



GCSE Bitesize revision audio scripts

English: Reading non-fiction and media

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Typical questions and types of text | 1 |
| Opinions and facts | 2 |
| Genre and audience | 4 |
| Purposes of a text | 5 |
| Language | 7 |
| Presentation | 9 |
| Answering the questions using Gap and List | 10 |

Reading non-fiction and media: Typical questions and types of text

This audio bite is about typical questions and types of text.

- ALIX: This part of the exam is all about reading – you’re given some texts to read, usually just two texts, and some questions to answer about them. So the first thing to do is ... well, I wouldn’t start by reading the texts!
- ELIOT: Yes, it seems odd, but Alix is exactly right. You have to answer the questions, so start by reading these. They usually tell you what the texts are about anyway. So if you had a question like this:
- ALIX: Sharon is writing a letter to her friend, Hanifa. Read lines 3 to 9 closely. List three opinions from these lines that Sharon has about animals and animal rights.
- ELIOT: We haven’t read the actual text yet, but we know who these two people are, that one wrote a letter, and what the letter seems to be about. We also know that lines 3 to 9 are the important ones.
- ALIX: Now it could be that on line 2 in the passage there’s a really difficult phrase, like ‘expressions of self pity’. You don’t quite understand it. And it would be easy to panic and feel you really don’t know what to do next. But it’s not part of the question. In fact, you’d only see it when you’re skimming through looking for the answer to the first question. And so you can ignore it, because it’s not what you’re supposed to write about.
- ELIOT: So even if it seems a bit weird, try to go for the questions first, and ignore things which you don’t need. The questions tend to be similar each year – they start by asking you to find things in the text. Like finding three opinions in the letter, or finding some facts in a leaflet.
- ALIX: Then there’s usually a question asking you to explain something that’s in the text. For instance, you might be asked what examples a writer has chosen, and why they chose these.
- ELIOT: This means you’re not just copying from the text, but understanding why it was written like this. The last two questions usually focus on particular bits of the passages. You might have to write about the purposes of a text, its audience and its presentation – such as its use of pictures. Or you may have to say how the writers use language.
- ALIX: And you won’t know what the passages will be on. You might get all sorts of subjects, from scuba diving to pop music, from

collecting stamps to growing plants. You aren't expected to know the subject, because all the information you need is in the passages.

ELIOT: But you are expected to know how texts work, how they are put together. There will be a media text, such as a newspaper report, a magazine article or a leaflet. So you need to know about things like purpose, audience and presentation.

ALIX: So when you start, concentrate on the questions and don't be put off by difficult words in the passages.

You normally have a number of questions. At first you just have to pick out information. Later on you must explain why something is used. There are lots of different subjects you could be asked about, but all the information you need is in the passages.

There are longer questions on audience, purpose and presentation, so listen to the audio clips which deal with these. If you've got time, you could also go on the internet, maybe visit GCSE Bitesize online to get some more ideas.

Reading non-fiction and media: Opinions and facts

This audio bite is about opinions and facts.

ELIOT: The first question often asks you to write about opinions and facts. Now this sounds easy. For instance, 'Elvis Presley is dead' is a fact. But 'Elvis's music is great' is an opinion – some people like his music, others don't.

ALIX: Now it's unlikely your question will be as easy as this. For a start, you've got to find the information in the passage somewhere. Then you've got to work out if it's a fact or not. Have a go at this one:

ELIOT: Every year, hundreds of thousands of calves are separated from their mothers within four days of birth.

ALIX: Fact or opinion? Well, can you prove it? If you can, by looking at evidence or other information, then it's a fact. And what Eliot said is a fact – you can look it up on the internet or in an encyclopaedia. Have a go at another:

ELIOT: Separating calves like this is cruel. It is done only to provide us with cheap milk.

- ALIX: Fact or opinion? Well it's an opinion – you can't really look it up and get a clear answer – some people would agree with it, some wouldn't. Have a go at a few more:
- ELIOT: Hundreds of people die in car accidents in Britain every year ...
- ALIX: Fact
- ELIOT: ... and car companies have made cars safer ...
- ALIX: Fact
- ELIOT: ... but they should much more ...
- ALIX: Opinion
- ELIOT: ... because lots of young people are careless and won't ever learn how to drive safely ...
- ALIX: Opinion. And now have a go at a longer passage. Listen carefully and see if you can find two facts and two opinions.
- ELIOT: A recent study shows that over half of 16 year olds in England have either tried a drug or have been offered one. Drugs can be easily found almost anywhere in the country, and things are only going to get worse. However, most teenagers who try drugs will not become dependent upon drugs.
- ALIX: How did you do? If you aren't sure, play that section again – you should have two facts, and two opinions.
- If you're sure – well, the first fact is about half the 16 year olds trying or being offered drugs, and the second is that most don't become drug dependent. And the opinions?
- ELIOT: The first is that drugs can be easily found almost anywhere. A lot of people wouldn't agree – you couldn't go around a church or a primary school and 'easily' find some drugs.
- ALIX: In fact the passage gives the impression that there are drugs lying around all over the place, and that's not true. The second opinion is that things are only going to get worse – some people would agree, but others wouldn't. And trying to say what will happen in the future is really difficult anyway, so this must also be an opinion.
- ELIOT: So there's usually a question asking you to find facts or opinions. Check you are looking at the right passage. If you are given line numbers, make sure you take the information from

the right part. If you don't, then you won't be answering the question.

