

**OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS
GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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ENGLISH (Specification 1900)

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

READING BOOKLET INSERT

MONDAY 11 JANUARY 2010: Morning

DURATION: 1 hour 45 minutes

SUITABLE FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED CANDIDATES

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

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

NON-FICTION

In this article Nigel Morris considers the problem of irresponsible or 'binge' drinking.

IRRESPONSIBLE DRINKING – IS IT GETTING WORSE?

Alcohol consumption in the UK has grown steadily since 1945. Today, only one adult in 10 is a non-drinker, with Britons spending more than £30 billion a year on alcohol. One third of men and one fifth of women admit drinking more than the recommended daily levels. However, it is worth bearing in mind that this country is only in the middle of the world league table for drinking, behind the French and Germans, but ahead of the Americans and Australians.

In recent years, the phrase 'binge drinking' has become a popular shorthand description for the practice of drinking irresponsibly (often in large groups) for the main purpose of becoming drunk. One common definition is five or more drinks in one session for men and four or more drinks for women. Southern Europe, however, is not generally disfigured by binge drinking, even though alcohol is generally cheaper. It would appear that an irresponsible drinking culture is embedded in the fabric of the British nation.

In particular, children and young adults are drinking more – and at a younger age – than ever before. About one in five secondary school pupils drinks once a week or more, averaging about 12 units for boys and ten units for girls. The Government has warned that Britain has

reached a 'worrying tipping-point' at which the majority of 13-year-olds have drunk alcohol. More than 40 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds admit to binge drinking at least once a month, with the figure dropping to 22 per cent for 25 to 35-year-olds.

Nearly half of all under age drinkers claim that they got their alcohol from their parents, prompting the Home Secretary to propose penalising mothers and fathers who allow their children to drink heavily.

Another 29 per cent of young drinkers obtained alcohol from friends, while 22 per cent got it from licensed premises. The latter figure has led to police and town halls being given extra powers to prosecute, and even close down, premises caught serving alcohol to children.

Under-25s are a target for the drinks giants, whose 'happy hour' and 'all you can drink' promotions in clubs and pubs are designed to pack in as many people as possible. A police chief has complained that retailers are selling beer 'cheaper than water' while supermarkets have been accused of selling discount lager for as little as 22 pence a can.

The Home Secretary has appointed auditors to examine how closely the drinks industry abides by its own code of practice on responsible retailing. It could result in a change in the law to force retailers into line.

An alternative approach would be to increase taxes on alcohol, but there could be political dangers in this. A survey for the Wine and Spirit Trade Association found 61 per cent of the public believed such a move would unfairly punish the majority of responsible drinkers.

Campaigns about the dangers of alcohol abuse to health and well-being may eventually replicate the success of warnings about the hazards of tobacco. But the process could take decades, and until then police and hospitals will be in the frontline of the battle against youthful drunkenness.

Police chiefs have pleaded for Britain to wake up to the epidemic of binge drinking among teenagers and young adults. The President of the Association of Chief Police Officers has warned that this is leading to alarming levels of violence, with the 'culture of drinking to excess spoiling our towns and city centres'. He has challenged supermarkets and pub chains to scrap the 'crazy promotions' that encourage youngsters to drink as much as they can. A police enforcement campaign, with officers confiscating alcohol from under-18s drinking in public, is under way.

MEDIA TEXT

The journalist Barbara Ellen reflects on the way that adults often criticise young people.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH 'YOOF'?

Could it be that the current wave of British youth delinquency is largely in the eye of the beholder? It certainly seems to be today's fashionable media topic – headlines about 'Binge Britain', campaigns to stop underage drinking and stories about ex-soldiers being drafted into classrooms as teachers. Then the dark stuff: 'happy slappers' locked up for filming fatal beatings; fathers stabbed; broken bottles brandished in a club frequented by the rich and famous. To view all this is to visualise a Britain that makes the violent excesses of an X-rated movie resemble a nursery outing to the park.

The question is, are we genuinely seeing the dawn of the new yobbery, or is it just youth-business as usual, spotlit and overreported by the older generation, for the titillated masses? Let's be clear about one thing: genuine antisocial behaviour is not a 'youth thing', it is a 'crime thing'. It is not only the young who indulge in antisocial, homicidal or psychopathic behaviour, though they are the only ones who get grouped together.

Odd, when you think about it. When older people commit crimes, we do not start ranting about a 'middle-aged crime wave'. Why, then, are 'teenage louts' in Blackpool automatically twinned with 'young thugs' in Luton? Moreover, what can really be so 'new' about a culture which has been a cause for media concern for decades?

It seems to me that one of the bitter-sweet by-products of ageing is a tendency towards a rosy-specs view of not only one's own youthful conduct, but also the behaviour of one's entire generation. As in: 'We weren't angels, but we were never as bad as that', followed by a pause as we gaze back fondly on our young selves – lying in meadows, say, sipping Panda Pops.

In truth, all generations have had their fair share of drinking, smoking, fighting and general miscreant carryings-on. And even when not behaving in a delinquent manner, my generation were scaring the life out of older people without realising it – by the very fact of our existence. When my friends and I thought we were so cool in the 80's, lurking outside Tower Records with the boys with the soaped mohawk haircuts, it didn't occur to us that we probably unsettled nine out of ten passers-by. The same goes for every generation – from the Brylcreemed Teds of the 50's through to the hoodies on street corners. While looking terrifying on the outside, on the inside and to each other these youths are not scary at all.

Nor are they 'new'. Where teens are concerned, cider-sozzled degenerates leaning against walls and holding spitting competitions have been around forever. However, what is a really new phenomenon is the attitude of people of my generation – all the oldies and fogies, in our 30s and 40s, who rather pathetically consider ourselves to be 'with it', because we have pages on Facebook, own iPods, and watch Skins.

We 'fake youths' flail around outside our age bracket like sightless movie zombies, with the result that the 'young-old' divide has become blurred and our perception of the younger generation has become distorted. Indeed, it may not be the young who have changed for the worse

so much as the not-so-young: the fake youth generation who can't and won't let go and are probably so far beyond help now that we actually consider ourselves to be better at being young than genuine 'yoof', with their unfortunate complexions and happy-slapping shenanigans.

In fact it is worth considering whether the younger generation really are so much worse these days or whether their worst excesses are simply publicised and criticised to an unprecedented degree by those of us stuck in fake youth. We may kid ourselves we are young, but we betray ourselves simply by the way we perceive and judge the 'louts' leaning against the bus shelter.



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