

## **iGCSE Coursework Task**

### **Non-fiction; Constructing an Argument**

Read through the 4 articles you have been given. Each deals with a controversial topic. The topics discussed are:

- *Smoking*
- *Body shaming*
- *Beggars and the issue of homelessness*
- *Facebook and social media*

Once you have read all four articles, choose one to inspire an argumentative piece of coursework.

#### **The Task**

- ★ Write a 500-800 word argument inspired by the article
- ★ First, you need to complete the planning sheet.
  - What are the key points raised in the article?
  - Do you agree?
  - Why? Why not?
- ★ Next you need to turn your planning sheet into a fluid essay, arguing for or against.
  - Introduction: what is your LINE OF ARGUMENT? You are writing a balanced argument but need to show which side of the argument you are on.
  - Paragraph 1: your first point to show this. If you are supporting or opposing a point from an article, you might refer to the article here.
  - Paragraph 2: your second point to show this.
  - Paragraph 3: your counter argument ('However, some might argue that...because of... but I disagree because...')
  - Conclusion: summarise your main points and come to a clear finish
- ★ Remember to include persuasive techniques to make your argument convincing.
- ★ Read through the notes below on 'Writing to Argue' to help you before you get started.
- ★ This is only a FIRST DRAFT. You will have a chance to get some feedback and write a final draft when you come back in September.
- ★ DON'T FORGET THE WORD LIMIT! Be concise and focussed in your writing. No waffling!
- ★ This is due in your first LL lesson back after the summer.

Happy holidays!

#### **Writing to ARGUE**

- Writing an argument for iGCSE English is different from arguing with a friend.
- You should write a balanced and rational argument, less passionate or emotional than if you were writing to persuade.
- You should take opposing views into account in your response.

**Key words/ phrases:** opposing views; rational; balanced

**Things to include:** At least two different points of view. You do not have to agree with them, but they need to be included.

### Planning Sheet

Key points from the article	Quote to support this point (if possible)	Do you agree?	Why? Why not?

## ARTICLE 1

The Metro Newspaper

13 August 2015

By Oliver Wheaton

### **Smoking Should be Banned in Public Places too, says new report.**

***The smoking ban should be extended to public places, a new report has said.***

Smokers shouldn't be allowed to spark up in pub gardens, by the school gates, or even in parks, according to the report.

The Royal Society for Public Health, who produced the report, said the smoking ban which was introduced in 2007 had 'de-normalised' smoking.

They said that creating more 'exclusion zones' would capitalise on this and make it even more inconvenient for smokers to continue their habit.

But the pro-smoking lobby said furthering the ban would 'discriminate' against smokers. In the report, RSPH said research it commissioned showing nine out of 10 people believed nicotine alone was harmful to health was "alarming", pointing out it was toxins in tobacco-based products which caused harm.

Chief executive Shirley Cramer said nicotine was no more harmful than caffeine and urged a greater use of e-cigarettes, which the charity would like to see the products renamed as 'nicotine sticks or vapourisers'.

Ms Cramer said: 'Over 100,000 people die from smoking-related disease every year in the UK.

'While we have made good progress to reduce smoking rates, one in five of us still does.

'Most people smoke through habit and to get their nicotine hit. Clearly we would rather people didn't smoke, but in line with Nice guidance on reducing the harm from tobacco, using safer forms of nicotine such as NRT and e-cigarettes are effective in helping people quit.

'Getting people on to nicotine rather than using tobacco would make a big difference to the public's health – clearly there are issues in terms of having smokers addicted to nicotine, but this would move us on from having a serious and costly public health issue from smoking-related disease to instead address the issue of addiction to a substance which in and of itself is not too dissimilar to caffeine addiction.'

A Populus survey for the charity found 50% of adults would be more likely to use outside areas in pubs and bars if the ban was extended, while a third of smokers would turn to e-cigarettes to get round the prohibition.

