

Year 9 Summer 2 Homework Booklet: Writer's Attitudes

Each week you must read one extract and answer the question which follows. You must include in your answer – the writer's attitudes, the methods the writer uses to convey (put across) their attitudes and quotations.

Week 1

A picture of loneliness: you are looking at the last male northern white rhino. Jonathan Jones, The Guardian

Human beings – we always kill the things we love. We have been doing so since the ice age. There are beautiful pictures of European woolly rhinos in caves in France, that were painted up to 30,000 years ago. These ancient relatives of Sudan the rhino share his heroic size, mighty power and gentleness. A woolly rhino in a Chauvet cave painting seems to be a creature full of life. But the same people who painted such sensitive portraits of ice age rhinos helped to kill them off.

Today, immense love is invested in rhinos, yet they are being slaughtered in ever greater numbers. The northern white rhino is the rarest species of African rhino. There are far greater numbers of southern white rhinos and black rhinos. But the demand in Asian countries such as Vietnam for rhino horn as a traditional medicine believed to cure everything from flu to cancer is fuelling a boom in poaching. From 2007, when just 13 rhinos were killed by poachers in South Africa, the killings have grown horrifically. Last year 1,215 rhinos were slaughtered for their horns in South Africa. This year already looks certain to beat that dreadful record.

Have we learned nothing since the ice age? Can the better angels of our nature not defeat the impulse to kill?

What is the writer's attitude towards poaching rhinos and how is it conveyed?

Week 2

Technobile: If computers keep taking over our brainwork, soon we will be nothing more than fat sheep with fingers, says Chris Patridge

Labour-saving devices have created a generation of lardballs, and now brainwork-saving devices threaten to cripple us mentally too. Technology has moved from making things possible to making things easy, and that is as dangerous for our mental health as vegging out playing computer games and watching DVDs is for our physical health.

Some programs even finish your words for you before you have finished typing them, something that is rightly seen as unforgivably rude in human conversation. The way software looks over our shoulders as we type is making us lazy. Nobody reads what they have written any more. You can see the dire results in blogs all over the web. Texts are littered with "theres" that should be "theirs", and "nots" that should be "nows" - errors that spellcheckers still cannot spot.

Software is killing music, too. It is too easy to create music by sampling digital sounds and assembling mixes that sound good, even great, in the ambience of an Ibiza mega-club. Outside that club, it's just blah. Only in the computer age could DJs such as Fat Boy Slim be regarded as musicians. All the skills are in the software - the number of people learning how to read music or play instruments is rapidly declining.

Already we live in a world where we barely have to lift a finger. Lights turn on automatically, doors open as you approach, nowhere is more than a few yards from a car parking space. Now computers are doing the same thing for the mind. A mental obesity epidemic threatens.

How does the writer convey their attitude towards technology?

Week 3

In danger for demanding peace (Amnesty International)

In the country of Colombia in Southern America there is a conflict between the government and anti-government guerrilla groups. This conflict threatens the lives and livelihoods of families and communities caught in the middle. The people of San José de Apartadó founded their Peace Community in order to live in peace and not be drawn into this armed conflict. But because of their refusal to take sides, all the warring parties treat them as enemies.

Since the Peace Community's creation in 1997, more than 170 of its members and other local people have been killed or have disappeared, while others have been threatened or assaulted. This is frequently carried out by armed groups supported by the army and the security forces, but anti-government guerrilla groups have also threatened and attacked community members.

Those in the Peace Community remain in constant danger. Incidents in 2012 include: a member of the Peace Community being shot at by paramilitaries; soldiers destroying crops, detaining one resident and threatening to 'exterminate' others; and local peasant farmers and Peace Community members receiving death threats from paramilitaries. The Colombian government has failed to take effective action to protect the people in the Peace Community.

How does the writer convey their attitude towards the people of San José de Apartadó?

Week 4.

How we became addicted to sugar

By Anne Gibson, BBC History website

We are swamped by sugar. It has crept into all areas of our daily diet, from the sweet treats we award ourselves to family essentials such as pre-packaged loaves of bread. We know that too much sugar is bad for us, but we are hooked - and sugar is now so ubiquitous it is hard to believe there was a time when it was not readily available.

