Definition

The term "constitution" is used to denote a written document comprising the fundamental political principles of a state. It lays down the powers and duties of the government and defines the rights of its people.

Britain's unwritten constitution

In Britain such a document does not exist. Instead, over the centuries a set of constitutional principles has evolved which together provide the legal framework of the political system. So the British constitution may not be contained in a single document, but it exists, consisting of numerous laws and conventions (unwritten rules or formal agreements that have come to be accepted as Common Law, a legal system that is based on precedents). The simple fact that these constitutional conventions have not been written down might also account for the general impression that the UK does not have a (written) constitution.

In Britain there is no constitutional court, such as the Supreme Court in the USA (cf. **14 The American System of Checks and Balances**), to protect the Constitution.

The powers that are the exclusive and peculiar right of the monarch are known as the **royal prerogatives**. In the course of history the Crown has been deprived of all its actual political power, yet formally the Queen still exercises these royal prerogatives:

- She appoints the prime minister and his cabinet.
- She creates peers, grants knighthoods and bestows honours.
- She summons and dissolves parliament.
- She dismisses the government.
- She has a weekly audience with the prime minister.
- She gives her royal assent to parliamentary bills before they come into force.

According to convention the Queen invariably acts on the advice of the prime minister in all these matters.

Playing a mainly representative role the Queen primarily fulfils symbolic functions.

- As head of state she opens a session of parliament with a speech (written by the government).
- She receives and entertains important visitors.
- The Queen is the head of the armed forces.
- As head of the Church of England she appoints bishops and archbishops.
- She is the head of the Commonwealth.
- She is head of state of some Commonwealth countries.

The Queen's ceremonial duties and obligations include

- presenting Britain to the world on state visits thereby also supporting the economic interests of Britain;
- social engagements (being the patron of charities, visiting hospitals and old people's homes);
- creating a sense of unity by regularly visiting every part of the United Kingdom etc.

The prime minister of the United Kingdom

There is no direct election in which the voters directly vote for the person that they want to see as prime minister. By convention, the leader of the strongest party in the House of Commons is appointed prime minister by the monarch.

When Labour won a landslide victory under the leadership of Tony Blair in 1997, Mr Blair consequently became prime minister. When he laid his office down in 2007, it was not necessary to call an election: he was automatically succeeded by Mr Gordon Brown, the new party leader.

The powers of the prime minister

Once the prime minister is appointed, the monarch asks him to form a government. Thus the prime minister

- chooses the cabinet,
- selects and dismisses ministers,
- determines the domestic and the foreign policy of the nation,
- presides over cabinet meetings,
- sets the agenda for parliament.

He/she also

- "advises" the monarch on the appointment of officials and on granting honours (by convention the monarch follows his/her advice),
- consults and informs the monarch about government decisions.

The prime minister

- can call an election and
- can deploy troops.

The term "New Labour" derives from a slogan adopted at a party conference in 1994 when the party's fourth successive defeat at the general election in 1992 seemed to confirm the necessity of revising the party programme and establishing Labour as a competent, modern party, with aims and principles distinctly different from those of the past.

Thus in the following year a statement of new aims and values was announced, with Tony Blair, the new and charismatic leader of the party, defining Labour as a "democratic socialist party." The term "New Labour" was now used to signify the major changes in the party's policies, marked by

- abandoning the principle of nationalisation (state ownership),
- accepting free market economy.

At the same time it declared to invest heavily into

- education,
- the National Health Service.

In accepting the forces of the free market as a part of the economy New Labour seems to have moved to the centre of the British political landscape.

The **Conservatives** pursue the aims typically associated with a centre-right party, advocating

- free enterprise, an economic system allowing private businesses to operate with little state control,
- privatisation of formerly nationalised industries including public services, thus encouraging private control or ownership,
- the right of property owning,
- lower taxation,
- cutting down on government expenditure,
- closer ties with the USA rather than with Europe,
- controlled immigration,
- a tougher stance on crime.

Stressing the freedom of the individual and private initiative the Conservative Party typically appeals to the upper and middle classes.

Formerly one of the two great British parties, the **Liberals** declined after a split in the party in the 1920s. Merging with the Social Democrats in 1987 the Liberal Party was dissolved to form a new party, the Social and Liberal Democrats which advocate:

- a written constitution clearly defining the power of the government and the freedom of the individual,
- a constitutional reform to transform the House of Lords into a predominantly elected chamber,
- to replace the present first-past-the-post electoral system by a system of proportional representation,
- protection of the environment through taxation,
- more direct involvement of the citizens in the decision making process,
- a policy of decentralisation and devolution,
- EU membership,
- fair trade.

The British Parliament consists of two chambers: the House of Lords (the Upper House) and the House of Commons (the Lower House). Thus in discussing the importance of parliament, one must clearly distinguish between the powers and functions of these two.

The House of Lords

Under the 1999 Act the House of Lords faced major change. Rather than being made up of hereditary peers, it now primarily includes people whose outstanding achievement and expertise might prove valuable in revising bills and scrutinising important issues though they do not hold any actual power (cf. **8 The House of Lords**).

The House of Commons

By convention the House of Commons constitutes the legislative branch and has the authority to check the work of government. Consequently

- the Commons can propose, examine, debate and vote on new laws.
- Proposals for government taxes and spending are subject to the approval of the Commons.
- The Commons check the work of government through investigative committees or by questioning ministers and debating the government's policies.

Members of Parliament (MPs) are the elected representatives of the people so they also raise issues concerning the voters in their constituencies.

- Parliament and government are two separate institutions but since the majority of the House of Commons chooses the prime minister, who then in turn appoints his/her cabinet (this means that some MPs hold posts as cabinet ministers), the two are closely interlinked.
- The strict party discipline imposed by dominant prime ministers forced the members of their parties to invariably support the government's policies and proposals. Frequent disagreement with the party politics might lead to the exclusion of the member. Thus some people claim that parliament has lost its sovereign status.

The role of the House of Lords

Although the power of the House of Lords – the second chamber of parliament – has been greatly reduced, the Lords still play an important role in the process of proposing, revising and amending legislation:

- they can initiate legislation,
- they can reject and amend new bills brought from the Commons.

Since there is less time pressure in the House of Lords (they are not bound by debating rules), there is more room for the detailed revision of new bills in an atmosphere free from partisan strife (conflict as a result of party membership) and without being held by party discipline.

- The Lords can even delay a bill for up to one year and force the Commons to reconsider it, thereby allowing a wider discussion.
  - Many members of the House of Lords are specialists in their own fields, whose independent expertise might prove valuable in revising legislation or in scrutinising an important issue and who thus act as an advisory board. This is also true for
  - the Lords' committees, which investigate a wide range of issues, e.g. climate change, illegal immigration.

Further functions

- The Lords check the work of government by questioning government ministers and debating.
- Twelve judges of the House of Lords constitute the highest court of appeal in the UK for civil cases and for criminal cases in England and Wales. They also conduct major public inquiries such as the Bloody Sunday Inquiry.

Definition

Basically the term “devolution” denotes the transfer of power from a central government to smaller sub-national units.

Devolution in the UK

In the UK you use the term “devolution” to describe the creation of local authorities in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, enabling people in these regions to have more autonomy in running their own affairs. This process was initiated by the Labour Government under the premiership of Tony Blair when in 1997 a referendum was held in Scotland and an overwhelming majority of the Scottish people voted for the right to have their own parliament.
While those in favour of devolution consider this system as a means of satisfying the demands of nationalists for independence, others express their concern that the process of delegating powers to local authorities might lead to the disintegration of the UK.

The first-past-the-post electoral system in Britain

The term "first-past-the-post system" denotes an electoral system under which the candidate who "comes first", that is who gets the most votes is elected while all the other votes are simply discarded.
In Britain, all Members of Parliament are elected according to this system. Thus, the candidate who gets the most votes in a constituency is elected. And the party which has gained the majority in most constituencies and which consequently has the largest number of MPs in the House of Commons forms the government.
General elections must be held at least every five years.

The electoral system in the USA

In the USA the first-past-the-post system is used for the election of the president. But when the voters cast their ballot, people actually vote for "state electors" since the president is not elected in a direct election. These electors are the members of the electoral college. Each state has as many electors as it has senators and representatives combined and these electors are to represent them in the presidential election. But these electors do not necessarily cast their vote in accordance with and in proportion to people's votes. In most states, the presidential candidate who obtains the majority of votes, wins the entire electoral college of this state.

The **American Constitution** is the oldest still in force. It is based on the idea expressed in the Declaration of Independence (1776) that a government should derive its power from the "consent of the governed" and on this idea the American system of government is founded.

- The American government was and still is perceived as a government serving the people, as representing their interests. Thus President Lincoln once described it as "a government of the people, by the people, for the people" ("Gettysburg Address", 1863).
- By creating three branches of government, namely the legislative, the executive and the judicative branch and
- by clearly defining the powers of each branch the Constitution instituted the **separation of powers** and the **system of checks and balances**.

At the time when the Constitution was written in 1787 and adopted in 1788, the 13 states constituting the "United States of America" were only loosely connected.

In outlining a set of common principles the founding fathers wanted to "form a more perfect union":

> "We, the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the Unites States of America." (Preamble to the Constitution of the United States)

Even today Americans identify with the principles laid down in a constitution written "by the people". In stating the beliefs shared by many citizens the American Constitution seems to create a bond holding together a nation which is otherwise characterised by its diversity.

The Constitution is also the supreme law of the land. It can be altered through adding amendments as it was first done in the Bill of Rights (1791).

The powers of the American president

The American president holds ample powers: as **chief executive**

- he suggests legislation,
- he presents the budget,
- he appoints federal judges,
- he decides on the foreign policy of the nation,
- he can choose his Cabinet ministers who are only responsible to him.

As **commander-in-chief** he can deploy troops.
As **head of state** he has ceremonial duties and represents the nation.
This might lead to the assumption that the president is indeed the most powerful man in the world, especially when taking into account that he is the leader of an immensely powerful nation. After all the USA are the world's sole superpower after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

But at the same time the president's proposals and appointments have to be submitted to Congress for approval. Thus he might present the budget, yet the power to control the budget solely lies with Congress (with the House of Representatives primarily). The president's judicial appointments are equally subject to confirmation by the Senate and the Supreme Court can declare presidential acts unconstitutional, which on the whole restricts the president's power considerably.
The House of Representatives can impeach the president (charge him with a serious crime), and the Senate has the power to subsequently remove him from office.

CONGRESS	
The House of Representatives	**The Senate**
435 voting members – each member representing one disctrict – serving a two-year term	**100 senators** – 2 from each state – serving a six-year term
– **legislation** – raising revenues – impeachment	– **legislation** – the ratification of treaties – the confirmation of the president's appointments – trying impeached officials

The system of checks and balances

The American system of government is founded on the French philosopher Montesquieu's concept of the separation of powers. According to him, government should consist of three branches, each holding separate and independent powers:

- the legislative branch, which has the authority to make the laws,
- the executive branch, which enforces the laws,
- the judicial branch, which has the right to administer justice.

In accordance with this doctrine, the founding fathers created three branches

- the president and his cabinet (the executive branch),
- Congress (the legislative branch),
- the Supreme Court (the judicial branch).

