

**Lesson  
Eleven****Introduction to Reading  
Non-Fiction****Aims**

The aims of this lesson are to enable you to:

- consider the skills required for active reading
- select relevant information by skimming and scanning
- read and summarise information and ideas from source texts
- identify the purpose of texts
- comment on how meaning is conveyed
- detect point of view, implicit meaning and/or bias
- analyse texts in relation to audience response

**Context**

Reading is assessed on both of your examination papers. Earlier in the course, in Module 1, you were introduced to approaches to prose set texts that will support responses to the Paper 1 examination.

In Paper 2 Section A, the focus will be on non-fiction texts. You will be asked to show that you can:

- **Understand** texts, **choosing** parts that are relevant to certain ideas.
- **Explain** how writers use language, style and form to create specific effects for the reader.

Before we turn our attention to the approaches to reading non-fiction for the AQA GCSE English Language Paper 2, it is worth reflecting on the nature of the reading skills which will be developed and enhanced during your GCSE Language study.

## Why do we read?

We read to find out about the world around us and learn new things. We might read instructions to work out how to do something, or we might choose to read to be entertained or as a form of socialise, as when we re-tweet or share on social media.

## Reading Strategies: things we do as we read

When reading a text for the first time, you are employing a range of skills simultaneously. When looking for meaning in a new text, a reader is using a number of strategies, as follows:

- **accessing prior knowledge:** drawing on what I already know about the topic, theme
- **monitoring understanding:** cross checking information, re-reading to confirm
- **re-reading:** used to become familiar with parts not fully understood
- **questioning:** used to clarify – why does X do that? What does Y mean? What does Z signify?
- **summarising:** what’s happened so far; key facts
- **predicting:** what is likely to happen next; what word or words come next
- **visualising:** seeing images – picturing what is happening
- **seeing patterns:** making links between different parts of the text; noticing repetition of words, phrases and images
- making **inferences** - reading between the lines and filling gaps: working out, by inference, what a character is like from what they say and do; interpreting the writer’s message by going beyond the literal meaning
- making **deductions:** drawing logical conclusions from the evidence in the text.
- **relating** text to previous reading: this text is very different from other pieces I’ve read from this time; stories about miners always end in a disaster; this represents war very differently from films I have seen.
- **relating** text to personal experiences
- **empathising:** putting yourself in someone else’s shoes e.g. I know just how they feel
- **processing** vocabulary: working out the meaning of a word; returning to unfamiliar vocabulary

- **evaluating:** passing judgements on argument, style, layout and overall effect
- **skimming:** gaining an overall impression
- **scanning:** for specific information such as key words, dates, names of places or people.

To some extent we take our reading ability and skills for granted, because once we have moved beyond learning the skills to decode words and infer and deduce meaning as part of our literacy, we use our reading skills throughout the day, with varying degrees of conscious thought.

It would be incredibly difficult to spend a whole day without some form of reading. When we are watching television or gaming, we have to read the titles and on-screen guides; prepared foods come with recipes and nutritional information on the packaging; we are bombarded by advertising media in print, online and on display banners on billboards and public transport; we read timetables to organise our journeys; even our clothing and hygiene products require some use of decoding skills, whether it be through branding or instructions for use.



The types of reading above form part of our daily routines and we may not have stopped to think of them as examples of literacy. Other types of reading are a result of conscious decisions and may be closer to what we understand 'reading' to mean. This can often involve reading as a form of entertainment or relaxation in itself, or reading for specific information, be it for a piece of homework or in order to find out more about a particular person, issue or idea.

**Activity 1****Your reading habits**

Using the space below or a note book make a list of all of your reading experiences in a single day.



For example if you set the alarm on your mobile you will read the text or time; while you brush your teeth, wash your face and shower you might skim the labels on the products you use; you might read the cereal box over breakfast; you might read command buttons on the remote control and programming information if your watch television in the morning; the number of the route on the bus or train and the destination if you take public transport, etc.