The RSPH also called for local authority stop smoking services to use e-cigarettes to wean users off regular cigarettes and new rules for retailers stocking tobacco, including mandatory sale of alternative nicotine products and tighter licensing.

Smokers' lobby group Forest welcomed the RSPH's announcement that 'nicotine is no more harmful to health than caffeine'.

But Forest director Simon Clark added: 'While it makes sense to encourage smokers to switch from combustible cigarettes to electronic cigarettes, public health campaigns should be based on education, not coercion and prohibition.'

'Banning smoking outside pubs and bars would discriminate against adults who enjoy smoking.'

'Renaming e-cigarettes is a silly idea. It ignores the fact that e-cigs are popular because they mimic the act of smoking. The name is part of their appeal. Calling them nicotine sticks or vapourisers suggests a medicinal product and that misses the point.'

'For many consumers e-cigarettes are a recreational product.'

'If public health lobbyists don't understand that they could sabotage a potentially game-changing device.'

## ARTICLE 2

The Pool Website

[www.the-pool.com](http://www.the-pool.com)

24 May 2016

By Alexandra Heminsley

### **Let this be the summer we finally do away with the dreaded bikini-body chat**

*Women – and women who wear swimsuits – should never feel the need to diet or walk in the shade, says Alexandra Heminsley*

The sun is out, the air is warm, early summer is here. It is the time of year for wisteria, asparagus and early-evening picnics in the park. Sadly, the season also marks the annual media-based self-hatred frenzy about which women's bodies are bikini-ready. This year has had a stronger start than many, revealing a recent interview with swimwear guru Melissa Odabash in which – as part of her guide to choosing a £200 bikini – she recommends that “If you’re self-conscious about your body, walk in the shade whenever you can”, adding “these little tricks can really help with confidence”.

Well. I have no reason to believe that Odabash is anything other than a lovely woman. She seems to be genuinely committed to helping women look, and feel, good in the sun, and talks warmly about the mastectomy range she is working on. But the idea that if you don't look good enough, or even feel that you don't look good enough for public consumption, you should literally stay in the shadows is a fresh take on bikini-body madness.

Odabash is not judging other women. She admits to her own insecurities, describing being on the beach at the same time as a gaggle of celebrities and refusing to walk into the water “in case the paps got a shot of my thighs in the midday sun”. She is both part of, and apparently a victim of, a multi-million-dollar industry whose bottom line is entirely dependent on the eternal stoking of women's anxieties around body image and beach wear.

Perhaps I picked up on Odabash's comment where it may have been white noise to others because of the research I have recently done for Leap In, my forthcoming book on swimming. After a few weeks' reading about the women who died as a result of the heavy crinolines they were forced to wear for swimming (lest a gentleman glimpse an ankle), being advised to wear a throw “until the moment you get in the water” was somewhat jarring. Slap on the sun block and allow yourself to feel the prickle of the sun's heat as you walk in its full glare. We do not go to the beach as mere ornaments

The conversation needs to change. And slowly, slowly it is. This month saw the UK publication of Sarai Walker's Dietland, a fantastic, angry book about an overweight dieter turned feminist vigilante – a rollicking beach novel to be read in the full glare of the sun. And Lindy West's gleeful, joyous Shri!l: Notes From a Loud Woman does heroic work in the field of addressing language used around fat people and the radical idea that they deserve to be seen, too.

In one particularly moving chapter, “Hello, I am Fat”, she writes in detail about her time on The Stranger newspaper in Seattle, and the pernicious, destructive impact it had for her to be writing for a boss (Dan Savage) who was repeatedly authoring cruel pieces disparaging the overweight – in the name of addressing “the war on obesity”. She repeats the emails from 2009 that she both sent to and received from him, as well as quoting from both of their work at that time, pointing out that “the rhetoric, even on mainstream news sites, was vicious. Vicious was normal”. Crucially, she demonstrates how much has changed, and how much individuals can change, explaining that: “I tell this story not to critique Dan, but to praise him. Change is hard, and slow, but he bothered to do it.”