Yet under the American model, these three branches do not function completely independent from each other, but each branch is invested with the power to check and control the others so that the powers of the three branches are carefully balanced against each other, thereby ensuring that none of them can become too powerful. Hence the term **the system of checks and balances** is used to refer to this model.

- Congress constitutes the legislative branch, but the president can veto a bill of Congress. Yet Congress can override his veto by a two-thirds majority.
- Congress can impeach the president. It can also remove judges from office.
- The president's right to appoint judges, ambassadors, etc is checked by the right of the Senate to confirm these appointments.
- The president appoints the judges of the Supreme Court, but the Supreme Court can declare presidential acts unconstitutional. It can also declare laws unconstitutional.

In the United States a two-party system has evolved with the **Democrats** and the **Republicans** constituting the two major parties.
Both parties cover a wide range of sometimes diverse political interests, thus one might easily get the impression that the Democrats and the Republicans are not distinctly different.

- But while the Democrats generally consider welfare programmes as a means of achieving a fairer distribution of wealth, the Republicans hold the belief that low taxation benefits the economy, thus creating workplaces and lessening the need for social programmes.
- Rather than subscribing to Republican unilateralism, the Democrats insist that solving international conflicts requires broad international consent and the support of America's allies.

There is also a number of smaller parties. The Green Party, for instance, was founded in 1984 and is committed to the protection of the environment and grassroots democracy.

Lobbies, interest groups such as the National Rifle Association, which aim at influencing politicians on legislation, also play a substantial role in the USA and their power must not be underestimated.

Definition

Deriving from the words *common* and *weal*, an old word for "well-being", the term Commonwealth literally means "common well-being" and denotes a group of people or nations which are organised for their common good.
In accordance with this definition, the Commonwealth defines itself as an association of "independent states consulting and co-operating in the common interests of their peoples and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace." (Commonwealth Secretariat)

Aims

In order to ensure the "well-being" of its members, the Commonwealth is pledged to "promoting

- peace and democracy;
- the liberty of the individual and equal rights for all;
- the importance of eradicating poverty, ignorance and disease; and it opposes all forms of racial discrimination."

Common ties

- the common knowledge of English
- cultural links (e.g. the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies)
- the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM): a summit held in a different member state every two years
- the Commonwealth Games, which also include sports such as cricket or rugby since they are popular throughout the Commonwealth
- the Commonwealth Secretariat committed to initiating programmes to promote economic growth by providing economic and legal advice for developing countries
- Commonwealth Day

Britain's multicultural society

- After World War II immigration from Commonwealth countries, primarily from Africa and the Caribbean fundamentally changed Britain, transforming it into a multicultural society.
- It was not always a smooth process with tensions sometimes escalating into conflict, such as in the Notting Hill area in London in 1958. But as a response to the riots, the Notting Hill Carnival was initiated by London's Caribbean immigration population in order to improve race relations. Even though the celebration led to clashes with the police in the 1970s, the Carnival since then has become the largest street festival and a symbol of multicultural diversity and of successful integration.
- Even though critics express concern that Britain's multiculturalism might lead to disintegration and therefore advocate a common culture which also allows for differences, the importance of integration is often stressed with integration being defined as a concept of cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance.
- The unique ethnic diversity in London results from the traditionally high concentration of ethnic minorities in the major cities. It is also reflected in the 300 languages spoken in the capital's schools and accounts for the National Curriculum 2000 explicitly including cultural diversity as a theme in all subject areas.
- Today Asian corner shops, Chinese takeaways and Indian restaurants testify to the fact that Britain has indeed become a multicultural society, in which Chicken Tikka Massala is as popular as the traditional fish and chips.
- In spite of the tremendous impact on British identity, themes such as immigration and multiculturalism were conspicuously absent from British literature in the 1950s and in the 1960s. Only recently highly successful writers such as Zadie Smith and Hanif Kureishi have begun to focus on the problems of those who often find themselves caught between two cultures.

Since its entry into the European Community in 1973 Great Britain has often proved to be a difficult member. Sharing a common language and to some extent a common culture and religion, the British often felt a closer affinity with the USA than with Europe, often stressing the "special relationship" between the two nations. Having longstanding ties with countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand on account of its colonial past Britain also felt committed to the Commonwealth.

When Britain finally joined the European Community, its interests were predominantly economic since membership in the EC was to open up new markets. Thus efforts to introduce common European standards, which involved abandoning traditional British measurements such as the "inch" and the "yard", were met with hostility since this was interpreted as a loss of sovereignty.

With France being an agricultural and Britain an industrial nation, disputes about subsidising the agricultural sector were inevitable. While France was and still is naturally in favour of agricultural subsidies, Britain opposes them, particularly denouncing the production of large food surpluses.

Although Britain's membership in the European Union is no longer questioned, people are still doubtful about joining the European Monetary Union (EMU) and introducing the euro as their currency.

At the beginning of the 20th century the USA's war against Iraq led to political tensions within the European Union when the UK supported George W. Bush's policy and joined the allied forces while Germany and France expressed reservations about the rationale of the war.

The Troubles

Definition

The term "trouble" denotes a state of political unrest. In Northern Ireland this term is used to refer to the armed conflict between Unionists (mainly Protestants) and Republicans (mainly members of the Roman Catholic minority).

History

- The Anglo-Irish War of Independence ended with the partition of Ireland, thus creating two separate territories: the Irish Free State, which was to become the Republic of Ireland (Eire) in 1949, and Northern Ireland, which continued to belong to Great Britain.
- Northern Ireland or Ulster remained deeply divided into a Protestant majority, who felt that Northern Ireland was still a part of the United Kingdom, and Catholics, who regarded themselves as Irish. The institutionalised discrimination of Catholics as a consequence of this sectarian divide and the fact that despite constituting a substantial minority the Catholics were denied fair representation in parliament led to growing tensions.
- At the end of the 1960s people began to demonstrate against the political and social oppression of the Catholics. This was received with suspicion by many Protestants. Hostility escalated and quickly resulted in the formation of paramilitary groups and the subsequent outbreak of violence.

Religion in Northern Ireland

- Although the conflict in Northern Ireland is a conflict between the members of two different denominations, namely Protestants and Catholics, it is not a war about religion or religious issues.
- At its root is the fight for control, supremacy over Ireland, which goes back into the 12th century when Henry II invaded Ireland.
- Having defeated the Irish in several battles, settlers from England and Scotland came to Ireland. Constituting the ruling class, they began to oppress the native Irish people, who soon began to fight against the dominant power. The conflict was aggravated since the two opposing parties belonged to different religions: the new settlers were Protestant, the native Irish Catholics.
- The Protestant king remorselessly confiscating the property of the church was interpreted by Catholics as an act of disrespect for their religion.
- Only in the 20th century religious issues began to matter. The division of Ireland into the Republic of Ireland and Ulster gave rise to the wish that one day Ireland would be united. For the Protestant majority, who had become accustomed to the liberal lifestyle and laws of Britain, under which contraception, abortion and divorce were legal, found the thought of having to live under the strict laws of a state closely following the Catholic church intolerable.

Britain's immigration legislation

When after World War II immigrants began to arrive in large numbers, Great Britain's immigration policy subsequently changed. This development is also reflected in the UK's legislation on immigration.

- Under the British Nationality Act 1948 every citizen of every Commonwealth country was also a British subject and consequently had the right to enter the United Kingdom and to stay permanently.
- In 1962 the United Kingdom introduced legislation to restrict immigration from the Commonwealth.
- The Immigration Act 1971 granted the "right to abode", that is the right to live and work in Great Britain only to those having sufficiently strong links to the United Kingdom. It introduced the concept of partiality, that means people had British citizenship and were thus allowed to come to Britain if their parents or grandparents were British.
- In accordance with the British Nationality Act 1981 Commonwealth citizens do no longer automatically hold British nationality.
- In 1973 the United Kingdom joined the European Union and under EEC law the free movement of people is a fundamental right for EU citizens.
- In 2005 the "Life in the United Kingdom test" was introduced in which those wishing to acquire British citizenship had to demonstrate "sufficient knowledge of life in the United Kingdom" and in 2007 this regulation was extended: those who want to settle in Britain now also have to demonstrate "a sufficient knowledge" of the English language.
- Under the premiership of Tony Blair the Labour Party proposed "managed migration", a system which grants entry to those whose skills might benefit the United Kingdom. This policy has been severely criticised since it necessarily leads to a brain drain in developing countries.

America's global role: isolationism versus interventionism

In defining its foreign policy, the USA has been determined by two opposing principles: the concept of isolationism and the concept of interventionism or involvement.

The era of isolationism

Following George Washington's advice "to have with them [i.e. foreign nations] as little political connection as possible," President Monroe (presidency from 1817 to 1825) pursued a strict policy of isolationism. The United States adhered to Monroe's doctrine of non-interference until the beginning of the 20th century when the USA reluctantly entered World War I. After the war, strong isolationist tendencies again prevailed and thus – in spite of President Wilson's leading role in establishing the League of Nations – the US Senate voted against the USA becoming a member of the League of Nations. In the 1930s, people responded to Germany's re-armament with a wave of anti-war sentiment. Thus, a number of laws were passed to prevent American involvement in a possible war in Europe (1935 Neutrality Act, 1937 Neutrality Act).

The era of interventionism

After World War II the era of isolationism ended with President Truman's request to give financial and economic aid to countries threatened by Communism (namely Greece and Turkey). Truman was led by the belief that economic and financial aid was essential to provide economic stability which would then ensure political stability. He also stressed the responsibility of the USA when pointing out that a refusal to assume a leadership role might endanger world peace. Truman's doctrine marked a watershed (a fundamental change) in America's foreign policy and subsequently, the USA got involved in a number of conflicts (Korea, Vietnam), taking a more or less active part.

Definition

The term "Cold War" denotes the time between the end of World War II (1945) and the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), a period marked by the "cold relations" between the USA and the USSR as a result of each side trying to spread their ideology and to introduce or to impose their political system with the USA representing capitalism and the Soviet Union advocating communism. Thus the USA focused on establishing democracies in war-ravaged Europe while the USSR set up communist governments in those parts of Eastern Europe which had been occupied by them.

The "Cold War" is also a metaphor used to emphasise that in spite of growing tensions, the two nations were never engaged in open military conflict. But in order to gain control both sides supplied military and economic aid to regimes representing their ideology.

Consequences

Since to many western democracies, communism soon became a synonym for totalitarian control, America pursued a policy of containment, seeking to reduce the influence of the USSR, supporting countries "threatened" by communism. This led to proxy wars, such as in Vietnam, where an economic and military aid programme gradually escalated into a war, with the USA trying to maintain a pro-western even if corrupt system in South Vietnam and the USSR assisting the communist North Vietnam.

The Truman Doctrine and the Bush Doctrine

Under the Truman Doctrine, the USA gave financial and economic aid to nations threatened by communism such as Greece and Turkey, in order to promote world peace and thus the security of the USA.

- American involvement was seen as in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
- Truman also emphasised that US support should primarily consist of economic and financial aid since he considered economic stability as crucial in establishing or maintaining a democracy.