You should try and list the various forms of reading in lessons or workplace.

**Active vs. passive reading**

As reading becomes part of our everyday life, unfamiliar words can be read without really thinking about meaning. If we are reading something in which most of the text is recognisable then we tend to gloss over anything that is new in a process termed **passive reading**. Examples of passive reading have been referenced above, and can include reading emails, credits on television programmes, train timetables and texting.

**Active reading** involves a process where you have to pause and reflect on what you are reading, so that you can take as much out of it as possible. Active reading is a skill that can be developed. This skill is necessary both for adult literacy and for this qualification, as

throughout the GCSE you will be required to engage in **reading for understanding**.

Today, much of our reading now takes place on social media platforms and via web-based texts. Often, our encounters with extended literary texts also take place through electronic platforms such as Kindle or iBooks.

For the purpose of the GCSE English Language examination, the texts you will encounter on the course will be limited to printed texts, as this is how they will appear on the examination paper. For those of you who choose to continue study beyond GCSE level on courses such as A-level Language or A Level Language and Literature, there will be opportunities in the future to examine web-based texts and spoken forms.

For Paper 2 of your examination, you will be asked to respond to non-fiction texts. A **non-fiction** text is a piece of writing based on facts and actual events, presenting the writer's reality and point-of-view.

Two main non-fiction categories are media texts and general non-fiction. **Media** can include newspapers and magazine articles, editorials, web pages, advertisements and reviews. Media refers to various means of communication. All of the texts set out to communicate with an audience.

**General non-fiction** might not be from a media source but is still formed from fact rather than fiction. It can include extracts from biographies, autobiographies, report writing, travel writing and letters. As these texts often employ a range of literary and figurative devices to help engage their readers. They are also known as examples of literary non-fiction.

## Activity 2

### Active vs. Passive Reading

Returning to the list that you made for Activity 1, use two different colours of highlighter to indicate which reading experiences were passive and which were active (alternatively, you could annotate your list with 'A' for Active and 'P' for Passive).

In the box below, write 50-100 words on what you think this reveals about the way you read.



## Genre: Non-Fiction Text Types

GCSE Language Study requires wider reading of non-literary texts, both within the study programme and independently. Non-literary texts are usually factual rather than imaginative. However, non-literary texts can incorporate creative use of language and may use features we associate with literature.

Non-literary texts can include:

- Newspaper articles
- Advertising material
- New technology texts
- Biographical and autobiographical writing
- Diaries and journals
- Letters
- Informative/ instructional texts
- Travel writing
- Scientific writing
- Leaflets and brochures
- Legal documents
- Speeches

Each unseen text presented in the examination comes with a short introductory paragraph identifying the text type or genre. This can be helpful when considering to what extent the writer meets readers' expectations or does something unexpected to surprise them. The exam will ask you to respond to a paired unseen non-fiction text, and it is useful to consider the ways in which non-fiction texts can be categorised, and some of the key features or characteristics of each type or genre before embarking on study of the anthology texts.

**Non-fiction** text types can be broadly categorised into the following groups:

### Recounts

Recounts often use highly descriptive language, scene setting or situational descriptions. They tend to be organised chronologically, that is, they provide details about events as they happened. Recount texts are conventionally written in the past tense. However, there are some examples in the anthology, such as Ralston's account of becoming trapped while rock-climbing, which use tenses in interesting ways to engage the reader. Verbs are selected carefully to create a sense of action and interaction. They will have a closing statement or outcome, for example:

*There is not a single healthy child here (Palin).*

### Reports

These texts aim to present information on a particular topic or issue, which is often clearly signposted in an opening statement:

*Each religion has its own particular practices and defining characteristics.*

Reports are non-chronological and are written in the present tense. Report texts are descriptive and relate to things involved in groups. They may contain pictures and diagrams and use specialist vocabulary, which is also known as technical lexis. as in the words used for sacred texts and places of worship in the sentence below:

*Muslims read the Koran and worship in a mosque; Christians read the bible and worship in a church.*

## Explanations

These texts aim to explain a particular phenomenon, process or idea. They are presented chronologically and begin with a statement about the topic:

*Clouds are formed from droplets of water.*

These texts present explanations as to how and why something happens. They are written in the present tense:

*sometimes ice crystals fall through the clouds*

They will often contain diagrams and illustrations. Typically, they will end with an outcome or consequence:

*Therefore clouds cause different types of weather.*

## Arguments/ opinion pieces

These texts begin with an opening statement which provides insight into what the author believes:

*I believe that school uniform should be banned.*

This is called the **thesis**. These texts are written in the present tense, offering various points in support of the writer's beliefs and using supporting evidence:

*Uniforms can be expensive. Official suppliers can charge up to £40 for a school skirt or trousers, and even generic lines of tailored trousers in chains such as New Look retail for around £20 and may need replacing through wear and tear throughout the year.*

These texts end with a summary which will again reiterate the writer's beliefs, for example:

*For both moral and social reasons, I think that compulsory school uniform should be abolished.*

## Discursive texts

These texts begin by defining the topic that is going to be discussed and providing an outline of the main points for and against:

*Should the council renovate the youth club or will it be too expensive?*

These texts are non-chronological and written in the present tense. The writer presents a balanced outline by looking at arguments both for and against the topic and provide evidence to support these views:

*To renovate the youth club would cost £20,000 which the council cannot afford and this money would be more useful providing speed bumps outside the local primary school.*

Having considered alternative viewpoints, the text will present a proposal or conclusion, for example:

*When all the evidence is taken into account, I believe it would be better to renovate the youth club as it would provide opportunities for the young people of the town to give back to their community and build relationships with people of all ages.*

## Instructional or Procedural texts

These provide step by step instructions of how to 'do' something and will begin with an introduction which conveys what is going to be undertaken, for example:

*How to make a mug cake.*

There will follow a list of materials and processes related to the task being described. Instructional texts use present tense imperatives (sentences where the verb is used as a command or instruction). They frequently contain diagrams and illustrations to support the text and clarify procedures.

## AQA GCSE English Language: How is reading assessed in Paper 2?

Reading and writing are given equal importance on the AQA GCSE course. Reading is assessed on both of your examination papers. Earlier in the course, in Module 1, you were introduced to approaches to prose set texts that will support responses to the Paper 1 examination.

In Paper 2 Section A, the focus will be on non-fiction texts. You will be asked to show that you can:

- **Understand** texts, **choosing** parts that are relevant to certain ideas.
- **Explain** how writers use language, style and form to create specific effects for the reader.



The AQA course will support you with the development of reading and writing skills. Your preparation and **skills development** will be critical in supporting you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of language in the examination.

The texts you will use are unseen and you will encounter them for the first time in the exam context. In the time allowed, you will be expected to:

- Recognize and gather information and meaning from texts
- Select, examine and evaluate what is relevant
- Understand and explain **implicit** (embedded or hidden) meanings and attitudes
- Appreciate how writers achieve effects within text

## Reading for Information

In the comparison of active and passive reading, the eventual aim of reading for understanding was outlined. The type of reading you will undertake in this part of the course can also often be referred to by its central purpose, which is **reading for information**. We often read to find out particular information or to investigate how to do something. To make this effective we need to understand what we are reading and be able to identify the information we need.

Throughout the course and in the final examinations, you will be actively reading in two ways. You will read for meaning and information, and you will read for understanding of the writer's craft. The processes by which you can engage with texts for information and meaning are known as **skimming** and **scanning**.

**Skimming** is the technique used when we want to identify key information quickly. For example, if we were looking for information on 'anaerobic respiration' in a Biology textbook, we would turn to the index and run our eyes across and down the page to find the relevant topic heading and page number needed. When we skim texts, we can quickly determine which elements are relevant and as a result require more detailed analysis.

