

Language under the Microscope Practice Texts:

In preparation for your Microscope assessment as part of Benchmark 8, we have compiled all the specimen and past paper texts that OCR has provided for A Level English Language since the specification was first sat in 2017.

The **question** is always the same and reads as below:

Read **Text A** in your **Resource Booklet** and answer the following questions.

1. Giving careful consideration to the context of the text:
 - a. Identify and analyse uses of lexis and semantics in this text [10]
 - b. Identify and analyse the way sentences are constructed in this text. [10]

The **assessment objectives** that you are assessed against for this question are shown below:

- AO1:** Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression. [10]
- AO3:** Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning. [10]

Text A

Text A is a humorous piece from the magazine section of the Saturday edition of *The Guardian* newspaper, in which the writer Catherine Bennett pretends to be a so-called 'empty nester', a mother whose children have just left home. It seems like the speaker is talking to a friend in a similar position. The article was published in August 2015.



Modern tribes **The empty nester**

Catherine Bennett

T hat's your last one off in September? Me, too, St Andrews. I know, thanks, but it's so far away. There's Skype, of course, and I've made Abby promise to text me at eight every morning and then again at 11pm, with a list of everything she's eaten, or I won't be able to sleep, but the thought I won't see her until Christmas, it's almost like she did it deliberately, even if it is the only place you can do joint history of art and Mandarin with a year in Toronto. I keep thinking, what if there are smokers in her corridor, with her allergies? Or people who eat peanuts? Or what if she gets radicalised and goes to Syria and marries a jihadist and we never see her again?

They never stop being your baby, do they? So I thought I might surprise her after a couple of weeks, say we were passing through, make sure she's not too stressed or thinking of getting a tattoo or something, then we could maybe meet one of her tutors to check she's getting her essays in. Can you believe it's only this time last year we were writing their personal statements?

It was tough enough without the other three, but the thought of four empty bedrooms and no piles of dirty washing, honestly, I'd give anything to do the school run just one more time. It's like a bereavement, isn't it, the way it hits you, every time you see the cuddlies and the violin exactly where they left them? I just keep sitting on her bed and howling.

Everyone says the thing to do is keep busy, that's why I'm off to the dump. If we clear Abby's junk and turn her room into an en suite, we could put the house on the market, trade down to a flat and buy a little place in France. Of course the kids are furious, but I keep telling them, tough, we're actually not a free laundry-cum-storage facility. But young people can be so selfish, can't they?

Do you want to see a picture of the puppy?

Text A

Text A is an extract from a new Terms and Conditions booklet sent out to First Direct bank account holders in 2016. First Direct is a major national online and telephone bank.

first direct

Say hello to...

Our Account Terms and Conditions (aka our Terms)

Which take effect on **16 September 2016**

It might not be a page-turner but consider this some (very important) gentle bedtime reading

It's not got that many twists and turns but it's full of useful information so you should look through it carefully, take extra care with bits that are important to you and keep it to hand in case you need to refer to it.

We know T&Cs can be heavy going but we've worked really hard to make sure ours are in as plain English as humanly possible, making it easy to find the information you need when you need it.

First things first (no pun intended), our 'current account' is called **1st Account**.

And **First Directory** is a package of benefits available to 1st Account holders for a monthly fee. Benefits include Worldwide Travel Insurance, Motor Breakdown Assistance, Mobile Phone Insurance, reduced fee non-Sterling ATM withdrawals, leisure benefits and offers. For more information, call us on the number on the back of these Terms or visit firstdirect.com/banking/first-directory

Sterling means Great British (GB) pounds.

UK means England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

[Text omitted]

Overdrafts

If you're not reading this with a hot beverage, you're doing it wrong.

Overdrafts are a short-term way to borrow money on your account although we can't offer them to everyone. They can be a useful way to buy what you need, but we don't recommend you rely on them. Ours are only available on 1st Accounts, not savings accounts.

Overdraft interest i.e. what you pay for using an overdraft

You'll be charged overdraft interest if you're overdrawn by more than £250. Our current rate is **15.9% EAR (Effective Annual Rate) variable**. In case you don't already know, overdrawn is where you borrow money from us to cover a transaction that's for more money than was in your account at the time.

If your 1st Account is linked to an Offset Mortgage, you'll be charged overdraft interest at your mortgage rate on your whole overdrawn balance – even the first £250.