In his State of the Union Address in 2003 President George W. Bush announced that

- he was ready to attack Iraq even without a UN mandate, after having already stated in 2002 that
- the "United States will, if necessary, act pre-emptively." (*Newsweek*, Special Issues 2003 Edition)

The Truman Doctrine is often interpreted as a sign of the USA's willingness to assume responsibility by accepting the role of the leader in the Western World. By contrast, the Bush Doctrine with its emphasis on unilateralism is perceived as an expression of American predominance and as solely serving America's self interest.

US involvement in Vietnam and Iraq

Vietnam has become the very epitome (i.e. perfect example) of a war that cannot be won. Thus a comparison of US involvement in Vietnam and Iraq implies that in spite of America's military superiority it might prove difficult to pacify Iraq and to stabilise the region since the attempt to impose a western-style democracy against the will of the people has already failed in Vietnam.

Other similarities include

- the ideological aspect:
  US involvement in Vietnam was founded on the belief that military and economic aid should be given to countries threatened by communism. On an ideological level, transforming Iraq into a democracy was seen as a first step to promoting stability and peace in the Middle East.
- atrocities and war crimes:
  The number of civilian casualties and pictures of complete destruction seemed to be irreconcilable with America's mission of protecting Vietnam against or liberating the Iraqi people from oppression.
  Accounts of the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War and prisoner abuse in Abu Ghraib caused worldwide consternation and seriously damaged the image of the USA.
- the costs:
  The rapidly escalating costs of military involvement led to a federal budget deficit during both wars.

In spite of these similarities, there are also fundamental differences. For instance, the USA officially declared war against Iraq. By contrast, Congress never declared war on North Vietnam. A policy which began as a military aid programme gradually escalated and became a sustained conflict.

Definition

In his book *The Epic of America* James Truslow Adams defines the American Dream as "the dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability and achievement […] a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders […]."

James T. Adams wrote these words at the beginning of the 20th century, but the ideal of a new society already existed before:

- The Puritan settlers dreamt of founding a new Jerusalem in a land where they could practise their religion free from persecution.
- For many early European settlers America was the land of unlimited opportunities: in this new land anyone could achieve prosperity through hard work, courage and determination.

Thus the belief that "you can make it" is an important aspect of the American Dream. It is reflected in the American Constitution. By stating that "liberty" and "the pursuit of happiness" are **inalienable rights** the founding fathers intended to lay the foundation for a new and just society.

Today material success has become so closely connected with the American Dream that at times the two terms almost seem to have become synonymous, but the concept of the dream is still more complex. Among the new immigrants there are still those who come to America led by the belief that in this land they might have the chance of personal fulfilment, that in America they might lead a life free from social, religious or political oppression.

The metaphors used to describe American society changed in the course of time. Originally, the term **melting-pot** was used. It denotes a pot or a vessel in which metals or other substances are melted to produce a new – and often a more valuable – compound.

The French-American writer Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecœur (pseudonym: J. Hector St. John) (1735–1813) used this imagery when he declared that in America "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race." This process required that people gave up their former way of life and their beliefs since through "leaving behind […] all his ancient prejudices and manners […] the American is a new man." This implied that the new arrivals had to give up their ethnic and cultural identity to be transformed into something new thus constituting a homogeneous society.

Particularly in the second half of the 20th century this definition did no longer seem to be appropriate. The "new"" immigrants were proud of their cultural heritage and did not want to assimilate. Thus the old metaphor of the melting-pot was replaced by a new imagery to describe a society in which people from diverse backgrounds formed a whole on a basis of mutual acceptance and equality.
This modern concept of cultural pluralism is described by metaphors such as **pizza** or **salad bowl**. The new immigrants and their descendants perceived and perceive themselves as integral parts of a society in which various ingredients complement each other to form a whole thus laying emphasis on the notion that American society consists of distinctive elements which together make up a unity.

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America – the people

America has been a country of immigrants since the first white settlers arrived in the "new world". In spite of the continuous flow of immigrants from all over the world, the whites still constitute the majority of the population (77.1%). The early European settlers came predominantly from England and Scotland, Protestant regions, thus establishing a WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) culture. The white majority also comprises Catholics and Jews, people of German, Irish and Scandinavian descent as well as people who trace their origin to southern and eastern Europe.

The Native Americans, who originally inhabited the continent, only make up 1% of the US population today.

African Americans represent the largest ethnic minority (13.4% of the population). They are mostly descendants of those people who were brought to America to work as slaves, so what sets them apart is the fact that their ancestors came unwillingly. The last decades saw the emergence of a black middle class but still a disproportionately high number of African Americans lives below the poverty line.

About ten million people of Asian descent (4.5% of the total population) live in the USA today, with the Chinese constituting the largest Asian group in the USA. The term Asian Americans includes people of diverse ethnic origin, tracing their roots to very different countries. They are the most successful of all immigrant groups, having a higher income in general and their children often studying at prestigious universities.

The term Hispanics was introduced to refer to people of Latin American or Spanish descent. This group includes immigrants from Latin America, especially from Mexico, or refugees from Cuba. Hispanic heritage in the US goes back a long time: Spanish settlements in Florida and California date back to the 17th and 18th century. The Hispanics represent the second largest and the most rapidly growing ethnic minority (13%), showing some reluctance to assimilate.

(Figures taken from the 2000 Census of the U.S. Census Bureau)

- The arrival of the Europeans invariably proved destructive for the Native Americans, who had originally inhabited the continent even though at the beginning, many Indian tribes and some groups of white settlers lived together in peace.
- Widely differing cultural concepts soon led to a collision of lifestyles: unused to the notion of individuals owning property, the Indians did not understand or accept land boundaries while white settlers took advantage of the Indians' primarily nomadic lifestyle, claiming the Natives' land as their own.
- In the 19th century the US government recognised the sovereignty of Indian tribes. But the treaties established between the US government and the tribes were repeatedly broken.
- Allegedly to enable peaceful coexistence, Indian tribes were pressurised into moving to reservations, with the forced march of the Cherokee becoming known as the "Trail of Tears". Tribes fighting for their rights were practically eradicated.
- On the Indian reservations, the Native Americans were geographically and politically segregated. In an attempt to assimilate Native Americans by breaking up the unity of the Indian tribes tribal land was divided and the land rights transferred to individual Indian families under the General Allotment Act or Dawes Act (1887). This scheme did not prove successful since much of the land was subsequently sold to non-Natives.
- As a consequence the Dawes Act was repealed in 1934 and the land became again the shared property of the tribes. But life on the reservations was marked by abject poverty.
- According to the 1980 census 58% of the reservation males were unemployed as compared to 18% of all races. 41% of reservation Indians lived below the poverty line, as compared to 12% of the US population, with poverty and unemployment accounting for extremely high alcoholism and drug use rates.
- At the turn of the millennium, statistics still paint a bleak picture even though some tribes are economically highly successful, for instance profiting from operating gambling operations or leasing land to mineral and oil companies.

The Civil Rights Movement

Ratified on 12th December 1865 the 13th Amendment to the Constitution abolished slavery. With the 14th Amendment stating that all persons born in the USA are citizens, the former slaves automatically acquired citizenship while the 15th Amendment emphasised that the right to vote should not be withheld on account of race. Yet in the south, Blacks were denied the rights of citizens, such as the right to vote, the rights of personal liberty and equal opportunity. Racial injustice and discrimination were institutionalised when in 1896 the Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation was legal as long as "separate but equal facilities were provided" thus laying the legal foundation for segregation.
In the 20th century, the Civil Rights Movement became instrumental in fighting segregation and ensuring civil rights for African Americans. On their initiative the legal framework was created to promote racial equality through a number of measures.

Some landmark decisions

1954 The Supreme Court ruled that separate schools could not be of equal quality.

1955 The bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, ended segregation on public transport.

1963 Two black students were admitted to the University of Alabama.

1964 Under the 1964 Civil Rights Act discrimination in public places was forbidden.

1965 The 1965 Voting Rights Act enabled more Blacks to participate in elections, for instance by abolishing the poll tax, a fixed amount of money which had to be paid in order to be allowed to vote, thus inevitably excluding poor Blacks from the elections.

1971 To achieve racial balance at school "bussing" was introduced: children from black residential areas were transported to schools in white neighbourhoods and vice versa.

1972 The Equal Opportunity and Employment Act encouraged "affirmative action" to improve the employment opportunities of minorities.

!

The abbreviation NHS stands for the **National Health Service**, the health care system of England (Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have their own medical services), one of the most ambitious health care systems in the world.

The National Health Service was set up in 1948. Based on the principle that everyone should be entitled to free medical treatment the NHS provides free health care for all the residents of the UK even though there are set charges for some services such as dental treatment, prescriptions and spectacles. People over sixty, children, disabled patients and people with low incomes are exempt from paying.

The NHS is funded through general taxation.
Yet visitors are entitled to the same medical services in a case of emergency or where Britain has reciprocal treatment arrangements, for instance with other members of the European Union.
For a long time the NHS was admired as a model among Western democracies for its egalitarianism. However, costs and demand for health care rose sharply so that symptoms of a crisis in Britain's health service became noticeable in the 1980s.

Medicare is a federal health insurance programme

- for people aged 65 or older,
- for people with certain disabilities,
- for people with permanent kidney failure.

➪ In order to qualify for the benefits you have to enrol and pay a monthly premium (a certain amount paid for an insurance policy).

➪ People who get benefits from Social Security or the Railroad Retirement Board can sign up for Medicare and on reaching their 65th birthday they are then entitled to Medicare services.

Medicaid, by contrast, is a medical aid programme for people with a limited income and limited resources. Since Medicaid is a joint federal and state programme, Medicaid programmes differ from state to state. Thus income limits might vary and in some states, these programmes might have different names such as "Medi-Cal" or "Medical Assistance". Some people qualify for both programmes.

The Original Medicare Plan does not cover all health care services and supplies. Services not included are, for instance, dental care, glasses, hearing aids, prescription drugs etc.
Thus some people buy a "Medigap" policy, a private health insurance which supplements the Original Medicare Plan.

The principle of self-reliance and welfare

The American welfare system only emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, which has often been attributed to the American ideal of self-reliance.

The concept that everyone is responsible for himself/herself is traced back to the time of the early pioneers, who had to be self-sufficient in exploring the vast land, having to confront the hardships to which they were exposed alone. Many of the first settlers were Protestants and the Protestant work ethic confirmed the belief that God would provide for and reward those who worked hard.

The Great Depression in the 1930s radically changed the view that unemployment was a sign of "idleness". With his second "New Deal", his reforms to fight the consequences of the economic depression, President Roosevelt laid the foundation for the American welfare system, introducing unemployment compensations, old age pensions and various other social securities. The state taking responsibility for the social and economic security of its citizens marked a turning point in America's social concept with its strong emphasis on the responsibility of the individual, personal initiative and private charity.

In the 1960s President Lyndon B. Johnson expanded the government's role in social welfare programmes. His social reforms aimed at the elimination of poverty and racial injustice and while some of his measures have been abandoned, others, including Medicare and Medicaid, still exist.

Especially when used before a noun the word "public" is used in the sense of 'for everyone', for example when referring to services the government provides for people in general, e.g. public transport.
A British public school, however, is a – often very exclusive – private school. So public schools charge school fees although they usually offer scholarships for the brightest children from poorer families. The word "public" derives from the fact that originally pupils from all over the country could enter the school. In the past, most public schools were boys' schools only, but today some of them also accept girls. Among the most prestigious public schools are Eton, Harrow and Winchester. There are also a few public schools for girls, for instance Queen's College in London.