**Scanning** refers to the overall process of engaging with the text in more detail. There are two steps in the scanning process:

**Step 1:** Using additional information. Reading the summary and overview if one is provided. Considering the headings and sub-headings to deduce how the information and text is organised, as this will reveal how the writer's argument is shaped.

**Step 2:** Reading the first section of each paragraph or the first paragraph of each section in a larger text in order to make an evaluation about whether to read the full text actively.

You may have found yourself using skimming and scanning techniques when selecting study guides to help you with your GCSE preparation or may even use them to choose a magazine or novel.

Some texts that you skim and scan will have pictures, photographs or diagrams in it so these will help to identify themes and central points but other texts will have no visual signposts so when you are skimming and scanning you will need to look for key facts and details, the intended meaning and any arguments and examples that are included.

## Tackling Question 1: Reading for Meaning

The first section of the paper may ask you to outline the argument or point of view presented in a text. This will require you to SKIM (read quickly for the gist or main idea of the argument) and SCAN (look carefully for certain information).

If we apply this technique to reading examination question papers the likelihood is that you first scan the whole paper and get a feel of the contents, you will then scan sections and make a judgement on possible question choice before identifying which sections to fully read as these are the ones that you are likely to answer.

You must try to use your own words as far as possible. This needs to be a detailed answer and the structure of your response is important.

You should start by SUMMARISING the main argument or idea the writer is presenting, before OUTLINING what the writer says about the subject in each section/ paragraph.

The source text for the activity is printed overleaf.

### Activity 3 Summarising

Write a summary of the effects the nuclear disaster had on the surrounding region and the people who lived there (in about 140-160 words).

Remember that you need to select the key points and convey the full effects of the nuclear disaster. Write your summary in full sentences and use quotations if appropriate but keep them brief and relevant.

Before writing your summary for Activity 1, use the table provided after the text to record your understanding of each paragraph.

	
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The following extract is from Michael Palin's book *Pole to Pole*. It describes the Chernobyl region that suffered the effects of a nuclear disaster. The table following the extract will help you record your notes as a plan for the summarising activity (Activity 3).

After a while the woodland gives way to a wide and fertile agricultural plain. The first indication that this abundance is tainted comes as quite a shock. It's a sign, set in brambles and long grass, which reads, 'Warning: It is forbidden for cattle to graze, and for anybody to gather mushrooms, strawberries and medicinal herbs'.

We stop here and put on our yellow badges, which register radiation levels, and which will be sent back to England for analysis after our three -hour visit. Armed with these and a radiation detector, we enter Narodichi where people have lived with radiation for over five years. It's a neat, proud little town with a chestnut-lined main street and a silver-painted Lenin in front of the party headquarters. In a year's time there will be no one here.

In the municipal gardens the grass is uncut but a fountain still plays. There are several memorials. One is a scorched tree with a cross on it – local people think that the forest protected them from the worst of the blast. Beside the tree there are three large boulders, one of which commemorates four villages and 548 people evacuated in 1986, another 15 villages and 3264 people evacuated in 1990. Twenty – two more villages and a further 11,000 people will be going in 1991. An inscription reads: 'In memory of the villages and human destinies of the Narodichi region burnt down by radiation'.

One of the most polluted areas is the children's playground, with 13 to 17 times more radiation levels. The red metal chairs hang down from the roundabout and blue steel boats swing gently in the breeze, but no one is allowed to play here any more.

Ivan, the local schoolmaster, is short and podgy and his face is an unhealthy grey. There were 10,000 children in the region, he tells me, now there are 3000. Two of his pupils pass by on bicycles and he grabs them and introduces us. The boys, just back from a Pioneer camp in Poland, look bored, and reply in monosyllables, which Ivan translates thus: 'The children send fraternal greetings to children throughout the United Kingdom'. He smiles proudly and a little desperately. I ask if the children's work has been affected by their proximity to Chernobyl. He sighs and nods. 'There is not a single healthy child here.'

