



General Certificate of Education
Advanced Level Examination
January 2011

General Studies (Specification B)

GENB4

Unit 4 Change

Insert

Stimulus Material

These texts are to be read in conjunction with unit GENB4.

The questions arise from the texts, but they should **not** be answered by reference to the texts alone.

Text A

Simplicity

Simplicity is liberating, it's elegant and it's not a hardship. Simplicity is not a negative quality at all. Simplicity is a positive quality because when things are simple they are less of a burden. I think it was E F Schumacher who said that any fool can make things complicated but it requires a genius to make things simple.

I think we need to start with simplifying our material possessions. Instead of having a big house which we have to heat, furnish and clean – all of which requires a lot of time and money – we could have a small and simple house.

Simplicity requires a smaller ego and limited desires and it allows us to expand our intelligence, our imagination and our creativity. A complicated life is a hindrance to creativity and the poetic, imaginative and spiritual dimension of our being. We have expanded into material possessions at the cost of this dimension. We make life complicated and have a lot of possessions partly to impress others. So simplicity requires a focus on inner fulfilment and well-being and not outer grandiosity.

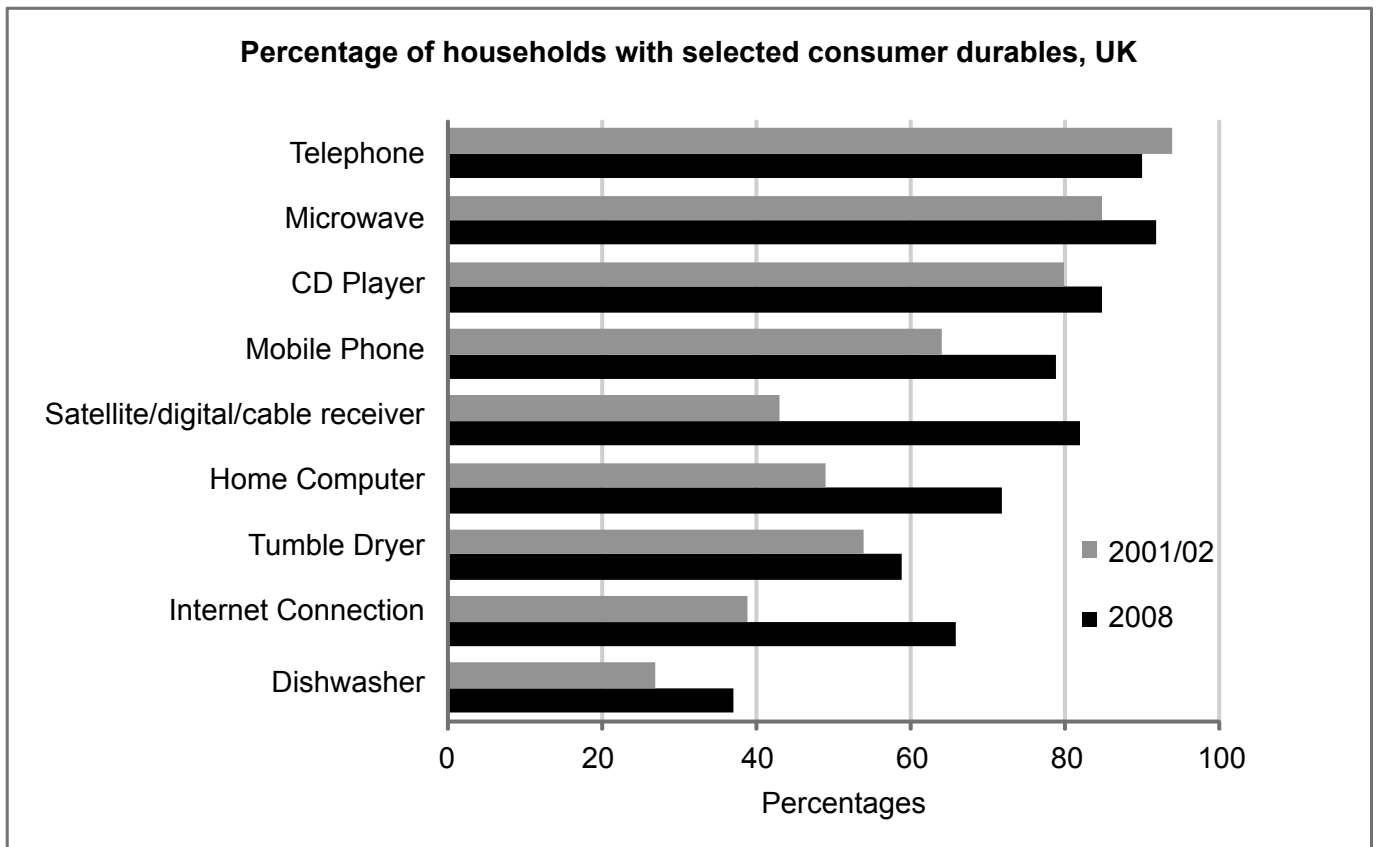
To go towards a simpler life is to undergo an inner revolution. You have to shift your consciousness to think: 'I am going to cherish my inner well-being and happiness more than my outer appearance'. This mind-shift is the first step. Then there are all the social forces working against a simple life – schools, media, advertising – they are all pulling us toward consumerism. So we have to build a robust philosophy and conviction that we are going to resist these temptations. And we need to educate our children from the beginning in a profound way to the perils of consumerism – the damage it does behind the scenes.