[Text omitted]

Text alerts to avoid charges

Don't worry we won't use text speak – and definitely no emojis.

If we hold a mobile telephone number for you, we may send you text messages to help you avoid charges eg on a day where we've agreed an informal overdraft (an overdraft we haven't agreed in advance) on your account or there's not enough Available Balance in your account to meet your payments.

If you'd like to opt out of these messages, please give us a call.

It may not always be possible for us to send you text messages eg if we have system problems or after 10.45pm so it's important you check your account regularly to avoid unnecessary charges.

We'll send text messages to the mobile telephone number we hold for you so it's important you keep your contact details up to date.

When you're outside the UK, some mobile operators may charge you for receiving texts. If you tell us when you go, we can temporarily suspend text alerts so you can avoid these charges.

Your **Available Balance** includes all cleared funds (including any cleared cheques) and any formal overdraft you have.

One day in the future, terms and conditions will be beamed directly into your mind. Today is not that day. Sorry.

Text A

Text A is an extract from a column in the *Guardian* newspaper written by Charlie Brooker. He writes a humorous opinion piece every week on a subject of his choice. The article was published on 20 December 2010.

To cut tuition fees, we should teach only the useful stuff...

You can't put a price on a good education. Except, actually, you can – and it turns out that price is just over £9,000 a year.

Unsurprisingly many students are furious at the hike in tuition fees; but apart from shouting about it or trying to smash the Treasury to bits with sticks, what practical steps can we take to make education more affordable?

Nine thousand pounds a year sounds like a lot – but actually, it's shitloads. Yet it turns out that if you divide shitloads by 52, it comes out at around £173 a week, which sounds more achievable. Especially if your course only lasts seven days. So let's only provide week-long courses.

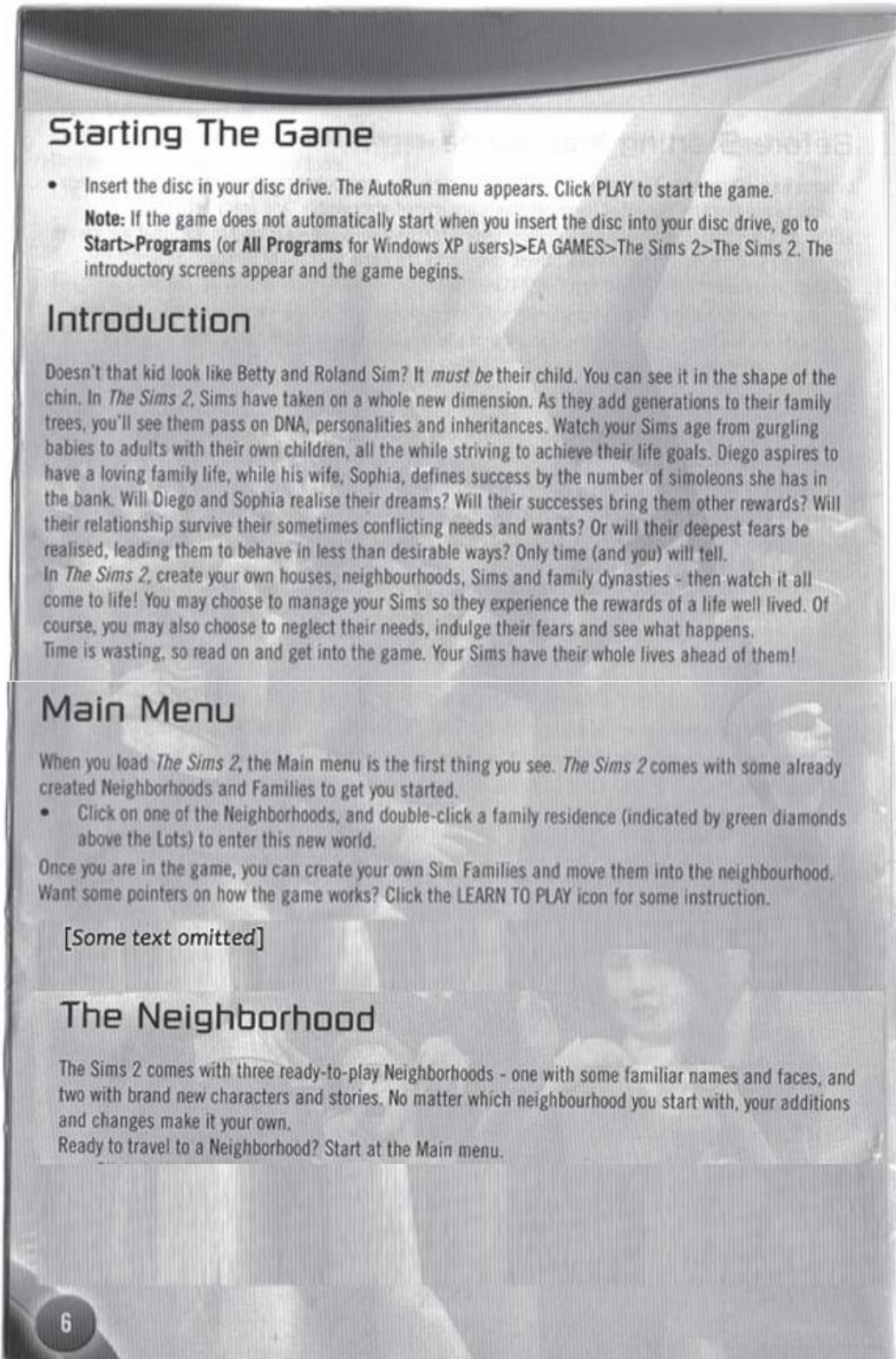
Obviously, to compress a three-year course into one week, the field of study will have to be streamlined a bit. Whittled down. Reduced to a series of bullet points. But in many cases, that's an advantage.