(From **Pole to Pole** by Michael Palin, 1995, <http://palinstravels.co.uk/book-1169?crithl=1590>)



## Activity 1: Planning Grid

<b>SUMMARY OF TEXT</b>	Extract from <b>Pole to Pole</b> Michael Palin
<b>Paragraph 1 outline</b>	Palin presents what seems to be a peaceful and beautiful country scene. He suggests that something is unusual by informing the reader of a sign which forbids people or animals to eat anything grown on the land.
<b>Paragraph 2 outline</b>	
<b>Paragraph 3 outline</b>	
<b>Paragraph 4 outline</b>	
<b>Paragraph 5 outline</b>	

## Extending Learning: Wider Reading

To support and enhance your development of reading skills throughout the course, wider reading is recommended, as it will help you practise reading different types of writing and enable you to become familiar with different text types, audiences and purposes. The text types (or genres) which may support you in preparation for Paper 2 include:

- Newspaper articles – preferably feature articles or opinion columns, where arguments are developed by the writer and more than one perspective of an issue is presented
- Factual accounts which may be in the form of literary non-fiction, such as autobiography, biography, memoir, published diaries or journal writing
- Reference or text books – these can be either those you would use for study in a particular subject or a general interest text. In 2016, a wide range of books have been published on Shakespeare to commemorate 400 years since his death and these are aimed at various age and interest groups. You may already have reference books for a particular interest or hobby which can be examined for language used for a specific purpose.

When you are practising wider reading, make sure you:

- Think about the meaning of words, sentences and paragraphs. Constantly self-check that you know what each of them means – you can make brief notes or keep a reading log if you like
- Question the text as you read- again you may chose to note these questions on post-its
- Think about how you would convey the meaning (or **gist**) of what you had read to another person who had not read it
- Identify the significant points of the text so that if you were asked about it, you could discuss the key point of view.

## Suggested Responses to Activities

### Activity 1: Your reading habits

In listing your reading habits, you may have been surprised at the amount of literacy required to undertake common and everyday tasks. Before you have even left your home in the morning, you may well have engaged with a number of texts using your decoding skills as you washed, dressed and had breakfast. Examples of these were listed in the activity introduction.

### Activity 2: Active vs. Passive Reading

It may be that you do not actively read the instructions on your cleaning products or nutritional labels on packaged goods such as cereals, yoghurts and breakfast bars, but you may be subconsciously decoding texts, as when you look at the brand label to select your cereal from a cupboard, or stare at a toothpaste tube while brushing your teeth. This is **passive reading**.

If you actively check or update social media accounts throughout the day, you may find you are engaging in a wide range of reading activities of both print and multi-modal texts (multi-modal texts use images and words to convey their message). You may also have to engage in more traditional literacy activities such as reading a textbook or a set text for your GCSE studies. Any type of reading where you consciously have to decode to understand or communicate is regarded as **active reading**.

### Activity 3: Summarising

Summarising is a key skill in the GCSE Language examination. When you are asked to read an unseen text and provide a summary or overview of the key points, the examiner is testing your ability to select relevant information by skimming and scanning. Re-read the section of lesson 1 on 'Skimming and Scanning' to remind yourself of how to approach the task.

You should have included the following in your summary:

- cattle can no longer graze/ feed on grass in the contaminated area
- it is illegal for people to pick wild fruits, mushrooms or herbs
- large populations of over 40 villages were evacuated and could not return
- 7000 children have moved away
- all the children who have stayed are sick in some way
- the children cannot play in the playground

In a summarising question you do NOT need to talk about language and its effects – you are being asked WHAT the text is about. If the question asks you to answer ‘in your own words’, do not copy the words from the unseen (in the example above you would change ‘graze’ to ‘feed’ if responding in your own words).