This chapter – one in a book of joyous writing – gives me huge faith that the language around beachwear can change, but I believe we all have to take part in making that happen. Whether you head for the lido this weekend or the beach next month, don’t deny yourself the pleasure of the silky water on your skin just because the sunlight might dapple on your thighs, and certainly don’t let yourself stay in the shade for fear of what others might think. Slap on the sun block and allow yourself to feel the prickle of the sun’s heat as you walk in its full glare. We do not go to the beach as mere ornaments, but to relax. We don’t need to “get away with it”, but to enjoy it. It’s not our bodies that need to reside in the shade, but merely certain turns of phrase.

### **ARTICLE 3**

**Adapted and shortened from an article in Arena Magazine**

**By Tony Parsons**

#### **Street Trash: Beggars of Britain**

Punk Beggars, drunk beggars, beggars with babies. Beggars in shell suits and beggars in rags. Beggars stinking of cheap lager with snot on their chin and a mangy mutt on the end of a piece of string. Lots of them.

And gypsy beggars who try to stuff a ratty flower into your buttonhole with some sentimental line – ‘For the children,’ coos some obese hag. Old beggars too shagged out to beg, young beggars who look like they could run a four-minute mile if they ever made it up off their backsides. Beggars in King’s Cross, beggars in Covent Garden, beggars on the street where you live. All kinds of beggars everywhere in this city, and they will be with us forever now. They have no shame. Because begging is no longer taboo.

I think that my father would rather have seen us go hungry than have to go out there and ponce for our supper. I think that the old man, may he rest peacefully, would have preferred to rob, cheat or watch us wither with malnutrition before standing on a street corner with a Uriah Heep look in his eye asking for a hand-out. He would have been happier seeing us sleeping in a shoebox full of shit than he would have been begging.

The fact is that my father’s generation was incapable of begging. The children they raised were also incapable of begging. There were standards that were not negotiable. There were certain lines you never crossed; there were taboos. Respect the elderly. Don’t rat on your friends. Never hit a woman. Never stand on a street corner with snot on your chin and a dog on the end of a piece of string asking passers-by if they have any change. Of all the taboos, don’t beg was the greatest of all.

Somewhere between then and now, between our childhood and our thirties all the old taboos disappeared. But taboos are good; taboos are the no-go areas that mark the parameters of society’s moral code. When taboos fall, civilisation is built on dangerously shifting sands.

Now that begging is an acceptable career option it is worth considering a few tips from the pouncing masterclass. Place yourself somewhere the public can’t miss you, say outside a West End theatre or at the foot of some tube station steps. Consider the use of props – a child is good, a baby even better, though you would be surprised at the well of compassion you plumb when you have some flea-bitten mongrel at your side. Signs are fine. Knock out ones that say, ‘Please give generously – No home, no job, no shame’ or ‘Take pity - Mohawk with run in tights’ or ‘Dog on a rope to support’. Make eye contact and be persistent, friendly – don’t be too specific. Ask the beggees for ‘loose change’, rather than money for a cup of coffee or money to catch the bus to the Job Centre. Everybody knows what you are going to spend it on anyway... .

You can always sing a little song or do a little dance, but a true beggar frowns on these gimmicks. Busking is begging with music (give me money because I am entertaining you) just as mugging is begging with menace (give me money or I will fill your face in). But begging purists want you to give them money because – what? Because you are better off than they are? Because life has dealt them a bad hand?

Well, I don't buy it. I don't believe that the people begging are the unluckiest people in town. They are merely the people with the least pride, dignity, self-respect – all the intangibles that hold the human spirit together. It's strange, but I don't recall ever seeing a black beggar in London, or a Hong Kong Chinese beggar or an Indian beggar. I must have seen hundreds, thousands of beggars in this town, and they have all been white trash. But when you look at the sick-making state of the white working class – all the men turning into fat farts at 20, all the girls turning into their mothers a year later – what possible hope could there be for the next rung down on the caste system? If the people with jobs have the aesthetic beauty and intellectual ability of a cowpat, what chance is there for the people without a job? Though of course by now begging is a job – the newest profession.