The advantages public schools are supposed to have:

- better facilities than state schools,
- smaller classes,
- a better equipment.

Most public schools do not only place emphasis on academic achievement but also on social skills, the formation of character, sportsmanship and developing leadership qualities.
Although the Labour Party is traditionally hostile to private schools, it has never done anything to abolish them, as the freedom to buy better education for one's children is considered a basic freedom in Britain.

The ideal of equality and the problem of equal opportunities.

- The Declaration of Independence states that all men are created equal and that governments are instituted to secure these natural and inalienable rights: life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and equality.
- This concept of equality is reflected in the American school system since it is based on the principle that free education should be available for all children. Committed to the idea of equal opportunity, American high schools are comprehensive schools, providing the same educational facilities for all students.
- High schools aim at providing a general education. In order to obtain a high school diploma students have to take compulsory subjects such as English, maths, science and social science (always including US history) but they can also choose from a wide range of electives to fulfil their potential.
- Children of all social backgrounds may attend the same school, yet it does not necessarily follow that all students at the same grade level take the same courses: Depending on his or her personal abilities, a student may choose to concentrate on more academic subjects as a preparation for college. Classes such as basic accounting, typing, or agricultural science are designed for those students who do not plan to go to college. At some high schools there are even different courses according to individual ability.
- Contrary to the democratic ideal of equality, the education that each student receives is by no means equal. American schools are funded from local taxes. Thus more money can be spent on education in wealthy districts while in poorer areas such as inner-city districts the communities have less money available. Consequently their schools tend to have fewer resources and as a result of bad conditions, pupils of these schools generally have low results.

In America, religion seems to permeate public life: American currency bears the inscription "In God We Trust."

- The pledge of allegiance includes the words "under God".
- Every session of Congress opens with a prayer.
- US presidents take their oath of office on the Bible.

This is often attributed to the fact that many of the first settlers were deeply religious people who came to America to escape religious persecution. Pilgrims, Puritans and Quakers settled on the east coast of America where they could practise their religion freely. Their values are supposed to have shaped America's society decisively:

- The Protestant work ethic with its emphasis on the necessity of hard work is often considered as the foundation of America's industrial growth and national prosperity since the Puritans, who thought of themselves as God's chosen people, interpreted material success as a sign that God counted them among the saved.
- Their religious beliefs committed Calvinists to use their wealth to help others. Thus, private charity plays a very important role in America.

At the same time, there is a **strict separation of state and church**:

- There are no church taxes. Religious communities solely depend on the voluntary contributions and donations of their members.
- There are no religious holidays and there is no religious instruction at school in the form of school prayer or a subject such as religious education.

Having different target groups, quality papers and the papers from the popular press differ considerably in style and content.

Quality papers	Popular papers
▪ a high standard of reporting ▪ objective and balanced coverage ▪ reliable since carefully investigated ▪ lengthy articles, often containing a lot of background information *target group:* educated readers	▪ sensationalist articles (catastrophes, celebrity news) ▪ focus on entertainment rather than on information ▪ many pictures, sometimes bordering on pornography ▪ biased reporting *target group:* a mass readership

Originally, quality papers could be distinguished from the papers of the popular press at first glance since they used to have a different format:

- Quality papers had a large format (38 by 61 centimetres) and were thus also called broadsheets while the popular press preferred the so-called tabloid format with pages of about 30 cm by 40 cm.
- The large format was inconvenient to handle and so most quality papers adopted a new form.

Automation and globalisation

Undoubtedly automation and globalisation are currently the most important trends in the business world.

Automation has become a major concept, with sometimes entire production processes being controlled by the computer as the growing demand for increased flexibility, the production of customised products and just-in-time delivery requires the use of advanced technology. But in enterprises heavily relying on CIM, computer-integrated-manufacturing, the unskilled or semi-skilled worker has been replaced by machines and robots, which are operated by a small number of highly qualified technicians. Thus, this development leads to increased unemployment in a time of economic growth and increasing business productivity.

Modern means of transport and highly advanced communication systems have led to the emergence of a globalised world, in which people around the globe are more connected to each other than ever before. Enterprises, too, attempt to operate on a global rather than on a national scale even though this might imply a higher degree of interdependence. But the global economy is marked by free trade, the free flow of money, and easy access to cheaper foreign labour markets in regions, where environmental regulations are less strict.

While the benefits of globalisation for the economy are indisputable, this trend also poses challenges for the UK and the USA as India and China are arising as powerful economic rivals, demanding access to raw materials and increasing the pressure to remain competitive.

The simple form

The simple form is used

- for facts and in general statements:
  Water boils at 100 C.
  Not all that glitters is gold.
- with actions and events which repeatedly take place (therefore you must use the simple form with expressions of time such as *frequently*, *often*, *sometimes*, *usually*):
  Jimmy usually takes the bus.
- with verbs denoting a (mental) state or feelings/attitudes:
  to see, to hear, to taste, to smell, to notice, to look (aussehen): These roses smell lovely.
  to love, to hate, to like, to dislike, to prefer: Some people simply hate loud music.
  to want, to wish: At the moment Timmy still wants to be an actor.
  to remember, to know, to realise, to forget, to doubt: I know that you are here.
  to consist of, to possess, to contain: Do you own a car?
- in a series of actions and in narrative texts:
  She got up, had breakfast and went to work as usual.
  She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned …

The progressive form

Basically the progressive form is used to denote an activity which is/was in progress at a particular point of time: the action has already begun but it hasn't finished yet, e.g. Jenny is painting her room.
The progressive form is sometimes used to add emphasis or to express an emotional attitude.

Though being **formed from the verb** (verb + -ing, e.g. reading) **the gerund is a noun** and consequently it can have all the functions of a noun. It is used

- as a subject (e.g. Watching old movies is fun.)
- as an object (e.g. Laura enjoys reading.)
- after prepositions (e.g. There is no point in waiting any longer.)

The infinitive is a form of the verb. Yet it can also be used

- as a subject (e.g. It isn't always easy to find the perfect solution.)
- as an object (e.g. He refused to answer that question.)

Although the gerund and the infinitive have similar functions, they are not necessarily interchangeable. There are words which can be followed by a gerund **or** an infinitive (*to love*, *to hate*, *to start*, *to begin*), but some verbs can be used with the gerund only (e.g. *to avoid*, *to enjoy*, *to suggest*), others only with the infinitive (*to agree*, *to choose*, *to fail*, *to want s.o. to do s.th.*, *to expect*, *to advise*).

Depending on whether used with the gerund or the infinitive some verbs even have a different meaning:

to stop to do s.th.: to end an activity in order to do s.th. else	*to stop doing s.th.:* to no longer continue an activity
to forget to do s.th.: to not remember s.th. you must do	*to forget doing s.th.:* not to remember s.th. you have done
to remember to do s.th.: to not forget s.th. you must do	*to remember doing s.th.:* not to forget s.th. you have done

The past tense

You use the past tense to refer to an action/event which took place/occurred in the past, placing emphasis on **the point of time when** the action/event took place or occurred. With the use of the past tense you make clear that there is no relation between the past action/event and the present. Therefore the past tense must be used

- with expression denoting a definite point or period of time in the past such as *some days ago*, *last year*, in *2007*: They met a couple of days ago.
- when asking about a definite point of time in the past: When did the meeting take place?
- when you can conclude from the context that the action/event took place at some time in the past even if this point of time is not explicitly mentioned: Shakespeare was a famous playwright.

The present perfect

Basically the present perfect establishes a link between a past action/event and the present. Therefore the present perfect must be used

- for an action/event which took place/occurred in the past but which has some effect on the situation now. You emphasise the fact that this action/event somehow affects the present: Jimmy has lost his keys. Now he can't get into the house.
- when talking about an activity which began in the past but which isn't over yet: I've been trying to open that door for ages. (You indicate that the action still continues.)
- for an action which has **just** or **recently** been completed: He has just left the room.

	if-clause	main clause
Conditional I: Use conditional I to indicate that it is realistic to think that the condition can be fulfilled.	*present tense* If you want to improve your tennis, If you want to win, If you really practise every day, If people practise often,	*auxiliary + infinitive* … you must practise very hard. *Imperative* … practise a lot. *will-future* … your tennis will get much better. *present tense* … their tennis usually gets better.
Conditional II: Use conditional II to indicate that it is not realistic to assume that the condition can be fulfilled.	*past tense* If I met a ghost, If pigs could fly,	*would/could/might + infinitive* … I would run away. … I would fly a pig. (John Reeves)
Conditional III: Use conditional III when the condition can no longer be fulfilled / has not been fulfilled.	*past perfect* If Bridget hadn't been to the party, If they hadn't met,	*would (not) have been + past participle* *could/might …* … she wouldn't have met Mark. *would/could/might (not) + infinitive* … they wouldn't be married now.

Only use *would* in an *if*-clause if it is a polite request: I should be very grateful if you would help me with the luggage.

You use an adjective

- to define a noun:
  a beautiful building
  a wonderful story
- with verbs such as *to be*, *to get*, *to become*:
  to be good at s.th.
  this is fantastic
- with verbs which can be replaced by *to be*:
  e.g. to look, to feel, to sound, to remain
  this sounds good
  to remain stable

You use an adverb

- to define a verb:
  He quickly jumped over the fence.
  She was greatly admired.
- to define an adjective:
  particularly interesting
  highly efficient
  absolutely wonderful
  definitely right
- in some expressions:
  to feel well
  to be poorly
  to do well

The word **hard** can be used as an adjective or as an adverb:

- The life of a pupil can be quite hard.
- He had to work hard.

The word **hardly** is used in the sense of German *kaum:* He hardly ever worked.

Since basically the pattern of a simple sentence is **subject + predicate + object** (SPO) and nothing should be placed between the predicate and the object, the adverb or adverbial phrase can only occur in three positions:

- front position (before the subject)
- mid position (between subject and predicate)
- end position (at the end of the sentence)

On Sundays Laura **sometimes** has breakfast **in the garden**.

Front position

You place an adverb in front position in order to

- modify the meaning of the complete sentence: Unfortunately Nick wasn't able to attend the meeting.
- to add emphasis: In the morning my father is mine.

Mid position

- adverbs of frequency such as *sometimes*, *often*, *frequently* (e.g. Nick often works late.)
- adverbs of indefinite time such as *soon*, *seldom* (e.g. He seldom fails to show up.)
- adverbs of manner, describing how an action is carried out (e.g. She quickly realised that …).

End position

- adverbs of manner: Allan enjoyed the whole scene immensely.
- adverbs of place: Mrs Allen was working in the garden.
- adverbs of time: He never went to the pub on Sundays.

If there are several adverbs, the correct word order is adverb of **manner**, adverb of **place**, adverb of **time**.

The definite article

You **do use** the definite article (*the*) when referring to a particular thing, person, institution etc. and you **must use** the definite article with a word that has been defined

- by an *of*-phrase (e.g. the life of Brian)
- by a relative clause (e.g. Although she found the life they led quite exciting she was looking forward to having some peace and quiet again.)

