



General Certificate of Education
Advanced Subsidiary Examination
June 2012

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 5**.

Section A

Source A for Questions 1.1 to 1.30

Being British: Can you teach it?

Fifty years from now Britain will still be the country of long shadows on cricket grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and football pools fillers and – as George Orwell said – ‘old maids bicycling to holy communion through the morning mist’ and – if we get our way – Shakespeare will still be read even in school. Britain will survive unchanged in all essentials.

John Major, Prime Minister, 1993

I’m not sure that distinct British values exist. The core ideals being put forward – truth, peace, justice, political and social participation – aren’t different from a lot of other countries.

John Lloyd, former adviser on citizenship,
Department for Children, Schools and Families

- (1) What is Britishness? Is it about multiculturalism, diversity and change? Or is it more like John Major’s vision of a homogenous, unchanging country?
- (2) Bhavin Tailor is in an interesting position – he is an Asian teacher of Religious Education, citizenship and philosophy, standing in front of a sea of white faces who have little experience of ethnic diversity, taking a citizenship study unit called Multicultural Britain. His class at a secondary comprehensive in Bolton, Lancashire, has just started its GCSE course. All of Bhavin’s pupils, bar one of mixed race, are white. Not only that, but they come to him with preconceptions that, to say the least, need some unpacking.
- (3) “We started by discussing how you define being British. For some that meant speaking English and, in a few cases, being white,” he says. “But to me it’s crucial to bring these kinds of issues into the open. Freedom of speech, that is something we can regard as a British virtue; you can say what you want, as long as you justify it. And that is how we come to learn about things.”
- (4) Using newspaper articles and PowerPoint presentations, the class explores questions around what it means to be British – are there too many non-British people living in the United Kingdom? Did this ethnically homogenous version of the country ever really exist? “We talk about the Norman Conquest, the arrival of African slaves, the arrival of immigrants in waves during the past century,” says Bhavin. “The point is that this kind of influx is not a recent thing. In a sense, ethnic diversity has always been a part of Britishness.”
- (5) Bhavin says that some of the A-level students who have been on work experience have realised that the real world beyond the school gates is one of ethnic diversity. But even so, within the school walls, these youngsters have little experience of multi-cultural Britain. Why should they care? And do they even feel that it in some way excludes them?
- (6) This, in a sense, is part of the rebranding of Britain. The Government is consulting on whether to lift restrictions on schools flying the Union Flag, and Lord Goldsmith, the former Attorney General, suggested last month in his report on British citizenship that school-leavers swear an oath of allegiance. But the push goes deeper than that, with Prime Minister Gordon Brown keen on citizenship education as a means of addressing “what it means to be British” at a turbulent time in our history.

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- (7) So what is Britishness? It's a complicated issue. National identity elsewhere (and even within the British Isles) is often linked with notions of freedom and liberation from an oppressor. But for many, Britishness doesn't have such positive connotations, partly because Britain was historically the ruler, not the ruled. The lingering influence of religion and the monarchy (can you be pro-British if you are not a monarchist?) mean that, for many people, it's easier to avoid the thorny subject altogether. As a consequence, it seems to have become the preserve of the extreme right – Britishness equals anti-Europe, anti-immigration, anti-diversity. But many feel that it needs to be reclaimed and that school is the place to do it.
- (8) Taking the bulldog by the horns, "population flow, globalisation, devolution – these are all realities," says Tony Breslin, Chief Executive of the Citizenship Foundation. "The turbulence and fluidity in a lot of communities and a lot of schools mean that children are talking about it and experiencing it. That means we no longer have the option of not addressing issues of what constitutes being British."
- (9) Doug Smith, a teacher and citizenship coordinator at an all-girls' comprehensive in Birmingham, agrees. "If you avoid addressing Britishness, then it can be taken over by extremists for the wrong purposes," he says. At his school, half of the intake is Muslim and there are many Hindu, Sikh, West Indian and Polish pupils. He starts with a light-hearted "being British" test based on familiar aspects of our national character, such as what are Britons most likely to complain about (the weather) or support (the underdog)? He suggests to them, for example, that "being British is being able to moan about everything" (invoking self-deprecation, a crucial British trait). These are a springboard to discussion and creative work on the subject.
- (10) "Some of the pupils are from backgrounds where toleration or democracy are not as ingrained, so they do think of these values as specifically British," says Doug. But teaching notions of national identity, especially one as complex as Britishness, can be problematic where young people are more likely to make their affiliations in other ways, according to Chris Waller, professional officer of the Association of Citizenship Teachers.
- (11) "Our work in schools shows that youngsters build identity around sub-groups – whether it's local, or cultural, or even a football team. They are quite comfortable with the concept of multiple identities. But they don't easily define themselves as British." Another factor, of course, is the unique make-up of the Union – four nations within a nation, each with a slightly different relationship towards the whole. Devolution and nationalist movements have blurred the picture even more. Does being pro-British, for example, mean being anti-Scottish?
- (12) Chris Waller thinks that, in 2007, few schools did work on the 300-year anniversary of the Act of Union between England and Scotland, compared to the greater number that covered the bicentenary of the Slave Trade Act that outlawed the selling of slaves throughout the British Empire. Though no one would deny the importance of marking the latter, it's an interesting sign that Britain is no longer just the sum of its parts. The whole meaning of the word has to be under review.
- (13) It's important to emphasise diversity; to be proud of being British while recognising that it's not a question of being better than any other nation. This, at least, is how the Year 9s at another all-girls' grammar school in north London, see it. Completing their first module on Britishness, which involved class discussions and trips to central London to interview tourists chosen at random, led to striking conclusions. Firstly, they thought that Britishness had changed over the past 100 years, which goes against the idea of continuity and tradition that the word normally evokes. And they thought that Britishness was all about the idea of a compromise between different cultures rather than a cohesive whole.

