



General Certificate of Education  
Advanced Subsidiary Examination  
June 2009

# **General Studies (Specification A)**

# **GENA1**

**Unit 1      AS Culture and Society**

## **Source Booklet**

Sources for use with **Questions 1.1 to 1.30** and **Questions 2 to 4**.

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**PASSAGE FOR SECTION A****QUESTIONS 1.1 TO 1.30**

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**Source A****Culture: now try this**

(1) I still remember finding it – by chance – although it did not feel like an accident: a paperback copy of Nabokov’s *Lolita*, abandoned on a landing bookshelf, with yellow pages, as though its last reader were no longer alive. I was 13. I knew, at once, by instinct, that it was ‘too old’ for me. And I knew I wanted to read it – without telling anyone.

(2) Guilt and secrecy – as if the book were sex itself (which, in a sense, it was). I didn’t read it from start to finish. I was just visiting, looking in on Nabokov’s swooningly unsafe prose about a girl who was (and this added to my complicated feelings) more or less my age. I was shocked, puzzled, aroused. Would it have been better if I had waited until I was grown up?

(3) Last week, the British Film Institute (BFI) proposed that parents have become too vigilant about what children see: too prohibitive. The BFI is not proposing that we send children to the cinematic equivalents of *Lolita*. But it does suggest that we have become culturally over-protective. Straight and narrow. In the same way that we hesitate to allow children out on their own, we discourage the cultural equivalent of park and street: the great grown-up outdoors.

(4) To remedy this, the BFI is plotting a canonical list, including a cluster of grown-up films (*Kes*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *The Bicycle Thieves*, *Les 400 Coups*, *Hue and Cry*, *Great Expectations*) thought to be required viewing for the under-14s.

(5) The trap they are about to stroll into is obvious: children shy away from prescription, however sophisticated, preferring to stumble, in their own ad hoc way, towards the light (or the landing bookshelf). Unripeness is all. Forbidden fruit tastes sweetest: that’s why children gloat about seeing films that are Certificate 15 or 18 when they are only 12. Seeing what your parents don’t want you to see is cool.

(6) But let’s not be discouraged. Prescription is pointless, but recommendation is a good thing. Children need to be introduced to art, film and literature – and then make up their own minds. (Consult with the ideas expressed in this article for inspiration; just keep the lists themselves from the children.)

(7) I do worry about exposing children to films, literature and theatre before they are ready – and I am particularly jumpy about violent films. But how do you decide when a child is ‘ready’ for a film? It is fascinatingly ambiguous. The extraordinary thing is that works of art – especially books – change according to age. A book read at 18, reread at 48, may seem entirely different. Age is part of what we bring to a work of art.

(8) I wonder whether, this summer, there will be any children who, on finding their parents reading the new JK Rowling, or watching the new film of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, will point out that they are ‘too old’ for the material. Crossover fiction has been lent distinction by Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, and Philip Pullman’s *Northern Lights*. But the question is: who is crossing where? Parents are always complaining that their children ‘grow up too fast’. But can’t growing up fast be a good thing?

- (9) One of my sons, an eight-year-old, has just finished Pullman’s book. He didn’t really understand it. But it gripped him. And he was incredibly proud to have read it. Maybe he will re-read it one day. If he doesn’t, he will have missed a fuller, more sophisticated pleasure. But I know I was right not to stop him.
- (10) Children grow up by reading aspirationally – they don’t need to understand everything. They unwrap the world this way. Last summer, my son Leo, 13, played Cobweb in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Now, he knows the play off by heart – and while there are lines he does not understand, the language is in his head and will grow up with him. Seeing a Shakespeare play before you are 14 is nothing like as good as acting in one.
- (11) Parents are much freer when it comes to music, often not policing it at all. I am intrigued that Sixties and Seventies music goes down so well with children. Sergeant Pepper and the Beach Boys, in particular, enslave the under-10s. Listening is like being innocently on holiday, singing ‘Sloop John B’ on the open road.
- (12) Not that children are always drawn to wholesome hits. Nor is censorship a one-way street. I was amused when my sons (eight and six) tried to stop me listening to Eminem’s ‘Lose Yourself’ (a song with lyrics I admire). We were listening to a compilation belonging to their older brother. The boys issued an urgent warning about Eminem’s language.
- (13) It was obvious they had enjoyed the track without me and without ‘the f-word’ disturbing them. Older brothers exert an influence. My youngest son, Ted, when only two, picked up a line from Green Day, a punk metal band, and sang, with acquired surliness: ‘I want to be the minority/ I don’t need your authority’.
- (14) Not much of a start to a musical or a sentimental education. But there is nothing so cool as bad taste and bad language. On television, *The Simpsons* and *South Park* have a universal appeal (much less formulaic than the cartoons designed for children). I found it less comprehensible that *The Office* should be such a hit with older children. Perhaps it is Ricky Gervais – grown-up child?
- (15) Leo asked me: ‘What is literature?’ and before reading anything wonders: ‘Is it literature?’ ‘Whole university courses are dedicated to this,’ I reply testily. But it is a good question and Leo, like all self-respecting children, has found his own unexpected way with adult reading. He has become obsessed with Alan Bennett.
- (16) And I have watched my 17-year-old stepson, Theo, read his restless way far from the shores of fiction marketed for teenagers. In the pockets of his capacious black suit there is usually some distressed literary paperback: *The Naked Lunch*, *Candide*, *To the Lighthouse*. I haven’t seen him with *Lolita*. But he probably read that when he was 10.