You **must not use** the definite article with abstract nouns such as life, society, nature etc and with institutions such as school, church, hospital etc when thinking of their function, when thinking of what they are used for (e.g. church – a place to pray). Since you do use the article with these words in German (cf. in die Schule gehen – to go to school), this is quite a common mistake among German native speakers. You **do use** the definite article though when referring to the building.

Indefinite article

You **do use** the indefinite article (*a* or *an*) when a word is mentioned for the first time or when not referring to a particular thing, person, institution etc. In contrast to German, you **must use** the indefinite article

- when referring to a person as a representative of a certain group (e.g. He worked as a driver.)
- with linking verbs like *to be* or *to become* (e.g. She was a famous dancer.)
- with some words such as *half* (an hour), *quite* (a change), *such* (a shame), *as* (a child)
- with numbers such as *a/one hundred*, *a/one million*.

You use **many** with **countables**, that is with things which you can count such as books (three books):
They don't have many books.

- Countable nouns have a plural form.

There is a strong tendency to use **many**

- in negative sentences (sentences containing words such as *no*, *not*, *never*): There aren't many people who think that …
- in questions: How many children do they have?
- in formal English: Many people expressed their concern about the growing number of …

In affirmative sentences (sentences not containing words such as *no*, *not*, *never*) **a lot of** is used instead:
A lot of people think that ….

You use **much** with **uncountables**, that is with things which you cannot count such as *love*, *hope*, *water*:
They didn't have much hope that …

- Some words which are countable in German are uncountable in English, e.g.
  information,
  advice,
  money.

These words do not have a plural form in English.

There is a strong tendency to use **much**

- in negative sentences (sentences containing words such as *no*, *not*, *never*): They don't have much money.
- in questions: How much is it?
- in formal English: The growing number of people infected with HIV has caused much concern.

In affirmative sentences (sentences not containing words such as *no*, *not*, *never*) **a lot of** is used instead:
A lot of money has been spent on ….

While all the three of them – *what*, *which* and *who* – can be used as **interrogative pronouns** to introduce a question, *who* and *which* can also function as **relative pronouns**.

who, *which* and *what* in questions

- *who* is generally used to ask about persons.
- *what* is used to ask about things or as a shortened form of *what kind of*: What (kind of) book is that?
- *which* **must be used** with an *of*-phrase since the *of*-phrase makes clear that there is a choice from a limited number only: Which of you would like to have an ice-cream?
- *which* is also used to ask for more specific information: So which house did they finally buy?

who and *which* as relative pronouns

- *who* is used for persons,
- *which* for things but
- *which* **must** also **be used** when the relative clause refers to the whole sentence: Helen has phoned to say that she can't come after all, which I find really annoying.

Each and **every** seem to have become more or less interchangeable: Each year more than 400,000 Americans die from cigarette smoking. / Every year more than 400,000 Americans die from cigarette smoking.

Yet there are some exceptions:

- You **must use** *each* with an *of*-phrase: How each of us can change the world.
- You **must use** *every* to say how often something happens: There's a bus every ten minutes.

any is used in the sense of 'it doesn't matter which or who' (German: jeder beliebige): Anybody could have walked into the room and stolen the necklace.

each other* and *oneself

- **Oneself** is a reflexive pronoun. Thus it is used when subject and object are identical: Jim looked into the mirror and stared at himself.
- **Each other** is a reciprocal pronoun. Thus it is used when something is given or done by each of two people, countries, etc to the other: Helen and Deborah just looked at each other and started to laugh. (This means that Helen looked at Deborah while Deborah looked at Helen.)

Knowing the correct preposition requires some effort. The prepositions which follow a particular adjective or noun simply have to be learned. Yet there are some rules regarding:

Prepositions of time

Use *on* with days and dates:
e.g. on Monday

Use *at* with a point in time:
e.g. at 8 a.m.

Use *in* when referring to a longer period:
e.g. in the summer, in 1899

Use *since* with a point in time:
e.g. since last Christmas

Use *for* with a period of time:
e.g. for weeks

by with a point in time means "not later than":
e.g. Construction works will be finished by November.

until is used to stress the length of time:
e.g. The tournament lasted until midnight.

Prepositions of place

at is used when a place is perceived as a point:
e.g. Turn left at the supermarket.

on is used to denote

- an upward movement: The thief climbed on the roof.
- a place situated close to a river or a lake, e.g. Stratford on Avon
- something covering a surface, e.g. on the wall
- the use of public transport, e.g. on the bus
- a subject matter, e.g. a book on the Vietnam War

in is used when referring to the inside of what is perceived as an enclosed area: There were birds singing in the trees.

off is used to denote

- a downward movement: He jumped off his horse.
- a place which is removed, some distance away: The old house off the road.

must is used

- when giving an order or to express a necessity:
  I really must go now;
- when giving a logical conclusion:
  All the lights are on. Lisa must be back.

can is used

- to denote an ability:
  I can speak German, you know;
- in requests or to ask for and to grant permission:
  Dad, can I go now? I've done my homework already;
- in assumptions:
  There is someone at the door. Can it be John?

may is used

- for permission:
  May I go to the toilet?
- to express a possibility:
  Can I speak to Mrs Blake? – She may have left already.

should is used

- to give advice:
  You really should work harder;
- in assumptions:
  Gwen left an hour ago so she should be home by now.

Going-to future is used to express

- an intention when a decision has already been made: What are your plans for tonight? – I'm going to have a quiet evening at home;
- a logical conclusion when there is some evidence indicating what is going to happen in the (immediate/near) future: Look at those dark clouds. Let's hurry up. It's going to rain soon.

Will-future is used

- when predicting future events, particularly in formal announcements or when expressing an assumption: And now for tomorrow's weather: it will be cold and wet in the morning, but there might be some sunny spells later that day;
- for a spontaneous promise or a decision made at the moment of speaking: Just look at these piles of dirty dishes. – I'll help you. Together we'll have finished in no time.

The **present progressive** is used for definite arrangements: I'm seeing the doctor tomorrow about these constant headaches.

➪ The use of the present progressive implies that an appointment has been made.

The **simple present** is used for so-called timetable information or when referring to a programme or a fixed schedule: Hurry up. The train leaves in ten minutes. – The Global Health Conference starts tomorrow.

Indirect speech is used when relating what someone else has said, told, thought, etc. To indicate that these are not one's own words some changes are necessary.

- The personal pronoun might have to be changed:
  Tim: "I hate getting up early."
  Tim always says that he hates getting up early.
- Adverbials of time and place might have to be adapted according to the context:
  John: "We only arrived yesterday."
  John mentioned that they had arrived the day before.
- Backshift of tenses is often used when the introductory verb is in the past tense or in the past perfect:
  Gwen: "I haven't read a book in ages."
  Gwen admitted that she hadn't read a book in ages.

➪ When backshift of tenses is used

will	becomes	would;
am/is/are going to	➪	as/were going to;
can/may	➪	could/might
present tense	➪	past tense;
present perfect	➪	past perfect;
past tense	➪	past perfect;

past perfect remains the same.

Backshift of tenses is not used

- when stating facts or something which is regarded as still being the case:
  Already Galileo Galilei taught that the sun is at the centre of the universe;
- when the introductory verb is in the present perfect:
  Helen has just told me that they are going to the concert tonight, too.

One basic difference is that the comma is used much more sparingly in English than in German. Thus German native speakers tend to have too many commas, particularly since in English the main clause and the subordinate clause are not separated through a comma if the subordinate clause is conceived as an integral part of the sentence.
This is always the case with

- "that" clauses: Harry said that he would arrive later.
- indirect questions: Does anybody know where John has gone?
- a subordinate clause that follows the main clause: I've known him since I was a child.
- defining relative clauses: The man who I met yesterday was wearing a pink shirt.

While a defining relative clause contains important information specifying the word which is explained in the relative clause, a non-defining relative clause simply adds some information which is not absolutely necessary: e.g. John's brother, who lives in New York, is coming to stay with us for a couple of weeks. In this case, the relative clause merely contains some additional information. It can be omitted and is therefore marked off with commas.

- The omission of commas, however, indicates that the relative clause is an integral part of the sentence, a defining relative clause and thus relevant to understand the sentence correctly: John has several brothers so it is necessary to define which brother is coming to stay. ➪ John's brother who lives in New York is coming to stay with us for a couple of weeks.

In English, inverted commas or quotations marks are placed at the top of the line at the beginning and at the end of the quotation, e.g. Petunia: "Do something about your hair!"

To avoid mistakes proofreading is indispensable. The mistakes typically made by German native speakers are frequently the result of "translating" from German into English. So when checking your written work, watch out for the following:

- the spelling
- the word order (cf. **44 The Position of Adverbs**)
- the correct use of tenses (cf. **41 Past Tense or Present Perfect** and **42 *if*-clauses**)
- the use of adverbs (cf. **43 Adjective and Adverb**)
- the correct use of the definite article (cf. **45 The Use of the Article**)
- the correct preposition (cf. **49 Prepositions**)
- **false friends** such as:

Kritik	criticism	eventually	schließlich
skrupellos	unscrupulous	scrupulous	gewissenhaft
Mörder	murderer	trade union	Gewerkschaft
aktuell	topical, current	to become	werden
aktuelle Nachrichten	the latest news	must not	nicht dürfen
wollen, dass jemand etwas tut	to want s.o. to do s.th.		
über etwas diskutieren	to discuss s.th. (do not add "about")		
etwas ernst nehmen	to take s.th. seriously		
wer von euch	which of you		
Happyend	happy ending		
nicht müssen	needn't		
eine Rede halten	to give/make/deliver a speech		

- Skim the text first to get a general idea of what it is about, looking up words which are crucial for understanding the text.
- Now read the questions/assignments carefully: What is it exactly that you have to do?
- Scan the text, this time underlining passages which are relevant to the assignment on which you want to concentrate first.
- Take notes and arrange them in a logical order.
- You might start by briefly mentioning the topic or summing up the main idea in the first sentence.
- Then proceed systematically, using your notes to answer the question.

Do's ...

- Do not comment on the content if you are not explicitly asked to do so.
- Use neutral language.
- Use connective phrases to create coherence.
- Sometimes you will be required to substantiate your findings with evidence from the text.
- Most assignments/tasks require the use of the present tense.
- Proofread your answer.

and don'ts

- Do not use phrases expressing personal opinion such as "I think", "I feel" etc.
- Do not use slang.
- Do not use short forms in a formal paper.
- Do not simply copy a passage from the text and use inverted commas to mark quotations

Use another colour when scanning the text in search of clues for answering the next question/assignment.

A writer's style is defined by the choice of words, grammatical structures and the use of literary devices. Thus these are the aspects on which you have to work systematically in order to improve your style.

Expand on your vocabulary to avoid commonplace words such as "good" or "nice".
In your dictionary you will find a number of alternatives. Thus, instead of having to resort to the word "nice", you might say that something is absorbing, fascinating, informative, impressive, pleasant or entertaining and when referring to a person you might describe them as kind, talented, gifted or skilled. Similarly something might be inadequate, disgusting, unpleasant or awkward while a bad person could be described as wicked or cruel.

- Note down and try to memorise good expressions.
- Learn phrases rather than only individual words.
- Generally, descriptive adverbs and adjectives make a text more vivid and interesting.