When you find the information, think carefully before deciding whether it's a fact or an opinion. If you can check the statement, such as testing it somewhere, it's usually a fact. But if you can't, and it's the sort of thing people might disagree with, then it's probably an opinion.

Reading non-fiction and media: Genre and audience

This audio bite is about genre and audience.

ALIX: In the reading section you are often asked to write about genre, audience and purpose. It might be easier to remember this as G – A – P, or 'Gap'. We'll look at purpose later on – right now we'll just deal with genre and audience. So what are they, and why are they important?

ELIOT: Well there are always questions asking you to explain the sort of texts you have, and that is what genre means. You could have the same basic topic, for example karate, but you might have passages from different genres. So you could have something from an encyclopaedia – it would be full of information, like where karate started, and the different types of karate.

ALIX: Or you could get a leaflet through your door about a local karate school. It would have far fewer facts, because it would be trying to persuade you to join the club. It would make karate sound great, but it wouldn't tell you about any of the moves.

ELIOT: Or you might find a book in the library about improving your karate – it would have instructions about what to do and diagrams of the different moves. But it wouldn't tell you about your local club.

ALIX: So the genre is the type of text. The exam often has passages which are from leaflets or books. But it can also have something from a magazine, a newspaper, a diary or an internet site. It could even have something from the back of a cereal packet – so remember to pay attention to what you see around you.

ELIOT: And the audience is who the passage is aimed at. So you might find a simple book about karate in a primary school library – it would give young children some of the history of karate and explain what people wear when they do karate. But it wouldn't

show young children exactly how to attack someone in the playground, or how to hit someone with a rice flail.

ALIX: But if you read an instruction manual for people who do karate – they might already be purple belts – then you’d find all sorts of things about how to defend yourself – and some of them involve breaking bones.

ELIOT: In fact the idea of writing for a particular audience is pretty straightforward – you probably wouldn’t tell exactly the same jokes to your mum as you tell to your friends. And writers think carefully about who they are writing for too.

ALIX: The trick in the exam is to put these ideas together – to show how a writer has chosen to write in a particular way, and for a particular group of people. You might write something like this:

ELIOT: This passage is probably for children because it’s nice to look at and easy to read. For example, there is a large picture of someone dressed in karate clothes. Each bit of clothing is clearly labelled, in Japanese and in English, so the children can learn something interesting. There is also a box explaining a little about Japanese writing.

ALIX: And that’s a good start – Eliot’s talked about what he’s found, who he thinks it’s for, and why it would suit them.

So think about the genre of the passage – what sort of style is used? What does it look like? How is it put together? What sort of information can you find?

And then work out who it is for – is it for people who know a lot about the subject? Is it a set of instructions for them to follow? Are there difficult words included?

Reading non-fiction and media: Purposes of a text

This audio bite is about purposes of a text.

ELIOT: If you remember, Alix talked about G – A – P, or ‘Gap’. This is a way of remembering genre, audience, and purpose. We covered the first two of these, so now we’re going to deal with purpose. Basically purpose is what the passage is trying to do, so if we have a text like this:

- ALIX: Cows are usually milked two or three times a day. On average they produce 30 litres of milk a day, but they also produce about 200 litres of gas.
- ELIOT: You know that it's giving us information – the purpose is to tell us things we probably didn't know. A lot of texts inform. For instance, you can find out what's on TV by looking in most newspapers. But texts also do other things, like this:
- ALIX: So there's these three cows, one from Germany, one from France, and one from England, and they all go into this bar...
- ELIOT: We're not really listening to this for information – it's part of a joke, so its purpose is to entertain. Can you think of any udders – sorry, any others?
- ALIX: Well a lot of texts are written to persuade people. For instance, adverts in magazines are there to sell things like perfume, shampoo or cars. And there's no reason why we can't use persuasion to write about milk too, like this:
- ELIOT: Growing children need calcium, they need energy, and they need vitamins. So what better than a full glass of fresh dairy milk to start each and every day?
- ALIX: You can also write a text to instruct – to tell someone what to do. And things like recipes are obvious examples of telling people exactly what they should do, like this:
- ELIOT: Now pour half a pint of milk into a saucepan. Heat it up slowly, stirring all the time.
- ALIX: You can also find texts which advise people – the passage might have a few instructions but it mainly gives suggestions, like this:
- ELIOT: If you are planning to get a tan, go carefully at first. You should use a sun cream right from the start. If there's no shade, you ought to wear a hat as well.
- ALIX: And you can find texts which explain, which tell you why. So if someone asked me why I liked EastEnders, I'd say something like ... the storylines are good. They seem to be about normal stuff that could happen to anyone, but then there's something that's so different, you can't wait for the next programme to find out what happens.
- ELIOT: So there are all sorts of purposes. And to make matters more difficult, a lot of texts have more than one purpose. So a newspaper story called 'Football Star Spat in My Pint' is more