I used to give. I used to give generously. These people disgusted me, but still I gave. I was appalled, but I felt sorry for them – and they knew it! Oh, they could spot old muggins a mile off! It was feeding frenzy time at the zoo when I came down the road! I was a soft touch – I thought it was the correct emotional response. In a way, my concern has simply been exhausted. So sorry, no change! Ponce your next bruise-blue can of Vomit Brew from some other sucker. There's just too many of them. But it goes beyond mere compassion fatigue. I think I have grown to truly hate them.

In Africa you see beggars with deformed legs crawling, literally crawling, by the side of the road. In Africa you see old men with their eyes turned a horrible milky blue by river blindness being led around by their grandchildren. You see sights that make you feel like weeping – you see beggars with every excuse for begging. But London isn't the Third World. It just smells that way.

We owe it to ourselves to walk past these people, metaphorically gobbing in the grubby palms of their outstretched hands, chanting our protest against a world that is forever changing for the worst. No change, we say, no change. Just say no change.



## ARTICLE 4

by Maria Konnikova

### How Facebook Makes Us Unhappy

No one joins Facebook to be sad and lonely. But a new study from the University of Michigan psychologist Ethan Kross argues that that's exactly how it makes us feel. Over two weeks, Kross and his colleagues sent text messages to eighty-two Ann Arbor residents five times per day. The researchers wanted to know a few things: how their subjects felt overall, how worried and lonely they were, how much they had used Facebook, and how often they had had direct interaction with others since the previous text message. Kross found that the more people used Facebook in the time between the two texts, the less happy they felt—and the more their overall satisfaction declined from the beginning of the study until its end. The data, he argues, shows that Facebook was making them unhappy.

Research into the alienating nature of the Internet—and Facebook in particular—supports Kross's conclusion. In 1998, Robert Kraut, a researcher at Carnegie Mellon University, found that the more people used the Web, the lonelier and more depressed they felt. After people went online for the first time, their sense of happiness and social connectedness dropped, over one to two years, as a function of how often they used the Internet.

Lonelier people weren't inherently more likely to go online, either; a recent review of some seventy-five studies concluded that "users of Facebook do not differ in most personality traits from nonusers of Facebook." (Nathan Heller wrote about loneliness in the magazine last year.) But, somehow, the Internet seemed to make them feel more alienated. A 2010 analysis of forty studies also confirmed the trend: Internet use had a small, significant detrimental effect on overall well-being. One experiment concluded that Facebook could even cause problems in relationships, by increasing feelings of jealousy.

Another group of researchers has suggested that envy, too, increases with Facebook use: the more time people spent browsing the site, as opposed to actively creating content and engaging with it, the more envious they felt. The effect, suggested Hanna Krasnova and her colleagues, was a result of the well-known social-psychology phenomenon of social comparison. It was further exacerbated by a general similarity of people's social networks to themselves: because the point of comparison is like-minded peers, learning about the achievements of others hits even harder. The psychologist Beth Anderson and her colleagues argue, in a recent review of Facebook's effects, that using the network can quickly become addictive, which comes with a nagging sense of negativity that can lead to resentment of the network for some of the same reasons we joined it to begin with. We want to learn about other people and have others learn about us—but through that very learning process we may start to resent both others' lives and the image of ourselves that we feel we need to continuously maintain. "It may be that the same thing people find attractive is what they ultimately find repelling," said the psychologist Samuel Gosling, whose research focusses on social-media use and the motivations behind social networking and sharing. But, as with most findings on Facebook, the opposite argument is equally prominent. In 2009, Sebastián Valenzuela and his colleagues came to the opposite conclusion of Kross:

