

**GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION
ENGLISH (Specification 1900)**

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

READING BOOKLET INSERT

TUESDAY 3 JUNE 2008

2431/2/RBI

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.

Reading: NON-FICTION**Bravo to army training**

Peter Kingston talks to bestselling author and ex-SAS soldier Andy McNab about his education.

Andy McNab is an exceptionally smart man. Mental toughness saw him through some extremely hairy episodes as a soldier and now his books sell in their millions. He is the first to give the credit for his intellectual development to the army. And he is the first to laugh at the gullibility that prompted him to sign up as a naïve 15-year-old. He fell for a recruitment film. ‘They showed a helicopter flying along a beach in Cyprus and the pilot was waving at girls.’

The idea instantly struck the 15-year-old McNab, and no doubt many of the other inmates of the borstal where he was doing two months for breaking and entering: ‘I thought, I’ll do that.’

Education had not stood a chance with him, nor had it really offered him one. At school, he had been put in a remedial class. ‘It was almost good to be in because you felt like the low life, and you felt great. I wasn’t smart enough to realise that instead of mucking about I should pull my finger out.’ Nor smart enough to cotton on that there was no prospect of his flying helicopters in the army. What the army was going to do – and still does – was to make up for the deficiency of his education.

Reality started to bite after three days when the army tested the intelligence of its teen applicants. For most of the recruits, McNab included, the next phase was a shock. The many like McNab who had not performed well found themselves in a classroom pretty similar to those that they had all escaped from not so long ago.

Their teacher was an officer from the education corps. McNab recalls his first words. ‘The reason you’re here is because everybody thinks you are thick. But as from today that all changes. In five or six years you are going to be in a position where you are going to have to take in information and take decisions that will affect people’s lives.’ For a whole day every week the young soldiers read round the class, learned vocabulary, did comprehensions and dictation.

‘I didn’t know what a syllable was,’ he recalls. Now his words have been read by more people than have read most other contemporary authors put together. He told the Guardian that as a young soldier lacking in basic skills, there was little shame because of the trainers’ approach. ‘There was no embarrassment because we were the future of the army.’

Education and training became a constant thread during McNab’s 18 years of service. He was responsible for training recruits. Nothing could be taken for granted of the raw material the army accepted.

In McNab’s days, recruits, for their first week, would be put through EDI (explanation, demonstration, imitation). One of the corporals would get out of bed and go into the washroom to show the routine. However, teaching methods have now changed radically. McNab says “What we taught was to ask ‘why’. Once, if a recruit asked ‘why’, it was classed as dissent. Now, by answering the question ‘why’ you get a better soldier.”

The education corps personnel who taught him were better than schoolteachers, he says. They didn’t have to worry about class control. ‘If you mucked about, you were put on a charge – the last thing you wanted.’

As he progressed in the army and into the SAS, McNab found himself having to undergo more and more education and training. An ability to take in and absorb huge amounts of disparate information is a prerequisite for the SAS. Since writing his books about the SAS, McNab is invited to play a full role in encouraging and inspiring young soldiers and officers. ‘I say to them: the last thing you want is education. However, use it – don’t abuse it.’

Reading: MEDIA TEXT

This is the edited text of a speech by John Taylor Gatto accepting the New York City Teacher of the Year Award on January 31st 1990.

Why Schools Don't Educate

I accept this award on behalf of all the fine teachers I've known over the years. Men and women who are never complacent, always questioning, always wrestling to define and redefine endlessly what the word 'education' should mean. This is their award as well as mine.

I've noticed in my twenty-five years of teaching that schools and schooling are increasingly irrelevant to the great enterprises of the planet. No one believes anymore that scientists are trained in science classes or poets in English classes. The truth is that schools don't really teach anything except how to obey orders. Although teachers do care and do work very hard, the institution they work in is psychopathic – it has no conscience. It rings a bell and the young man in the middle of writing a poem must close his notebook and move to a different cell where he must memorise that Man and monkeys derive from a common ancestor.

Schools are intended to produce formulaic human beings whose behaviour can be predicted and controlled.

To a very great extent, schools succeed in doing this. But our society is disintegrating, and in such a society, the only successful people are self-reliant, confident, and individualistic. The products of schooling are irrelevant. Well-schooled people are irrelevant. They can sell film and razor blades, push paper and talk on the telephones, or sit mindlessly before a flickering computer terminal but as human beings they are useless. Useless to others and useless to themselves.

The daily misery around us is, I think, in large measure caused by the fact that we force children to grow up to become absurd. Any reform in schooling has to deal with its absurdities.

It is absurd and anti-life to be part of a system that compels you to sit in confinement with people of exactly the same age and social class. That system effectively cuts you off from the immense diversity of life.

It is absurd and anti-life to be part of a system that compels you to listen to a stranger reading poetry when you want to learn to construct buildings, or to sit with a stranger discussing the construction of buildings when you want to read poetry.

It is absurd and anti-life to move from cell to cell at the sound of a gong for every day of your natural youth in an institution that allows you no privacy and even follows you into the sanctuary of your home demanding that you do its 'homework'.

What can be done?

Genuine reform is possible but it shouldn't cost anything. We need to decide what it is we want all children to learn and why.

We've got to give kids independent time because that is the key to self-knowledge, and we must re-involve them with the real world as fast as possible so that the independent time can be spent on something other than mere abstraction. This is an emergency, it requires drastic action to correct – our children are dying like flies in schooling, good schooling or bad schooling, it's all the same. Irrelevant.

What else does a restructured school system need? It needs to stop being a parasite on the working community. For a while I think we need to make community service a required part of schooling. Besides the experience in acting unselfishly that will teach, it is the quickest way to give young children real responsibility in the mainstream of life.

However, no large-scale reform is ever going to work to repair our damaged children and our damaged society until we force the idea of 'school' open – to include family as the main engine of education. The curriculum of family is at the heart of any good life. We've gotten away from that curriculum – time to return to it. Enough. I've said my piece. Thank you.

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