than just giving information. It seems to be entertaining more than anything else. And it might contain persuasion as well, trying to make us believe how some of the stars behave badly

ALIX: Your job is to spot the 'Gap' – sort out what the genre, audience and purposes are, and then show how these are tied to the language the writer uses.

ELIOT: So remember 'Gap' – genre, audience and purpose. The passages you get can have different purposes. You might have something that informs, or entertains, or persuades, or instructs, or explains. And you can have a passage which has more than one purpose.

Give reasons for deciding on the Gap, and try to show how the Gap affects features of the text, like the presentation and language.

Reading non-fiction and media: Language

This audio bite is about language.

ALIX: The reading section always has at least one question to do with language. Sometimes you are told what to write about – it could be how a passage uses questions. But you are more likely to be asked just about language, like this:

ELIOT: How is language used in a Greenpeace leaflet to inform its readers?

ALIX: A lot of people have trouble answering these sorts of questions - it's hard to know where to start. Let's start by working out the 'Gap' – it's a leaflet, with headings, sections, photos and diagrams. It's aimed at teenagers, and it seems to be a mixture of information and persuasion – they want you to join Greenpeace.

ELIOT: So now you've got that, you know how to answer the question. Just look at the text, and write about how the leaflet uses those things, like this:

ALIX: The leaflet makes the information easy to understand. It uses clear headings, like 'What are ancient forests?' which are easy to read. And the headings tell you at a glance what it's all about. The text is broken up into short sections, with one section under each heading. Again, this makes it clear and straightforward.

- ELIOT: So Alix has already told us quite a lot, but she hasn't dealt with any of the words yet. See how she does that next:
- ALIX: The passage uses quite simple ideas and words, such as the forests are disappearing so quickly. When there are more difficult words, there are examples to help. For example, when 'species' is mentioned, the passage tells us, 'from bears to beetles'. We all know what these are, so it's easy to understand, and it's easy to see how wide the range is.
- ELIOT: This is getting really good, but is there anything else she could add?
- ALIX: The leaflet also looks easy to follow. The difficult words, such as 'evolution', are printed in bold, so they stand out and are easy to look up. And there's a diagram which shows what happens to water – going from rivers to trees, to clouds and then falling back down as rain. Diagrams are much easier to look at than explain.
- ELIOT: And that's an excellent example. This one shows how language is used to inform readers on a leaflet, but the question will basically be the same each time – how and why does the writer use language?
- ALIX: This means write about what you can find in the text and how it fits in with the 'Gap' – the genre, the audience and the purpose.
- ELIOT: As well as 'Gap', there's another word that might help you to remember – it's L – I – S – T, language, information, style and tone, or 'List'. Language is the sort of things you find in the passage, but the ideas, the facts or opinions, is the information.
- ALIX: The style is what it looks like – is it full of bright colours to make it eye-catching? Or is it serious, with lots of long paragraphs? And the tone is tied to the attitude of the writer – is it meant to be funny, or sad, or angry? The bits of 'List' all join together – after all, you wouldn't get a Greenpeace leaflet about forests disappearing which was just meant to be funny.
- There will be at least one question to do with language. You should show how 'Gap' and language fit together. You can also use 'List' - the language, information, style and tone, to help you remember how to deal with the question.
- Writing about language isn't easy, so there's more about using 'Gap' and 'List' in a later section.

Reading non-fiction and media: Presentation

This audio bite is about presentation.