Take history. There's already far too much of it. In fact, mankind is generating a "past mountain", which grows 24 hours in size every single day. No one can be expected to keep all of that in their head. There simply isn't room. Even award-winning historians will be lost for words if you unexpectedly leap out in front of them and demand they list everything that happened on, say, 6 July 1919, before the special quiz music ends, especially if they thought they were alone in the house.

So instead of studying the whole of human history, why not focus on a concentrated period, such as the most exciting five minutes of the second world war? That way you just get the fun bits with the machine guns and everything, and there's none of that boring exploration of the "consequences" or the "causes" or "how we can stop it happening again". The philosopher George Santayana famously remarked that those who forget history are condemned to repeat it. But if you *have* forgotten history, you won't know you're repeating it – so it won't matter. And you won't have heard of George Santayana, either. Which is just as well, because, to be honest, he sounds like a bit of a smart arse.

Text A

Text A is a page from an instruction booklet that came with the computer game *The Sims 2*, released in 2004.



Starting The Game

- Insert the disc in your disc drive. The AutoRun menu appears. Click PLAY to start the game.
Note: If the game does not automatically start when you insert the disc into your disc drive, go to **Start>Programs** (or **All Programs** for Windows XP users)>EA GAMES>The Sims 2>The Sims 2. The introductory screens appear and the game begins.

Introduction

Doesn't that kid look like Betty and Roland Sim? It *must be* their child. You can see it in the shape of the chin. In *The Sims 2*, Sims have taken on a whole new dimension. As they add generations to their family trees, you'll see them pass on DNA, personalities and inheritances. Watch your Sims age from gurgling babies to adults with their own children, all the while striving to achieve their life goals. Diego aspires to have a loving family life, while his wife, Sophia, defines success by the number of simoleons she has in the bank. Will Diego and Sophia realise their dreams? Will their successes bring them other rewards? Will their relationship survive their sometimes conflicting needs and wants? Or will their deepest fears be realised, leading them to behave in less than desirable ways? Only time (and you) will tell.

In *The Sims 2*, create your own houses, neighbourhoods, Sims and family dynasties - then watch it all come to life! You may choose to manage your Sims so they experience the rewards of a life well lived. Of course, you may also choose to neglect their needs, indulge their fears and see what happens. Time is wasting, so read on and get into the game. Your Sims have their whole lives ahead of them!

Main Menu

When you load *The Sims 2*, the Main menu is the first thing you see. *The Sims 2* comes with some already created Neighborhoods and Families to get you started.

- Click on one of the Neighborhoods, and double-click a family residence (indicated by green diamonds above the Lots) to enter this new world.

Once you are in the game, you can create your own Sim Families and move them into the neighbourhood. Want some pointers on how the game works? Click the LEARN TO PLAY icon for some instruction.

[Some text omitted]

The Neighborhood

The Sims 2 comes with three ready-to-play Neighborhoods - one with some familiar names and faces, and two with brand new characters and stories. No matter which neighbourhood you start with, your additions and changes make it your own.