Use complex structures

- combining consecutive sentences with conjunctions or connectives;
- replacing subordinate clauses by gerunds or participle constructions.

You should try to avoid repetitions unless you want to deliberately repeat certain phrases or ideas to add emphasis, for instance when writing or delivering a speech.

Before you start:

- Choose an appropriate form of language. When addressing an audience, diction (the choice of words) and tone (*serious* in a political speech, *playful* in a wedding speech) should fit the social context and the occasion.
- Collect ideas and arrange them in a logical order.
- Do some research: official data (statistics) and quotations usually create a sense of credibility.

Writing a speech:

- First greet the audience, then briefly introduce yourself and your topic (perhaps by referring to the occasion): your personal background might establish you as an authority on the subject matter or as a party concerned.
- Captivate the audience: mention an interesting fact, shocking figures or begin with a humorous remark.
- Try to establish common ground with the audience, perhaps by telling a personal anecdote. Rhetorical questions are also a good means of seemingly involving the audience since they create the impression that speaker and audience are engaged in some kind of discourse.
- Coherence is established when one idea leads to the next in a clear and logical sequence.
- Short sentences make it easier to follow an argumentation. You might want to expand on an idea in longer and more complex passages but these should be followed by a series of shorter sentences.
- Repetitions help to focus on main points.
- Most speeches end with a general appeal and on an optimistic note.
- Some people conclude their speech by thanking people for their attention, but this is not necessarily appropriate in a political speech.

When giving a speech:

- Mind your body language (eye contact), volume and speed.

A good interview requires some research to find an interesting person to interview and to develop relevant and stimulating questions. When planning the interview, you should arrange your questions in a logical order to create inner coherence. But of course, in conducting an interview you also have to be able to respond flexibly to unexpected answers.

- Introduce the person you interview(ed) by mentioning his/her name and by briefly explaining why he/she was selected as an interviewee (the person to answer the questions in this interview).
- Your first questions should be conducive to creating a good working atmosphere: the interviewee might then be more willing to answer more provocative questions later on.
- Avoid yes/no questions: they usually do not lead very far.
- Explanation questions (e.g. What is the reason?) allow the interviewee to expand on a particular topic or subject matter, thus contributing to a general understanding of the issue.
- When answering judgement questions the interviewee might then draw on his/her experience or his/her expert knowledge to state his/her opinion.
- In a real interview you sometimes have to ask for more details or for clarification.
- The interview should also include some stimulating or even slightly provocative questions which reveal an unknown side of a person's character or an unusual aspect of the topic.

In a test, you might have to write a hypothetical interview. While a genuine interview always involves some degree of unpredictability, you can then

- arrange questions and answers in a logical order and when doing so
- create smooth transitions.

When writing a letter, choose the appropriate format since there are some marked differences between

- a formal letter, such as a letter of application, a letter of complaint or a letter to the editor and
- an informal letter to a friend or to a relative.

Yet all letters should contain these elements:

- Start by explaining why you are writing.
- Define the subject matter in a formal letter: a job application, a letter of complaint, a letter to the editor. In an informal letter you might refer to a letter you have received, your personal situation etc.
- The body of your letter should be clearly structured: a letter of application should contain all the relevant information (qualifications, experience, motivation, etc).
  - Concisely state the facts in a letter of complaint.
  - Present your ideas logically when commenting on an article or a TV programme.
  - A logical flow of ideas also creates coherence in an informal letter.
- Close the letter with a concluding remark in the final paragraph.

In a comment you are supposed to give your opinion on a particular topic. Of course your opinion should be well-founded.

- Start by defining the topic: What is it about?
- Present your ideas and discuss the various aspects which are relevant to the topic.
- Use examples to illustrate your ideas.
- Structure your argumentation carefully.
- To create coherence use connective phrases such as
  first, second, third …
  on the one hand … on the other hand
  besides, moreover, …
  consequently, thus, therefore, …
  it is also/equally important to mention that …
  however, yet, by contrast.

Conclude your composition by stating your personal opinion. Of course the conclusion should be the natural outcome of your argumentation, so do not repeat the arguments which you have discussed before.

If it says "Discuss …" you are usually expected to deal with the pros and cons of an issue.
If it says "Comment …" you only have to follow one line of argument.

1. Introduce the book by giving the title, the name of the author, the place and date of publication. (When giving a presentation in class, you might also show the cover of the book.)
2. You should then mention the genre (e.g. novel, mystery, adventure, romance or science fiction) and the main theme. (What are the main ideas?)
3. Briefly outline what the book is about: you might mention the setting, name some of the main characters, thus giving a short summary. (Do not forget to use the present tense in a summary.)
   In this summary you should present a short extract or quotation
   - which you regard as particularly interesting **or**
   - which conveys a sense of the author's style.
4. Give your personal opinion, stating whether you would recommend the book or not.

- Skim the text first to get a general idea of what it is about, looking up words which are crucial for understanding the text.
- Now read the text again, looking up all the words which you do not know. You might have to read the whole entry in the dictionary to determine the meaning of a word in this particular context.
  A translation requires a thorough understanding of the text.
- Note down seemingly brilliant ideas which come to your mind spontaneously but verify later on that they really fit the context.
- When you start translating the text, think carefully before writing anything down. Particularly minor mistakes might escape your notice later on.
- When having finished, read the German text again: Does it really sound German?

How literal should the translation be? Actually this depends on your teacher. While some people insist that a proper German word be used when translating expressions such as "to emigrate", others are more liberal. Ask before the test which option your teacher prefers.

While you should not change the wording as long as you do not necessarily have to do so, some fundamental differences between English and German inevitably require some changes:

- The passive voice is much more common in English. There is a tendency to avoid it in German.
- Since there is no progressive form in German, you have to use words such as "gerade" to express this aspect.
- Gerunds and participle constructions, too, are more frequently used in English. You might replace some of these complex constructions with subordinate clauses or you might simply begin a new main clause.

Remember: The English past tense does not necessarily correspond to the German "Präteritum".

When summing up a text, you give a brief account, only covering the important points. Yet a concise summary, marked by brevity and precision, requires a detailed knowledge and a thorough understanding of the text. Thus you have to go through the text several times.

- When reading the text for the first time, make sure that you know words which appear to be relevant.
- Then try to define the topic or subject matter of the text: What is it about?
- When reading the text again, underline key words, facts and ideas which are relevant and crucial for understanding the text.
- Now make a draft, arranging the main points in a logical order.
- When writing the summary begin by stating what the text is about. You might also mention the author and the title of the text.
- Then present the main ideas of the text using connectives to create coherence.

Remember:

- You must use the present tense when summarising a text.
- Do not copy from the text. Naturally some expressions cannot be replaced but use your own words as far as possible.
- Do not include detailed descriptions, examples etc.
- Phrases such as "the author describes …" etc or personal reflections and remarks are superfluous and thus have no place in a summary.

There are numerous creative writing tasks: for instance you might have to write a diary entry, a dialogue or a letter from the perspective of a fictional character. Perhaps the assignment consists in the continuation of a story.

1. Thus begin by defining the task: What kind of text do you have to produce? What does the genre require?
2. Then do some brainstorming and simply collect ideas.
3. Do you have to adopt a certain perspective?
4. What characters do you want to create/include? Develop characters by deciding on their background and determining what kind of language they use etc.
5. What is the atmosphere like? Establish and describe a setting.
6. What will your text be about?
7. How does your story develop? Might problems or tensions – perhaps between the characters – lead to a conflict or a catastrophe?
8. Plan your text carefully, outlining the beginning, the middle and the ending of the story.
9. Begin writing, following your story line.
10. Go through the text again when you have finished writing.
11. Do you have to improve on the descriptions?
12. Are the characters convincing?
13. Is the story consistent? It might contain some surprising turns but it should not lack coherence.
14. Finally you should proofread your text.

A tragedy

In his work *The Poetics* Aristotle defines tragedy as "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete (i.e. it has to have a beginning, a middle and an end in order to form 'a whole') and of a certain magnitude" and which through evoking pity and fear effects "the proper purgation of these emotions". This process of purification is also known as catharsis.
Over the centuries new forms and concepts of tragedy have evolved so that today the term tragedy is used to loosely refer to a serious drama which usually has a sorrowful or disastrous conclusion.

A comedy

A comedy, by contrast, is defined as a drama of light character, and though it may deal with a serious topic, it does so in an amusing way. A comedy typically concludes with a happy ending.
According to Aristotle the ludicrous element may consist in some defect or ugliness, but it is not painful or destructive.

A classical drama consists of five parts:

Exposition
The exposition is the opening of a play, the first act of a drama, in which the characters and the setting (time and place) are introduced and the main themes are established. In a tragedy, the first act often contains hints of an arising conflict.

Rising action
In the second act, the play gains momentum and in a tragedy the conflict is developed and intensifies. Aristotle refers to this part of the play as "complication", defining "complication" as "all that extends from the beginning of the action to the part which marks the turning-point to good or bad fortune." (*The Poetics*)

Climax / turning-point
The play reaches the highest dramatic tension or a major turning point in the action: from then on, nothing is the same since it "marks the turning-point to good or bad fortune" (Aristotle, *The Poetics*), i.e. to happy ending or catastrophe.

Falling action
This part leads to the resolution or conclusion of the play. Aristotle defines it as "that which extends from the beginning of the change to the end."

Solution
Invariably the final act brings the solution when all threads are unravelled and all secrets disclosed. In a tragedy the resolution of the conflict brings about the downfall of the protagonist.

Definition

In contrast to prose, the words of a poem are arranged in lines. Thus one might say, the main difference between a poem and a piece of prose is merely the point at which the lines stop before they reach the end of the page.

Hugh MacDiarmid: "Perfect"

I found a pigeon's skull on the machair,
All the bones pure white and dry, and chalky,
But perfect,
Without a crack or a flaw anywhere.

At the back, rising out of the beak,
Were twin domes like bubbles of thin bone,
Almost transparent, where the brains had been
That fixed the tilt of the wings.

(Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Complete Poems*, Vol. 1, ed. by Michael Grieve and W. R. Aitken, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985, p. 573)

Typical features

- A number of lines arranged together constitute a verse or a stanza.
- These lines may rhyme, perhaps in order to stress their inner coherence.
- In some poems the regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables forms a rhythm.

The short story and the fable are both short narratives, and yet there are a number of fundamental differences:

- While a short story is invariably in prose,
- The short story does not comment or reflect on the action in focussing on one crucial problem.

(Cf. 69 Short story)

- there are fables in prose and in verse.
- The fable, by contrast, teaches a lesson: it has a moral which is often summed up at the end.

Distinctive features of the fable:
Instead of human characters animals or inanimate things speak and act. Often these animals carry the traits of human beings. Fables can also be used as an indirect means of conveying criticism.

Most short stories concentrate on

- one/few characters,
- one crucial situation/dilemma/problem

in order to present "a slice of life".

As a consequence

- there is hardly any background information.
- There is often no real introduction.
- There is an open ending.

Thus **condensation of language and narration** is fundamental. There is no comment or reflection on the action.
Ideally you can read a short story in one sitting.

