorest countries won't live to see their 5th birthday. For many children like Elsy, there is very little cause for hope without someone like you to reach out and make another kind of life possible.
C	£40 million win? That'll buy me a carpet A couple who won more than £40 million on the lottery revealed their shopping list last night – with a new carpet right at the top.
D	To construct the sandwich you'll need two large slices of rye bread and four slices of Swiss cheese. Take one slice of rye bread and smear with one heaped tbsp of our Russian dressing.
E	You can tell a lot about a person by the way they treat waiters and shop assistants, especially when you are one. The majority of people are perfectly capable of interacting with retail staff without spitting on them or whipping their hides like dawdling cattle, but planet Earth still harbours more than its fair share of disappointments.
F	The weather grew warm and we were allowed to throw our boots away and run barefoot. The soft touch of grass was cool and delicious to our feet as we ran about like young cattle in the first discovery of a fresh field.
G	A soft day, warm enough to grind down the window and get the smell of the country. The black fields stretched for miles, the furrows rising and falling like a calm sea. He thought about pulling into a place and asking if they needed a hand, but didn't think he could work on another man's farm, stand there with his hat in his hands asking to be a hired man.
H	I like dogs. You always know what a dog is thinking. It has four moods. Happy, sad, cross and concentrating. Also, dogs are faithful and they do not tell lies because they cannot talk.

8 Apply sterile dressings to the affected areas.

Place the dressing between fingers or toes if they have been affected. Try not to disturb any blisters, wrap rewarmed areas to prevent refreezing, and have the patient keep thawed areas as still as possible.

9 Get medical treatment as soon as possible.



I

J

Jack: I have lost both my parents.

Lady Bracknell: To lose one parent, Mr Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness.

K

Malay doesn't have plurals like ours. In English you simply add an S to the end of the word. But in Malay you form your plural by repeating the noun, so tables would become table table.

L

I was still only 15 when I was first picked for Arsenal's youth team, in the August of 1982, a 3-1 defeat at Colchester. Then, later that month, still three months short of my 16th birthday, came elevation to the reserves.

1. Sorting Activity – What is a Non-fiction Text?

You have been given a selection of very short extracts.

- With your partner, divide these extracts into a fiction pile and a non-fiction pile. Be sure to discuss your decisions with your partner.
- Once you have done this, join up with another pair to compare your decisions. Your teacher will now tell you which extracts are fiction and which are non-fiction. Were there any surprises? If so, think about why you placed an extract in the wrong category.
- Put the fiction extracts to one side and focus just on your pile of non-fiction extracts. Now look at the following statements. With your group decide whether you agree, disagree or are not sure about each statement. Make sure that you clearly discuss the reasons for your decision.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
a. All non-fiction texts are very similar.			
b. Non-fiction texts are written in the present tense.			
c. Most non-fiction texts are written in the third person.			
d. Non-fiction texts tend to be impersonal.			
e. Some non-fiction texts share features with fiction texts.			
f. The layout of non-fiction texts depends on the purpose and audience of the text.			