Ready to travel to a Neighborhood? Start at the Main menu.

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[Text A – written text only]

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Text A

Text A is an article celebrating the life of the musician David Bowie, who died in January 2016, written by the columnist Caitlin Moran and published in The Times newspaper.

An energy source has been extinguished. He wired us to ourselves



Bowie on tour in Canada in 1983

Corbis

Caitlin Moran
January 12 2016

What a lucky planet we were to have had David Bowie. So lucky. Imagine how vast all of space and time is — how endless and empty, how black and cold. Imagine a tracking shot across the universe, nothing happening nearly everywhere, nearly all the time.

And then, as it scrolls past our galaxy, you can hear, quiet at first, but getting louder as we close in, Rebel Rebel, coming from our planet, from our country, in our time, playing on tinny transistor radios, in a million bedrooms, as a whole generation, and the next, and the next, straighten their spines, and feel their pulses rise, and say: “This. This is how I feel. Or at least, this is how I feel now. Now I’ve heard this.”

[Text omitted]

... for millions, for me, it was Bowie that we pretended to be, whenever we were lonely, or scared, or full of that itchy, awful, brilliant desire to become something bigger than we were. That's what heroes are, they show us a new way to stand that gives us confidence. They change our body language. They rewire our brains. They give us permission to become other. To become bigger. To become wilder and bolder when the only way forward in your life is to become wilder, and bolder, or else you will simply not exist.

Growing up in a world short of female role models, Bowie was a feminist one for me. He wasn't aligned with any particular gender, or sexuality, or culture. He presented himself as a joyful alien, singing songs directly to, and for, anyone who felt weird, or lonely.

[Text omitted]

I've had 20 years to think about it, and I really don't think I'm projecting. As an outsider himself — a ginger, bonk-eyed, snaggle-toothed bisexual in a dress, in Bromley — Bowie was singing to everyone like him.

Bowie's velocity and daring were so astonishing and so outrageously successful that it's impossible to pick the shrapnel of his Big Bang out of popular culture without tearing it to bits. Everywhere pop music is bold, ambitious, odd, dressed up — whenever it looks like nothing you've ever seen before — when it's Madonna, or Gaga, Pet Shop Boys, or Daft Punk, or Beyoncé — it is using the tools and framework largely built by one man from Bromley with tombstone teeth, and his name borrowed from a fixed-blade knife.

His command, "Let's dance", feels as if dancing is the most momentous, consequential thing you can do. And he is correct — sometimes, crossing a dancefloor and dancing with someone can change your life.

[Text omitted]

We were a lucky planet, and it was a lucky time. In all the cold, silent, black emptiness of space, we were the ones who had David Bowie. And he had us. He invented something just as astonishing as a currency, or a medicine, or a machine, or a circuit, or a city. He was an emotional statesman — a president of possible futures. Thank you, you beautiful man. Thank you for giving us us.

Text A

Text A is a compilation of extracts taken from the *Veganuary* website. *Veganuary* is a new charity encouraging people to try veganism for the month of January 2018.

Bite-sized answers to the most common vegan myths.

- **But where do you get your protein?**

The most common misconception out there is that you have to consume meat in order to get enough protein. This is simply not true. There may be protein in meat, but that doesn't mean that it doesn't exist anywhere else. In fact, vegans simply do what cows, pigs, sheep and chickens do; we go to the source.



Quinoa Pumpkin Chili by All About Vegan Food.

Green vegetables (the superstars are kale, broccoli, seaweed, peas and spinach), beans and pulses (lentils, lima, edamame, pinto, black), grains (brown rice, whole wheat pasta, quinoa and bulgur wheat) and nuts (brazils, peanuts, cashews, almonds, pistachios and walnuts) are all excellent sources of protein.

Getting enough protein in your diet is not as big a deal as this question will make you first think it is. Simply be aware of what plant-based foods are protein rich, and try to include some in all your meals... The easy back-up of a peanut butter sandwich (although now you're vegan you'll

discover the delights of cashew and hazelnut as well), quinoa on your salad, a big vat of chili [sic] with kidney, black-eyed and cannellini beans, or quinoa like in the photo ([click for recipe](#)), or a stir-fry with tofu and lots of veggies... And that's only scratching the surface. There really is so much to choose from that often you won't even notice you're doing it!

For more information about protein visit our [health section](#). Also, check out all the [athletes](#) who are excelling on a vegan diet.