First discovered growing as a wild grass in the South Pacific around 8,000 BC, travellers and traders helped spread sugar across the globe. For centuries it was regarded as a status symbol, too expensive to be consumed in great quantities.

Britain's love affair with the sweet stuff began in the 1600s. Settlers on the British colony of Barbados discovered sugar cane thrived in the island's stony soil where crops of cotton and tobacco had failed. Providing three harvests a year, farming sugar cane became a lucrative business. The discovery prompted a 'sugar rush' with settlers descending on Barbados - keen to cash in on the wealth it created.

Mass production of sugar saw Britain grow rich, helping to build the Empire.

Slaves from West Africa were used on plantations on which sugar was grown. The slaves were at the mercy of the plantation owners and overseers who had little regard for their welfare. Even pregnant women were made to work in the fields, and slaves were not given adequate nutrition.

"These are guys who are there to make money and get out. The objective of the system is to produce the sugar, not to provide an easy way of life for the slaves - as long as you have access to more slaves," adds Prof Richardson.

During the Napoleonic wars of the early 1800s the French invested heavily in the production of sugar beet, a relatively new discovery. It was not long before sugar beet flooded the British market. The price dropped and by 1850 sugar was finally affordable for all. The public could not get enough of this cheap and tasty pick-me-up. From sweetened tea in the workplace, to meals on the family table, to the new working class tradition of high tea - sugar soon became indispensable.

Far from being an unhealthy choice, this new foodstuff played an important role in family eating habits, says food historian Dr Annie Gray.

"It's a question of, are your children going to eat that dry bread? No. If you spread it with a bit of jam can you get them to eat it? Yes."

It did not take long for sugar to become a household favourite.

"If you look at the diet of the working class at the beginning of the 19th century, you're pretty much looking at bread, potatoes, cheese, butter if you're lucky, maybe a bit of bacon fat," says Dr Gray. "By the end you're looking at bread, butter or margarine, jam and cake."

So addicted were we to this new taste, that at the beginning of the 19th century we consumed 12 pounds of sugar per head. By the end of the century that amount had rocketed to 47 pounds per head. But this new-found pleasure came at a price.

"For the poor in the 19th century a lot of their calorific intake came from sugar, and the problem with that is they could have been taking in calories from elsewhere that came with nutrients", says Dr Gray. "Malnutrition among the poorer classes at the end of the 19th century was awful."

Malnutrition is not the only health problem for which sugar has some responsibility. It is known to cause tooth decay, while obesity and high blood pressure are closely linked to the over-consumption of calories. In turn they can lead to heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.

Sugar is now so ingrained in our diet it may seem too impossible a habit to break.

But Professor Naveed Sattar of the University of Glasgow's School of Medicine thinks there is some hope in our battle with the sweet stuff.

"People can take some of the sugar out of their diet and get to a point where they're eating less sugar in their food or drinks but still enjoy their diet to the same extent, if not more, by reprogramming their palate."

Challenging centuries of in-built programming favouring sugar might take a lot of willpower, but Professor Sattar is confident it can be achieved.

"Sometimes to re-programme your palate can take a couple of months... but [people] can achieve that change."

What is the writer's attitude towards our diet?

Week 5.

Sleep: Weird things people do in their sleep

Denise Winterman, BBC News Magazine

Increasing numbers of people are asking for help with sleep disorders and some of them are doing rather strange things during the night. Specialist sleep clinics are treating more people with sleep disorders than ever before. It's not surprising. More than 30% of the UK population currently suffers from insomnia or another sleep disorder, according to the Mental Health Foundation. This can have serious mental and physical consequences.

Clinics say they are getting up to 50 new referrals a week. It's a fivefold increase in just a decade for some. This big rise has been put down to raised awareness of sleep disorders and more people reporting them. The clinics are also dealing with some strange new sleep behaviour, while other rather odd sleep disorders are becoming more common. So what are the weird things people do?

"It is very common for people to do things in their sleep that they do repeatedly during the day," says Dr Kirstie Anderson, who runs the Neurology Sleep Service for the Newcastle Upon Tyne NHS Foundation Trust. This is largely down to sleep disorders called parasomnias. These are unwanted behaviours that occur during sleep. They can be as small as opening your eyes while asleep or, at the very extreme end, driving a car while sleeping. Anderson has even treated someone who carefully dismantled grandfather clocks while asleep. What happens in our brains during such episodes is still something of a mystery. Not much research has been done, largely due to the fact that gathering data is very difficult.