Source: KATE KELLAWAY, *The Observer*, 17 July 2005

## END OF PASSAGE

Turn over for Section B Sources

Turn over ►

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**SECTION B****SOURCES FOR QUESTIONS 2 TO 4**

Read **Sources B to D** on **crime and punishment** and answer **Questions 2 to 4**.

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**Source B**

When the private affairs of Cabinet ministers are up for grabs, Government is quick and right to protest. However, the same rules don't seem to apply to the rest of us.

Government has taken us too far down a dangerous road. CCTV can be a useful tool when used in a targeted and proportionate manner, but why should Britain be the CCTV capital of the world? Then there is the idea, exciting to politicians, of the massive database. DNA technology can be a vital weapon in fighting crime but we have a growing and racially-biased database of people who have been unfortunate to come into contact with the police, including those never charged with a crime or even cautioned. Similarly, we should not be surprised that support for the intrusive, discriminatory and expensive folly of identity cards, with the massive risks of error and fraud they carry, is in steady decline.

Source: Adapted from SHAMI CHAKRABARTI, 'Yet another step along a dangerous road', *The Independent*, 15 January 2007

**Source C**

We have more prisoners than any other European country and the jails are bursting their seams. Such overcrowding undermines society as research shows that, as prison numbers increase, so does the proportion of former inmates who re-offend. Yet prison can work. It can rehabilitate. Education works, as do established initiatives like drug rehab and sex offender therapy. Prison can deter, and restrain, and protect the public. The catch, however, is that it can't do this if it's overcrowded. Nor is prison useful if it means repetitive, ever-shorter sentences. We still imprison people too readily. Anyone who knows prisons will tell you that about a fifth of inmates should not be there.

We could build more prisons and that would help, but the cost of £38 000 a year per head is daunting. We could use more 'community' sentences but community punishments do not have an unblemished reputation. They are seen as therapeutic rather than punitive, and poorly enforced. Effective tagging, decent mental health services and relentless supervision cost money. At present, the cost of community sentences is one tenth of the cost of prison, yet they are 10% better at preventing re-offending. This is not logical but politicians' attitudes are not governed by logic, rather by politics and the electorate's emotions and fears.

Source: Adapted from LIBBY PURVES, 'Who says prisons don't work?', *The Times*, 4 April 2006

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**Source D**

There was a renewed dispute between liberal and punitive commentators following the publication of the Guardian ICM poll on crime. After a ‘summer of guns and knives’ it was seen by the Tories as absolute proof of ‘a broken society in a state of anarchy and chaos’. Marriage is the answer, they said, along with zero tolerance for almost everything. Meanwhile, liberal commentators point, as usual, to overwhelming evidence that crime and violence thrive most in the most unequal societies – with 1.2 million unemployable youths who have gone missing from the education system, what can you expect? Major social problems like poverty, child abuse, dysfunctional families and mental health issues need to be addressed.

The ICM poll’s finding that most people think the courts are too soft is not surprising, unlike the fact that a majority no longer see prison as the only answer. The poll confirms that rationality does not figure large in the public perception of crime, its causes and possible solutions. Like film, fiction and the media, the public’s pre-occupation with crime borders on the obsessive. The new Prime Minister has started well, promising a firm and measured response with talk of the need to work closely with broken families, intervene early, punish those responsible and challenge gun and gang culture.

Source: Adapted from POLLY TOYNBEE, ‘Election battle lines are set over crime and punishment’, *The Guardian*, 28 August 2007

**END OF SOURCES**

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