More people are now realising that our complicated consumerist lifestyle is causing three problems. The first consequence of a lack of simplicity is the environmental destruction in terms of resource use, climate change, and air and water pollution. The second is that our high standard of living produces poverty in other parts of the world. The third problem is that our lives are so hectic and stressed that we have no time for our families, friends and neighbours. We have no time left for ourselves.

At the moment the consumerist life is very easy for us. Shopping and buying and consuming are easy options, but behind the easy appearance are jobs that do not have meaning for people. Boredom is a consequence of a complicated life-style. So the challenge for our society is to develop new kinds of organisations that can provide meaningful work for people. This means good agriculture and good craftsmanship, arts, culture and service.

Meaning comes when work is done in a smaller setting, so simplicity should also have to be small. Schools, hospitals, bakeries and dairies should all be small places where people feel they are really helping others. In a smaller setting there is a more meaningful relationship to the material we are producing. It is through this relationship that we find meaning.

Source: extract from 'Simplicity', by SATISH KUMAR, *Triodosnews*, Summer 2009

Text A continued

Source: UK Statistics Authority website: www.statistics.gov.uk
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Text B**Jumping to conclusions**

'If your experiment needs statistics, you ought to have done a better experiment'
(Ernest Rutherford)

It is clear enough what Rutherford meant, but his principle can only be applied in particular circumstances. Astronomers, for example, are seldom in a position to improve on their experiments: the universe is an experiment that cannot simply be run again. How far does the public see, never mind astronomers themselves, that we attempt to understand the universe by reference to snapshots taken at moments in the vastness of the space-time continuum? There is no way that we can re-roll the dice; we are never at the same co-ordinates in space time.

Cambridge Professor of Astronomy Fred Hoyle wrote his science fiction novel *The Black Cloud* in 1957. The story is that astronomers in California observed that a black cloud out in space was growing bigger over time. They inferred, reasonably enough, that the cloud was approaching Earth. Less reasonably, all but one member of the scientific team inferred that the cloud was approaching Earth *on purpose* - it was an 'intelligent' cloud. Not so, said the dissenting member of the team: consider a golf ball that lands on a course consisting of 10^7 blades of grass. The chances are 1 in 10^7 that the ball lands on this blade of grass by chance. But there is nothing remarkable about this: the ball had to land somewhere. It would only be remarkable if the ball landed on the same blade of grass a second time.

In the case of the black cloud, the scientists had just the one event to interpret, not a series of events.

We must take care what we infer from what we observe. If scientists can sometimes jump to conclusions, the media and the general public certainly can.

Source: adapted from *Practical Statistics for Astronomers*, J.V. WALL and C.R. JENKINS,
© Cambridge University Press, 2003

Text C**The future of farming?**

It is ten years since Will and Meg Edmonds took over their struggling family farm in Worcestershire, and business is good. So good, in fact, they struggle to meet demand for their home-reared meat. 'People queue up for the organic chicken and it always sells out,' says Will.

Upper Wick, the Edmonds' 190-acre organic farm, is virtually self-sufficient. Beef cattle and sheep are grazed on organic pasture, and when it's needed – in winter or during the breeding season – the animals are fed oats, wheat and barley from the Edmonds' fields. Produce from their Worcestershire farm is sold in the couple's farm shop and at two nearby farmers' markets. The shop also stocks a diverse range of food – from vegetables to ice-cream – produced within a 10-mile radius by around 30 suppliers. 'We'd rather have decent local produce where we know where it comes from,' says Meg.