"The problem is people rarely do such acts under controlled conditions at a sleep clinic," says sleep specialist Dr Chris Idzikowski, director of the Edinburgh Sleep Clinic. "But this area of research is going to really move forward in the next few years because we now have the necessary equipment to record people in their own homes."

Unexplained empty food wrappers and a messy kitchen are what some sleepwalkers face when they wake up. Often snacking in your sleep is not a big problem, but in more extreme cases it is classed as Nocturnal Eating Syndrome (NES). Sufferers can raid the kitchen several times a night but have no recollection when they wake up. Not only do they lose sleep but they can put on an excessive amount of weight, causing a whole range of problems mentally and physically. Other concerns include choking in their sleep.

"Sleepwalkers will often do simple things that make some kind of sense, like eat when having gone to bed hungry or dieting during the day," says Anderson.

In more complicated cases, where someone might cook a meal, the person is actually awake but will have no memory of what they have done. It's a type of amnesia, says Prof Jim Horne, from the Sleep Research Centre at Loughborough University.

"They are basically in a confused awake state. In these more extreme cases you can't attribute the problem to sleep itself. Often it's a case of stress, for example, affecting sleep."

You're peacefully falling asleep and suddenly it's like a bomb has gone off in your head. It's exploding head syndrome, when a sudden and incredibly loud noise comes from within your head.

Some sleep experts say it is very rare but Anderson says cases have been referred to her in recent years. It is really the sensory equivalent of the motor start [the hypnic or sudden jerk accompanied by a falling feeling] we all sometimes get as we are going off to sleep, she says.

"People hear a really loud bang or explosion as they are drifting off to sleep, and then work out that it can't be external as no-one else heard it. Sometimes people get bright flashes of light.

"It is entirely benign, but can be alarming and mostly we simply reassure sufferers. Sometimes medication is used if people are very bothered and therefore worry about falling asleep and make it worse."

Often there is no pattern to episodes, but they can go on for years and be a significant disruption to quality of life.

What are the professionals' attitudes to sleepwalking?

Week 6.

Is zero an even number?

Laura Gray, BBC News Magazine

Is zero odd, even or neither? For mathematicians the answer is easy: zero is an even number. The rest of us may not feel completely sure. According to Dr James Grime of the Millennium Maths Project at Cambridge University, reaction time experiments in the 1990s revealed people are 10% slower at deciding whether zero is odd or even than other numbers.

Children find it particularly difficult to recognise if zero is odd or even. "A survey of primary school children in the 1990s showed that about 50% thought zero is even, about 20% thought it was odd and the remaining 30% thought it was neither, both, or that they don't know," explains Dr Grime. "It appears that we may file numbers mentally into lists such as the even numbers two, four, six, eight or numbers to the power of two which would include two, four, six, eight or two, four, eight, 16. Zero is not on these lists so it takes us longer to work out."

So why, mathematically, is zero an even number? Because any number that can be divided by two to create another whole number is even. Zero passes this test because if you halve zero you get zero. Zero also has odd numbers either side of it - minus one and one - and so this is another test it passes to be classified as an even number. In fact, there is an argument that zero is the most even number of all. A number which is "doubly even" can be divided by two and then divided by two again. Zero can be divided by two forever and the result will always be a whole number - zero.

It's not just the public who have struggled to recognise zero as an even number. During the smog in 1977 in Paris, car use was restricted so that people with licence plates ending in odd or even numbers drove on alternate days.

"The police did not know whether to stop the zero-numbered licence plates and so they just let them pass because they didn't know whether it was odd or even," says Dr Grime.

It even took mathematicians some time to agree on the question.

"It wasn't until the 1600s that zero was truly accepted as an even number - after resistance and debate," says Grime. For more than 1,000 years mathematicians had difficulties with the number zero and non-mathematicians are still often uncertain about how to classify it. So Bloomberg had every reason to spell out to New Yorkers in black and white that he was lumping zero along with the (other) even numbers.

What is the writer's attitude towards zero?