- **But what if you were stranded on a desert island?**

Despite the fact that this situation is a rather rare occurrence, this question does seem to get asked to vegans a lot. Odd really. When you Google 'desert island survival tips' finding drinkable water tends to be top of the list. Hurrah, very vegan indeed.

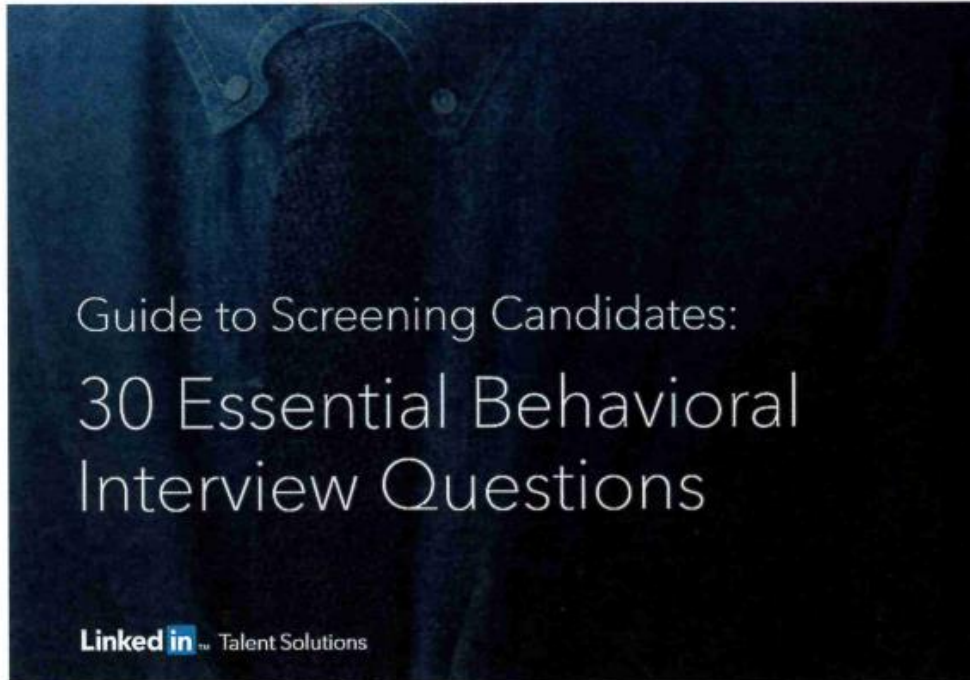
If you're really stuck for a response, and have forgotten that bananas, mangoes and coconuts tend to grow in abundance on such islands, then go with our standard:

"I'm planning on being just like Tom Hanks in *Castaway*, with only a volleyball for a friend and a wild shock of rock star hair."

It really is the only sensible response you can give.

Text A

Text A is an extract from a *LinkedIn* e-Book advising interviewers on what questions to ask candidates who have applied for a position within their company. *LinkedIn* is a social media platform specifically designed for business professionals.



Why behavioral interview questions matter

Screening candidates for soft skills is often the toughest part of an interview. You have less than an hour to figure out if the person has the qualities you are looking for in your next hire.

The good news is that behavioral interview questions are a proven way to reveal a person's ability to collaborate, adapt, and more. By looking at their past behavior, you can more easily determine what someone will be like to work with.

To find out what are the best behavioral interview questions, we surveyed nearly 1,300 hiring managers. This eBook will walk you through their answers and give you tips on how to ask these questions.



The 6 essential soft skills to screen for

Over 60% of hiring managers said that screening for soft skills is difficult. When asked to prioritize some of the most important soft skills they look for during interviews, here's how they ranked the following six in order of importance:



How to screen for adaptability

69%

of hiring managers say adaptability is the most important soft skill they screen for. And it makes sense - to stay competitive today, your company needs to be able to adapt to a changing economy and business needs. And that means you need employees who can adapt as well.

Here are some of the most popular questions to ask:

- 1 MOST POPULAR Tell me about a time when you were asked to do something you had never done before. How did you react? What did you learn?
- 2 Describe a situation in which you embraced a new system, process, technology, or idea at work that was a major departure from the old way of doing things.
- 3 Recall a time when you were assigned a task outside of your job description. How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome?
- 4 Tell me about the biggest change that you have had to deal with. How did you adapt to that change?
- 5 Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to a colleague's working style in order to complete a project or achieve your objectives.