

GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION 2431/2/RBI
ENGLISH (Specification 1900)

UNIT 1 Non-Fiction, Media and Information (Higher Tier)

READING BOOKLET INSERT

WEDNESDAY 9 JANUARY 2008

Morning

Time: 1 hour 45 minutes



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- The material in this READING BOOKLET INSERT is for use with the questions in Section A of the question paper.

This document consists of **4** printed pages.

Non-fiction

In this article, Bel Jacobs covers the launch of the 'History Matters' campaign and explains the importance of history.

Bringing the past to life

Kings, queens, wars, dates. History's boring, right? Wrong, says a partnership of leading heritage organisations, which earlier this month unveiled 'History Matters – Pass It On', a campaign to raise awareness about the importance of history.

'If you don't know where you come from, you don't know who you are and then it is almost impossible to move forward,' said former MP and keen historian Tony Benn at the campaign launch.

Strong words – but making history appealing to the man on the street may prove an uphill struggle. Britons are not known for their profound connection with the past, despite the millions who visit heritage sites and the startling results of a recent Mori poll in which 75% of people said they were interested in the subject, while just 59% cared about sport. If anything, modern society is more dislocated than ever from what got us here in the first place.

'Extraordinary, really extraordinary,' muses Ivo Dawney, communications director of the National Trust, on the poll findings. 'But we want people discussing history in the pub, in the workplace. And if they decide it doesn't matter after all, at least they're talking about it.'

The trick is to show that history has a direct effect on the present – something no one disputes but almost everyone fails to examine more thoroughly. Dawney chooses a recent – if raw – example: 'If England hadn't won the World Cup in 1966, our excitement about the 2006 tournament might have been less or different in some way.'

The campaign's youngest supporter, Dan Snow, 27, son of political pundit Peter, was brought up in a household where family history was passed down through generations. 'History is important because it's everything that's ever happened to anyone who's ever lived,' he enthuses. 'When I talk to people who think history is boring, just an academic pastime pursued by old men in libraries, I say, "Look at your own experiences". You can't understand anyone without looking at their history – where they went to school, where they grew up, the fact that they are a bit shy because this happened to them. It's the same with society. We're all just a product of our history.'

Part of the problem may lie in the classroom. 'The term history conjures up boring date-learning,' says Snow. 'But young people are more interested in history than they think. They love retro fashion and the music of the 1970s. They love looking at amusing pictures of their parents when they were younger. Many young people are fascinated by the history of their football club.'

Big ideas become more approachable given a personal touch. By appearing in the popular BBC series *Who Do You Think You Are?*, Stephen Fry discovered his great aunt Maud and her family died at Auschwitz. 'I received more feedback from that one show than from anything else I've done,' he said at the campaign launch. "'I never knew what the Holocaust meant ...", one viewer wrote to me. Is that cheap celebrity culture at work or the perfectly human truth that while the slaughter of a nameless six million is hard to fathom, the murder of one of your forefathers, whose name you discover, can move us inexpressibly?'

History, say campaign supporters, offers a connection to a more profound narrative than one created for us, daily, at home and work. Historian Tristram Hunt says: 'In our transient, individualistic age, an understanding of the past is vital for a sense of ourselves.'

Dawney agrees: 'People increasingly live on their own without the benefits of strong families and communities. History is something which brings us all together.'

Bel Jacobs, Metro, 20 July 2006

Media

In this speech, for the launch of the 'History Matters' campaign in 2006, Stephen Fry argues the case for the importance of history.

The future's in the past

Whenever the importance of history is discussed, long, boring speeches and brief, witty sayings come tripping easily off our tongues: how can we understand our present or glimpse our future if we cannot understand our past? History is bunk.

Certainly, some people sense in our world, even if they can't prove it, a new and bewildering contempt for the past. In the high street of life, as it were, no one seems to look above the shop-line. Today's plastic signage at street level is the focus; yesterday's stonework features are neither noticed nor considered, except by what some would call cranks and conservationists.

There are those who wonder if history is now valuable only as a politically correct lesson in the stupidity and cruelty of monarchs, aristocrats, industrialists and generals. History is really the story of a series of conquests, oppressions, exploitations and abuses. Or history is heritage studies: cotton mills, railway yards and coal mines smartened up as 'resources' for school trips.

And yet, against this, we measure the exponential growth in the public appetite for history. Has it ever been a better time to be a historian? In publishing and broadcasting, history is a phenomenon that continues to exceed expectations. Enthusiasts bound about from battlefield to palace and castle and back again, filling more air-time than ever before.

Family history has exploded in popularity, too. I was involved in the BBC's *Who Do You Think You Are?* programme and received more mail and feedback from that one programme than from anything else I've ever done. 'I never knew what the Holocaust meant until I saw your programme,' one viewer wrote to me. We might find this a little odd, but it tells us that many people cannot see links between facts and historical narratives, unless those facts are brought absolutely to life, mediated by personality. Is that cheap celebrity culture at work or is it the perfectly human truth that while the slaughter of six million is hard to fathom, the murder of a named and delineated family can move us inexpressibly?

The biggest challenge facing the great teachers and communicators of history is not to teach history itself, nor even the lessons of history, but why history matters. There is no phrase I can come up with that will encapsulate in a winning sound-bite why history matters. We know that history matters, we know that it is thrilling, absorbing, fascinating, delightful and infuriating – that is life. Yet I can't help wondering if you just have to get used to the fact that some people are never going to listen.

No, it isn't exactly political correctness that dogs history; it's more a pernicious refusal to enter imaginatively the lives of our ancestors. Great and good men and women stirred sugar into their coffee knowing that it had been picked by slaves. Kind, good ancestors of all of us never questioned hangings, burnings, tortures, inequality, suffering and injustice that today revolt us. If we dare to presume to damn them with our fleeting ideas of morality, then we risk damnation from our descendants for whatever it is that we are doing that future history will judge as intolerable and wicked: eating meat, driving cars, appearing on TV, visiting zoos, who knows?

In the end, I suppose history is all about imagination rather than facts. If you cannot feel what our ancestors felt when they cried: 'Wilkes and Liberty!' or, indeed, cried: 'Death to Wilkes!', if you cannot feel with them, then all you can do is judge them and condemn them, or praise them and over-adulate them.

History is not the story of strangers, aliens from another realm; it is the story of us had we been born a little earlier. History is memory; we have to remember what it is like to be a Roman, or a Jacobite or a Chartist or even – if we dare, and we should dare – a Nazi. History is not abstraction: it is the enemy of abstraction.

Extract from Stephen Fry, *The Guardian*, 09 July 2006

Copyright Acknowledgements:

Text 1 Bel Jacobs, *Bringing the past to life*, Metro, 20 July 2006 © Metro, www.metro.co.uk. Reproduced by kind permission of Metro.
Text 2 Extract from Stephen Fry, *The future's in the past*, The Guardian, 09 July 2006 © The National Trust, www.nationaltrust.org.uk. Reproduced by kind permission of The National Trust.

Permission to reproduce items where third-party owned material protected by copyright is included has been sought and cleared where possible. Every reasonable effort has been made by the publisher (OCR) to trace copyright holders, but if any items requiring clearance have unwittingly been included, the publisher will be pleased to make amends at the earliest possible opportunity.

OCR is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group. Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which is itself a department of the University of Cambridge.