Famous short story writers:
Edgar Allan Poe
Ernest Hemingway
James Joyce

The short story and the novel are both narratives in prose so what mainly distinguishes the novel from a short story is its length. Ideally, a short story can be read in one sitting. Edgar Allan Poe, who stated that an aesthetic effect can only be maintained for a brief period of time, argued that like any piece of art, the short story, too, should concentrate on "a certain unique or single effect."

A novel, by contrast, is much longer and thus naturally more complex. Its setting might vary:

- A longer period of time may be covered, allowing characters time to develop.
- A change of scene might also account for changes in a character.

Consequently, there is more room for detailed descriptions (of the setting as well as of the characters).
A wider range of characters might provide material for exploring complex relationships.
Rather than concentrating on one crucial situation, various themes or issues might be the subject of the novel.

Basically a bestseller can be any product that has sold in great numbers over a short period of time, but usually the word is used when referring to a CD or a book. Depending on the sales figures, a CD or a book might be included on the lists of currently top selling titles, which are published by newspapers, magazines, or bookstore chains.

Particularly in the UK, **boarding-school novels**, **detective stories** and **thrillers** figure most prominently among bestsellers (cf. *The Sunday Times* Bestseller List, December 31, 2007).
The boarding school novel can be traced back into the 19th century when *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, written by Thomas Hughes and published in 1857, became highly popular. Yet this genre will invariably be associated with the name of Enid Blyton (1897–1968), the author of series such as *St. Clare's* and *Malory Towers*, in which she follows her heroines as they make their way through school.

The 19th century also saw the emergence of detective stories with Edgar Allan Poe inventing the brilliant detective C. Auguste Dupin while Arthur Conan Doyle achieved fame as the creator of Sherlock Holmes. The detective stories of the 19th and the early 20th century are classical "whodunits", in which the true identity of the real murderer has to be discovered. A thriller, too, might revolve around crime but with a stronger emphasis on danger and suspense, such as in Ian Fleming's stories featuring James Bond, a fictional agent, who works for her Majesty's secret service.

Narrator and narrative perspective

When writing a novel, an author creates a narrator, the person who narrates the story and thus the person from whose point of view or from whose perspective the story is told. Naturally the perception of the narrator affects the perception of the reader who is influenced by what he is told. So in interpreting a narrative, it is important to distinguish between a first-person narrator, whose account is bound to be subjective, and a third-person narrator, who might even be omniscient. An author may even choose to introduce various narrators, presenting events from different perspectives.

First-person narrator

The first-person narrator is a character within the story, so when talking about himself, he uses I. Since he cannot look into other people's heads, he can only speculate about the thoughts and motives of the other characters. His knowledge is limited and so is his point of view since he naturally presents the story as he sees it. Thus, he is not necessarily reliable.

Third-person narrator

The third-person narrator is not involved in the story, he stands outside, so when talking about the other characters he uses he or she. Consequently his point of view is not necessarily restricted to one character, it may be unlimited, and since he is not part of the story, he may adopt the role of a detached observer. And yet a third-person narrator may also focus on one character, and in doing so concentrate on his/her perspective and his/her sensations.

The omniscient narrator

Third-person narrators are often omniscient, which means they know everything: they are even able to enter into the minds of all the characters in the story.

Theme

A theme is one of the main ideas explored in a literary work. It does not necessarily have to be stated explicitly, the central themes in a drama or a narrative evolve as the narration proceeds or the plot unfolds. Thus Macbeth's overpowering ambition which finally leads to his own destruction is one of the central themes in Shakespeare's drama. It is introduced in the first act when Lady Macbeth remarks: "Thou wouldst be great, / Art not without ambition" (I,5,18 f), and Macbeth himself expands on this by saying: "I have no spur / To prick the sides of my intent, but only / Vaulting ambition" (I,7,25 ff). But driven by his ambition he is finally persuaded to kill Duncan and in murdering the king, Macbeth becomes guilty. Guilt is another important theme developed in the play and it is intricately linked with the motif of washing blood off one's hands.

Motif

A motif is a recurrent element which is used to present or to illustrate one of the main themes in a literary work. In repeating and varying a distinctive statement, image, object or stylistic device a motif might be crucial in developing a major idea or concept.

When Macbeth has accomplished the first murder, Lady Macbeth tells him to "Go, get some water, / And wash this filthy witness from your hand." (II,2,43 f) Macbeth later takes up this motif saying: "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand?" (II,2,57 f)

Lady Macbeth echoes his question in her hallucinations when asking: "What, will these hands ne'ver be clean?" (V,1,43), and she seems to give the answer a few lines later: "Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." (V,1,50 f)

In using the image of hand washing as a recurrent motif, Shakespeare elaborates on the theme of indelible guilt which cannot be absolved.

In his literary essay *Aspects of a Novel* (1927) the English writer E.M. Forster distinguishes between flat characters and round characters.

Round characters

A round character is complex:

- It has diverse, sometimes even seemingly contradictory character traits
- and thus seems to be more real since he/she reflects the "incalculability of life" (Forster).

Round characters often change as the plot unfolds. Usually the protagonist(s) is (are) subject to such an (emotional) development.

Flat characters

Flat characters, by contrast, are two-dimensional:

- They often carry almost stereotypical character traits.
- This stereotypical portrayal might even border on the caricature.

Flat characters do not change in response to circumstances, and they are often minor characters.

In analysing a character it is important to distinguish between direct/explicit or indirect/implicit characterisation.

Direct or explicit characterisation

As the term *explicit* suggests the author, the narrator or another character literally describes the character in an open and direct way by giving a detailed description of a person's outward appearance and character. This description is not always reliable since the person who gives it might be biased.

Indirect or implicit characterisation

As the term *implicit* suggests the characters are not directly described. Their actions, their thoughts, the way they speak may reveal their personality. A variety of aspects might give important clues:

- speech (choice of words, slang, dialect),
- education,
- hobbies, profession,
- interactions with other characters.

The term “stream of consciousness” denotes a literary technique which is used in a work of fiction to simulate a person’s continuous and uninterrupted flow of thoughts and emotions.

- Therefore in using this literary technique expressions such as “he/she thought” etc are frequently omitted, access to a character’s mind seems to be immediate.
- This impression is sometimes heightened by arranging a character’s thoughts in a seemingly artless and incoherent manner to reflect the wanderings of the mind.
- It also allows the constant shift from present to past to give deeper insight into a character’s life.
- The focus is on portraying the psychological reality, the emotional processes that are taking place inside a person’s mind.

Note:

Famous writers using this technique are James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner and Samuel Beckett.

Setting and atmosphere are two distinctly independent elements in a piece of work even though they are necessarily often interrelated.

The setting

This term denotes the context in which a story unfolds, most importantly the time and the place that form the backdrop against which the action takes place.

- In a narrative, the author may simply relate these details, but sometimes the reader also has to deduce them.
- In a play, the scenery on the theatre stage, the props and costumes usually give important clues as to the where and when. But the audience may also be informed by a chorus in a prologue, such as in *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, or by the characters themselves.

The atmosphere

This term denotes the mood evoked in a piece of work. The setting might be used as means of creating a particular atmosphere, but language, especially imagery is also very effective in establishing a certain mood.

Scenic presentation

When using this narrative technique, an author presents an episode like a scene in a drama, giving detailed descriptions, including dialogues and interior monologues. Thus the whole "scene" might easily be transformed into a play such as in Jane Austen's novel *Northanger Abbey* when Isabella Thorpe, one of the characters, exclaims: "'Let us move away from this end of the room. Do you know, there are two odious young men who have been staring at me this half hour. […] Let us go and look at the arrivals. They will hardly follow us there.' Away they walked to the book; and while Isabella examined the names, it was Catherine's employment to watch the proceedings of these alarming young men. 'They are not coming this way, are they? […].'" (Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p. 63)

Panoramic view

As the term suggests, this technique implies giving an overall account by summing up the main points, for instance when at the end of the novel Jane Austen briefly informs the reader that "the General, […], permitted his son to return to Northanger, and thence made him the bearer of his consent, very courteously worded in a page full of empty professions to Mr Morland. The event which it authorized soon followed; Henry and Catherine were married, […]." (p. 247)

A **flashback** interrupts the chronological sequence of a narrative, a film or a play by inserting or describing a scene from the past. It can take the form of a dream or a recollection, but past occurrences might also be told by one of the characters. This technique can be used to follow a character's thoughts, as they shift to the past, examining earlier encounters or situations and it also allows a writer to relate events which might explain the circumstances described in a narrative or in a play.

For instance at the opening of Nick McDonell's novel *Twelve* White Mike, one of the main characters, is introduced as a drug dealer. In a series of flashbacks the author then traces the stages of White Mike's drug trafficking career: "*When White Mike first started dealing, it was summer and hot, […]*" (Nick McDonell, *Twelve*, London: Atlantic Books, 2003, p. 4) thus accounting for the boy's motives and inner development.

Moreover, this flashback is marked by the use of italics, which clearly shows that a different part of the story is told.

Definition

As a figure of speech, irony is the use of words to imply exactly the opposite of what you actually say. Thus, irony may lead to misunderstandings if there is no clear indication of what is really meant.

> When someone makes a move
> Of which we don't approve,
> Who is it that always intervenes?
> UN and O.A.S,
> They have their place, I guess,
> But first send the Marines!

In his song "Send the Marines" from the album *That was the Years That Was* (1965) Tom Lehrer does not propagate military force as the only means of solving conflicts. On the contrary, he criticises this attitude. This becomes evident in the second stanza when he suggests sending "John Wayne" and "Randolph Scott", two actors, whose names are closely associated with Westerns and war films.

Effect

Irony is often used to produce a humorous effect while at the same time questioning a particular attitude, behaviour, etc.

A pun is a play on words

- which have the same or a similar sound but a different meaning, for instance while beer is an alcoholic drink made from malt, hops and sugar, a bier is a platform or stand on which a corpse or coffin is placed or carried at a funeral. The words sound the same, yet there is a marked difference between carrying a beer, namely a drink or carrying a bier, a frame on which the coffin rests;
- which are spelt the same way but have two fundamentally different meanings: for instance among others the adjective "grave" may be used in the sense of 'serious' and 'solemn' but used as a noun the word "grave" denotes a place for the burial of a dead person. In Shakespeare's drama *Romeo and Juliet* Mercutio plays on this word when saying: "Ask for me to-morrow, and you shall find me a grave man" (*Romeo and Juliet* III,1,97 f) thus making a grim joke after he has been deadly wounded.

This ambiguity of a pun might lead to a deliberate confusion to attract attention but the abundance of homophones and homonyms in the English language is also frequently exploited to create an often comic rhetorical effect.

Since a rhetorical question is not asked to obtain information but merely to achieve a certain effect, it is worthwhile to consider what this effect might be:

- In addressing the listener, some kind of communicative relationship is established.
- In a speech, a rhetorical question is often posed to engage the audience in some form of mute dialogue and to establish a rapport between speaker and audience.

Example:
"Those of you who are working – let me ask you a question. As you look around the room at your brothers and neighbors and cousins who aren't as lucky as you – what do you see? Y'see people who wouldn't work if we gave 'em a chance?" (Anonymous, *Primary Colors*, New York: Random House, 1996, quoted after: *The New Top Line*, Stuttgart: Klett, 2006, p. 183)

In colloquial speech, a rhetorical question can also be used as a means of expressing criticism. Rather than accusing someone directly, a rhetorical question encourages the other person to reflect on his/her behaviour:

- Aren't you ashamed of yourself?
- What business is it of yours?