that using Facebook makes us happier. They also found that it increases social trust and engagement—and even encourages political participation. Valenzuela's findings fit neatly with what social psychologists have long known about sociality: as Matthew Lieberman argues in his book "Social: Why Our Brains are Wired to Connect," social networks are a way to share, and the experience of successful sharing comes with a psychological and physiological rush that is often self-reinforcing. The prevalence of social media has, as a result, fundamentally changed the way we read and watch: we think about how we'll share something, and whom we'll share it with, as we consume it. The mere thought of successful sharing activates our reward-processing centers, even before we've actually shared a single thing.

Virtual social connection can even provide a buffer against stress and pain: in a 2009 study, Lieberman and his colleagues demonstrated that a painful stimulus hurt less when a woman either held her boyfriend's hand or looked at his picture; the pain-dulling effects of the picture were, in fact, twice as powerful as physical contact. Somehow, the element of distance and forced imagination—a mental representation in lieu of the real thing, something that the psychologists Wendi Gardner and Cindy Pickett call "social snacking"—had an anesthetic effect as one we might expect to carry through to an entire network of pictures of friends. The key to understanding why reputable studies are so starkly divided on the question of what Facebook does to our emotional state may be in simply looking at what people actually do when they're on Facebook. "What makes it complicated is that Facebook is for lots of different things—and different people use it for different subsets of those things. Not only that, but they are also changing things, because of people themselves changing," said Gosling. A 2010 study from Carnegie Mellon found that, when people engaged in direct interaction with others—that is, posting on walls, messaging, or "liking" something—their feelings of bonding and general social capital increased, while their sense of loneliness decreased. But when participants simply consumed a lot of content passively, Facebook had the opposite effect, lowering their feelings of connection and increasing their sense of loneliness.

In an unrelated experiment from the University of Missouri, a group of psychologists found a physical manifestation of these same effects. As study participants interacted with the site, four electrodes attached to the areas just above their eyebrows and just below their eyes recorded their facial expressions in a procedure known as facial electromyography. When the subjects were actively engaged with Facebook, their physiological response measured a significant uptick in happiness. When they were passively browsing, however, the positive effect disappeared.

This aligns with research conducted earlier this year by John Eastwood and his colleagues at York University in a meta-analysis of boredom. What causes us to feel bored and, as a result, unhappy? Attention. When our attention is actively engaged, we aren't bored; when we fail to engage, boredom sets in. As Eastwood's work, along with recent research on media multitasking, have illustrated, the greater the number of things we have pulling at our attention, the less we are able to meaningfully engage, and the more discontented we become.

In other words, the world of constant connectivity and media, as embodied by Facebook, is the social network's worst enemy: in every study that distinguished the two types of Facebook experiences—active versus passive—people spent, on average, far more time passively scrolling through newsfeeds than they did actively engaging with content. This may be why general studies of overall Facebook use, like Kross's of Ann Arbor residents, so often show deleterious effects on our emotional state. Demands on our attention lead us to use Facebook more passively than actively, and passive experiences, no matter the medium, translate to feelings of disconnection and boredom.

In ongoing research, the psychologist Timothy Wilson has learned, as he put it to me, that college students start going "crazy" after just a few minutes in a room without their phones or a computer. "One would think we could spend the time mentally entertaining ourselves," he said. "But we can't. We've forgotten how." Whenever we have downtime, the Internet is an enticing, quick solution that immediately fills the gap. We get bored, look at Facebook or Twitter, and become more bored. Getting rid of Facebook wouldn't change the fact that our attention is, more and more frequently, forgetting the path to proper, fulfilling engagement. And in that sense, Facebook isn't the problem. It's the symptom.

Maria Konnikova is the author of the New York Times best-seller "Mastermind: How to Think Like Sherlock Holmes." She has a Ph.D. in psychology from Columbia University.