Animals on industrial farms have been bred to grow fast, which means they need high-protein feeds. Typically, this protein comes in the form of soy, imported from South America. But soy production on a massive scale is causing widespread environmental and social devastation.

Other protein sources can be grown in the UK, although making best use of them will mean changing farming practices. At Upper Wick Farm, Will Edmonds buys in mixed feed which contains some organic soy for his laying hens and broilers (meat chickens), but he reduces the amount used by adding his own wheat. In future, he is keen to try growing field beans to provide some of the protein in his feeds – peas and lupins, he says, are good sources.

For effective change to happen, we also need the big players to do their bit. Supermarkets must pay farmers a fair price for producing planet-friendly food, rather than squeezing them to the brink of viability. This will encourage more small farmers such as the Edmonds. Shopping habits will have to change, too, and planet-friendly farming ultimately means producing and eating less meat and dairy products. But what we produce will be better; for the environment, our health, and animal welfare.

Source: adapted from 'The future of farming?' *Earthmatters*.
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Text D

Ageism begins at 25

Despite the fact that improved well-being is increasingly recognised as a significant result of taking part in adult learning, for too many adults seeking help to get back on the learning ladder after the age of 25, the choice is largely restricted to narrow skills-for-work programmes. Whilst skills-for-work programmes meet the aspirations and increase the well-being of some people, a range of learning opportunities should be available to meet the needs of different people.

This is a key message from a new study – *Well-being, happiness and life-long learning*. Professor John Field, the report's author, said:

“Learning is important to a range of well-being indicators. Yet as a nation we tend to think of learning as something best done by the young, with a few crumbs left for people in their early years of work. Educationally, ageism begins at 25.”

The study reveals considerable evidence for the positive impacts of learning on health and well-being of all ages, and suggests it may have greater effect than health promotion campaigns. Professor Field says we need:

- to challenge ill-founded assumptions behind narrow policy goals focusing on skills which invariably assume that continued economic growth is both desirable and possible
- a system for lifelong learning that sees well-being not as an incidental (if desirable) by-product, but instead situates well-being as one of its core goals and values.

Professor Stephen McNair adds

“Adults need more opportunities to learn what they need when they need it if they are to make their own way through an increasingly complex and uncertain economy and society. Learning needs to continue throughout life. Our historic concentration of policy attention and resources on young people cannot meet the new needs. When people are changing their jobs, homes, partners and lifestyles more often than ever, they need opportunities to learn at every age.”

Source: adapted from *The Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning (IFLL)*
www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry, 2009

Text E

News at a price

Newspapers have a glorious past, but do they have a future? We may soon know, as leading lights in the industry meet to work out ways of charging readers for online news that hitherto has been free. There are some parallels with music, which has been battling free downloads for years, though the two industries are very different. News dies overnight, while music has a long shelf life. News has been given away free, voluntarily, while music has been pirated. But the problem of non-payment has a common origin: the fact that the internet didn't come with a micropayments system. Mobile devices – from e-books to phones – do. So, as our online activity moves from computers at home and work to mobile devices, a new opportunity beckons. Google's chief executive, Eric Schmidt, says micropayments are the obvious way to make money from online news.

The tectonic plates are moving. Rupert Murdoch has already said that free online is "going to stop". The nightmare is that if some papers do it but not the rest then there could be a mass migration to the free ones. Last week, top US newspaper executives met to discuss this, with an anti-trust counsel present, so that any concerted action doesn't fall foul of competition rules.

Ironically, this is a golden age for newspapers. *The Guardian* has never been read so widely – on and offline – in its history: it is just that the exodus of advertising to online sites has triggered a 50% decline in classified revenues since 2000, which online advertising has not filled. It was the right, the only, strategy for newspapers to go for growth by establishing a big, free base in the hope that online advertising would yield new riches. One day it may. If you are reading a story about chocolate or cars, it is an amazing opportunity for targeted adverts. But it hasn't happened on a big enough scale yet and won't as long as the recession lasts.

The recent lesson of music is: people will pay for content if it is accessible and affordable, even if there are free alternatives. Nor should we write off printed newspapers. There is scope for revival by, for instance, targeting older, less web-savvy readers and watching for innovations, such as phones that can read barcodes in newspapers and take you direct to a website. The real point is that innovation is still happening at such a breathtaking speed that nothing should be ruled out for the future.

Source: extract from an article by VICTOR KEEGAN, '*Here is the news: get ready to pay for it.*' 4 June 2009
guardian.co.uk © Guardian News and Media Limited 2009

END OF STIMULUS MATERIAL

There is no stimulus material printed on this page