Source A continues on the next page

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- (14) The pupils, most of whom are from Asian and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds, discussed familiar icons and concepts, but some old ideas were cast in a new light. “Bravery is a traditional characteristic of being British, but rather than see it as outmoded, we concluded that it is important, especially now,” says Kelly Barry, Head of PSHE and Citizenship. “In the climate we live in, people seem to be afraid of each other, as individuals and as separate communities. So people must be brave to overcome these divisions.”

Source: adapted from the *Times Educational Supplement* magazine, 25 April 2008

Section B**Sources for Questions 2 to 5**

Source B

Soaps have reached British television from countries such as America and Australia and have been the foremost genre in Britain since the very first episode of *Coronation Street* was screened in 1960. Over the years, soaps have been condemned as little more than “chewing-gum for the eyes”. Typically, soap viewers have been equally condemned and stereotyped for their addiction to this so-called mindless form of entertainment, often using the programmes as a form of escapism from home life and an indisputable source of advice on personal problems.

However, many feel that soaps should not be dismissed as shameful addiction, and should be regarded more constructively as an expression of daily life within a given society.

Source: adapted from MERRIS GRIFFITHS, ‘Why are soap operas so popular?’ 15 November 1995 www.aber.ac.uk

Source C

This source has been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Source: adapted from Laura Webb ‘Why UK soap operas like *Coronation Street* are so successful’, Daytime TV by www.suite101.com

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Source D

The cot-death, baby-swap storyline in BBC's *EastEnders*, intended as one of the soap's triumphant seasonal set-pieces, has prompted an outcry. Thousands of viewers have complained, the storyline has reportedly been cut short, and Samantha Womack – who plays Ronnie, the bereaved mother – has resigned from the show.

The main complaint was not the inclusion of cot death, but its crudely sensationalised treatment. In shock after the death of her newborn, Ronnie wanders over to the Queen Vic, walks upstairs, past a throng of baying revellers, and secretly swaps her boy for Kat Moon's, taking the live child for her own. John Yorke, the Controller of BBC Drama, defended the storyline as a commendable treatment of big, difficult issues, insisting: "We never do it without taking it very seriously."

The dismay and fury this storyline has provoked have come particularly from families who have experienced the agony of losing a baby.

The phenomenon of obsessive, insensitive "boundary-pushing" is not, of course, confined to the BBC. Comedian Frankie Boyle's Channel 4 show, *Tramadol Nights*, is notable chiefly for his creepy mockery of breast cancer sufferers and Katie Price's disabled son, among other soft targets. Channel 4's Head of Comedy described Boyle's comedy as "very challenging" and defended material "that takes risks and pushes boundaries".

It is real life, not television, that is truly "challenging". Every day, ordinary people cope as best they can with serious illness, divorce or bereavement, sometimes including the death of much-loved children. They do not want to be shocked further, or have their hardships ridiculed. TV executives' increasing desire to do so suggests a curiously arrogant state of arrested development.

It's just a dream, but perhaps one day television will content itself with entertaining, informing and consoling its viewers, and take its sweaty hands off our boundaries.

Source: adapted from JENNY McCARTNEY, '*Eastenders*' cot death storyline was tawdry and wrong.', *The Telegraph*, 8 January 2011

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