- ELIOT: When we talk about presentation, or how something is presented in a text, we are talking about what a text looks like. You might think it's not really important in English, but it is. Often the questions ask you to write about things like the colours used, or underlining, or even the photos.
- ALIX: Most people find this easy. It's usually done with the media passages, because if you did it with a normal story, like a novel, you wouldn't have much to say. A novel will probably just be presented in chapters and paragraphs, and that's about it.
- ELIOT: But media texts are different. For example, a magazine advert looks very different to a novel. And if you hold a media passage up at arm's length, you'll see how it's organised. For a start, they often have headings in bigger, bolder type. Like a newspaper with headlines like 'Prince to Marry in August'. You tend to read these headings first, so you can quickly work out what it's about. The headings can also guide you, so you might not read everything in a leaflet – just the bits you need to know.
- ALIX: And the text is often written in different sections. So you can have a heading, with some writing underneath, and then another heading, and so on. This splits up the information – it looks better, but it's also quicker and easier to read – so if it's for children, it's often in sections. And all newspapers are in sections too, with the writing in columns and boxes.
- ELIOT: They also have photos or diagrams. So you might have the picture of a pop star, or a car crash. These photos grab your attention. They also bring the story to life and break up the writing – that means that it looks less boring and easier to read. But don't forget that most photos have a caption – a sentence or two explaining it – and you should include this in your answer.
- ALIX: You should also be able to notice other aspects too. For instance, many media passages use colours. It makes a photo look much better than black and white. But colours can also represent other things. For instance, a lot of adverts use green – it can suggest that something is natural, fresh or good for the environment.
- ELIOT: Media texts often have logos too, which are ways of identifying a company. So if you look at someone's trainers, you know instantly what make they are. And some logos mean other

things too – so if something is recycled, you get this little circle with two arrows.

- ALIX: But presentation is also about how words are printed. For example, you can make a passage look like someone's handwriting – by using a different font. Some fonts look very modern, but others look old or formal. And you can split information by putting it in bullet points.
- ELIOT: Or write words in capital, italics, bold, or underlined.
- ALIX: Whatever it is, you always need to write what the effect is – does it make it easier to read? Does it make it stand out? Or is it there to help the reader?
- ELIOT: It should be clear that presentation is important in media texts. Look at the passage from a distance and you can spot things like headings, sections, boxes, columns, photos, diagrams and captions.

Write about other things, like colours, logos and the way the words are printed out. The key to a good answer is explaining why the writer chose to use a certain presentation. Was it to grab your attention, to create a special image or make it easier to read? That's what you've got to decide.

Reading non-fiction and media: Gap and List

This audio bite is about answering questions using Gap and List.

- ELIOT: In the reading section you are dealing with different texts, or passages. You need to work fairly quickly, because you'll be covering several questions about the texts. Each question looks for different things, so start by roughly estimating how long to spend on each question. The paper will show you how many marks each question is worth – and this is important to you.
- ALIX: Yes, a lot of people waste time writing far too much on the first question or so. It might only be worth three marks, yet they spend twenty minutes on it. And later on they only have fifteen minutes to write about a question which is worth nine marks. So divide up your time properly.
- ELIOT: And quite a few people forget about time all together. They carry on writing an answer and forget there are other, more important questions left. So stick to your plan – perhaps take

off your watch and check where you are in the plan every few minutes.

ALIX: Read the questions before you look at the texts. The questions will tell you lots about the passages anyway, and the questions are what you have to answer, and what you will be marked on.

ELIOT: Highlight the key words – so underline them, or circle them, or colour them in - this will make you focus on the question.

ALIX: There will be some questions which seem difficult. They often have bullet points and ask you to do a number of things. Take your time – you’ve made a plan so you don’t have to rush. Go through the ‘Gap’ ideas. So think about the genre – what sort of passage is it? Then about the audience – who is it for? How do you know? And then about the purpose, or purposes - what is the passage doing?

ELIOT: ‘Gap’ is a good way to remember how to tackle the text. And so is ‘List’ which is about language, information, style, and tone. So language is basically what you can find on the page – like the words and headings. Information is what the passage is telling you – is it made up of facts? Or does it have lots of opinions?

ALIX: That’s ‘L – I’, so we need ‘S’ and ‘T’. ‘S’ is Style, which is the way everything is expressed – is it eye-catching? Is it attractive? And ‘T’ is the tone, how you should treat the subject – should you be angry, sad, or disgusted? Or should you be interested and happy?

ELIOT: If this doesn’t quite make sense, think of an advert for fast food on the TV – people seem to be having fun, they all look like models and they’re smiling all the time. So the advert fits the purpose – it makes you want to go out and get some of this food.

ALIX: But if you don’t normally cook, and you decide to make chicken korma and rice for your girlfriend’s birthday, you don’t need lots of pictures of people grinning at you. You need lots of facts, like what to buy, and you want clear instructions, so you don’t make mistakes.

ELIOT: So the reading questions are about understanding the passages. You need to plan how long you’ll spend on each question, and stick to your plan, so you make sure you cover all the questions.

Read the questions before you read the texts. Check you understand the questions by circling the key words. When you are doing the more difficult questions, use 'Gap' and 'List' to help you remember. And try to link the texts with the language – show you understand what's going on.