With a **personification** an object or an abstract concept is presented as a person or as an animal, thus suggesting a similarity. Personified, a thing or an idea assumes the emotions and the behaviour of a human being and might so even be able to speak.

Sometimes the personification simply consists in the use of verbs denoting an activity usually associated with people when referring to things (e.g. to breathe, to think, etc). In T. C. Boyle's novel *The Tortilla Curtain* (1995) two illegal immigrants from Mexico, América and Cándido, struggle to survive in a hostile environment where even nature seems to be antagonistic as "[…] thorns and the smooth hard daggers of the foxtails bit into every step" (T. Coraghessan Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain*, London: Bloomsbury, 1997, p. 19).

The poet John Donne (1572–1631) personifies the sun when he begins his poem "The Sunne Rising" with the words: "Busie old foole, / Unruly Sunne, / Why dost thou thus, / Through windowes, and through curtaines call on us?" (*The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, London: University of London Press, 1968, p. 93)
In addressing the sun Donne presents it as a person and this is underlined since "Sunne" is spelt with a capital letter and a human feature is attributed to the sun when he "calls on us."

While **an alliteration** is the use of the same consonant or the same sound at the beginning of two or more neighbouring words for instance in "land of liberty" or in "fashion favourites", **an anaphora** is the repetition of the same words at the beginning of two or more successive phrases, clauses, or lines, e.g.: "We have swallowed the wine lake, we have swallowed the butter mountain, we have watched our French 'friends' beating up British lorry drivers carrying good British lamb to the French public." (Jonathan Lynn & Antony Jay, *The Complete Yes Prime Minister*, London: BBC Books, 1986, quoted after: *The New Top Line. Teacher's Book*, Stuttgart: Klett, 2006, p. 88)

A repetition is often used to focus on a certain idea, but by repeating some word or phrase an idea can also be introduced first and then developed as in the poem "The Choosing" by Liz Lochhead (*Dreaming Frankenstein and Collected Poems*, Edinburgh: Polygon Books, p. 151):

> We were first equal Mary and I
> with same coloured ribbons in mouse-coloured hair,
> and with equal shyness,
> […].

Definition

In an antithesis two opposing words or abstract ideas are juxtaposed or placed close together thus highlighting the difference between the two. In using an antithesis Martin Luther King contrasted the deprived circumstances of the black community with the material wealth of the rest of American society when saying that "the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity."

Often the words are arranged in a parallel structure in order to lend emphasis to the contrast or to create a sense of balance. Thus in his inaugural speech President John F. Kennedy demanded: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

Contrast

In a work of art the differences between two concepts might be explored by developing and comparing opposing principles while in a narrative or in a drama two characters might be contrasted thus illustrating a range of possible reactions. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth* Banquo acts as a foil to the tragic hero. When Macbeth learns that he is to be "Thane of Cawdor" which seems to confirm the witches' "predictions", his mind quickly turns to murder: "My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical" (I,3,139) while Banquo who was hailed the father of kings (I,3,67) is suspicious of the evil temptations these prophesies pose and never betrays any inclination to commit a crime in order to realise his ambition.

In an enumeration we list words and expressions, thus including separate individuals, objects or ideas in a list. The following example is from *The Complete Yes Prime Minister* by Jonathan Lynn and Antony Jay (1986), the diaries of a fictional politician, the Right Honourable James Hacker who makes public his views on the subject of the British sausage and the EEC: "We have swallowed the wine lake, we have swallowed the butter mountain, we have watched our French 'friends' beating up British lorry drivers carrying good British lamb to the French public."

By enumerating,

- you produce a rhythmical pattern,
- you establish a link between them,
- illustrate the different facets of an issue,
- and you add emphasis.

In a climax, these words or expressions are arranged in a rising order, proceeding from the least important (i.e. the wine lake) to the most important (i.e. the French beating up British lorry drivers). In this example the climax reflects the speaker's frustration and anger, which clearly culminates in the outrageous behaviour of the French beating up British lorry drivers.

With an exaggeration or hyperbole we represent something as larger or greater, more important or more successful than it actually is and we frequently do so even in colloquial speech just to add emphasis:

- Where have you been? I've been waiting for ages.
- He's just dying to meet you.

Exaggerations are also a means of producing a comic effect: "Typical lobby correspondent. If he was the sole entrant in an intelligence contest, he'd come third." (Jonathan Lynn & Antony Jay, *The Complete Yes Prime Minister*, London: BBC Books, 1986, quoted after: *The New Top Line*, Stuttgart: Klett, 2006, p. 122)

In advertising and in sensational headlines exaggerations are used to captivate attention:

- The best Christmas Pageant ever
- Flood of the Century

Modern technology provides greater access to information, thus forcing us to read selectively.

Skimming

Particularly when doing research, you skim a text first "to get the gist" and

- to determine its main theme;
- to decide if it is relevant to your topic/task.

Do's when skimming through a text:

- Look at the title and the pictures.
- Concentrate on the beginnings and ends of paragraphs: the topic is often defined in the first sentence of a paragraph.
- In the last sentence a paragraph is sometimes summed up.
- Glance through the text searching for certain clues.

Scanning

Scan a text for details and information

- which might be useful when working on a topic/task;
- to answer comprehension questions.

Do's when scanning a text:

- Read the text, searching for keywords.
- Mark the keywords.
- Read the parts containing the keywords carefully.

Definition

A metaphor is often defined as an indirect comparison. Basically this figure of speech equates two things:

> The stars are mansions built by Nature's hand
> And, haply, there the spirits of the blest
> Dwell, […].

(From: William Wordsworth, "Sonnet XXV", in: *The Poetical Works*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956, p. 32)

Since it does not use the words "like" or "as", these two things or notions become one. Thus, what we associate with "a mansion", is also ascribed to "the stars".
Thus a metaphor is often employed as a means of illustrating abstract concepts.

Analysis

- When analysing a metaphor, the associations created by this imagery have to be identified first. What mental pictures are evoked?
- Then these associations have to be related to the idea, object, term, which forms the other part of the underlying comparison. What do the pictures evoked express in this particular context?

Symbols are objects or figures which are used to represent abstract concepts, for instance a dove often symbolises peace and a sword might embody the idea of justice.

The meaning of a symbol is usually defined by convention, thus what a symbol stands for might vary depending on the social and religious context in which it is used and a symbol might also be interpreted differently or perhaps even inadequately in an alien cultural sphere. For instance, in a Christian society the cross traditionally stands for suffering and resurrection although this might not be necessarily obvious to someone who is not familiar with Christian symbolism.

In a literary work there might be some natural association between the literal meaning of a word or phrase and its symbolism. When writing "That time of year thou mayst in me behold / When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang / Upon those boughs which shake against the cold […]" (*Sonnet 73*, ll. 1–3) Shakespeare uses the imagery of autumn with the parallel between the year drawing to its end and ripe age suggesting decay and the inevitability of death.

Yet an author might also create his or her own symbolism. In Aldous Huxley's dystopia *Brave New World*, in which religion has been replaced by the belief in mass production, "the President […] made the sign of the T" (A. Huxley, *Brave New World*, ed. by Dieter Hamblock, Stuttgart: Reclam,1992, p. 107). This allusion to the Model T, the first mass-produced car designed by Henry Ford, indicates that in this "new world" Ford holds the place of God.

Definition

In a simile two objects, ideas or terms are compared,
and the resemblance between these two is indicated by words such as "like" or "as":

> They have tied me to a stake: I cannot fly,
> But bear-like I must fight the course.

(Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, V,7,1 f)

Analysis

Thus, when analysing a simile, this resemblance has to be established first:

- What do these two objects, ideas or terms have in common?
  - A bear is known for its enormous strength.
  - In bear-baiting – a popular spectacle in Elizabethan England – packs of dogs were let loose to attack a bear. Chained to a stake the animal could not flee but defended itself desperately.
  - Macbeth himself has proved to be a mighty warrior.
  - Macbeth, too, finds himself in an inescapable situation and must fight to his death.

Then the function of the simile in this particular context has to be described:

- What is the effect of this comparison?

Like a metaphor, a simile is often employed as a means of creating mental images,
thus adding intensity and vividness to a description or to illustrate abstract concepts.

The register of a text

Different varieties of language are invariably associated with particular social situations or subject matters: the language used in court is distinctly different from the language of ordinary people when engaged in everyday conversation. In using a particular register, a speaker chooses a particular form of language, ideally adapting to the social context and the purpose of communication. Thus, depending on the situation, a text might be formal, factual, emotional, etc.

Analysis

When analysing the register, the following aspects should be dealt with.

- The stylistic level:
  Does the speaker prefer familiar, colloquial or common expressions or even slang?
  Is the language used literary, poetic or scientific?
  Do the words and phrases belong to a certain jargon (specialised language used by a particular profession or group of people) or are they characteristic of a dialect?
- The sentence structure:
  The sentence structure varies, depending on the purpose and the form of communication. Is it normative or non-standard?
- Non-standard grammar is regarded as typical feature of colloquial speech and so is the use of short forms.
- The effect of the register chosen also has to be examined.

Since the tone reflects the emotional attitude the writer assumes when dealing with a particular topic, his/her way of treating the subject has to be analysed first in order to comment on the tone of a text.

Analysis

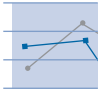
When analysing the author's attitude, the following aspects should be dealt with.

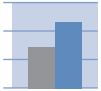
- The choice of words:
  Does the speaker prefer formal language, perhaps even using scientific expressions to indicate that he takes the subject matter seriously or do colloquialisms suggest an easy familiarity?
- The use of stylistic devices:
  Exaggerations and wordplays create humorous effects, thus affecting the tone of a passage while irony can also take the form of intense bitterness or sarcasm.
  Like a painting the imagery in a text can be dark and sombre or bright.
- The use of quotations, statistics, etc:
  Quotations, figures and statistics are often used to lend an air of authority to the views expressed.

Depending on these factors, the tone of a text can be serious or earnest, solemn or grave, humorous, playful, ironic, sarcastic, bitter or objective. When commenting on the tone of the text, do not forget to substantiate your findings with examples or evidence from the text.

Briefly state what
the table

1995-1996	2006-2007
1034	4696

the graph 

the bar chart 

or the pie chart 

is about and, if possible, where the data is taken from. When/over which period of time was it collected? Is the source reliable?

Now you must describe the table/graph/chart. Useful vocabulary:

- to rise / to increase / to go up by
- to fall / to decrease / to go down by
- to reach a peak in …
- to stay constant
- to remain stable
- a huge/substantial majority
- slight(ly)
- moderate(ly)
- significant(ly)
- enormous(ly)

Then you should explain what the presentation illustrates, how these figures can be interpreted.

Briefly mention where the cartoon appeared: a paper's political inclination or its target group might account for the author's bias in presenting a particular topic.

- The cartoon appeared in … / was published in …

Then briefly outline what the cartoon is about.

- (I think) the cartoon is supposed to …
- At first glance it seems that the cartoon …

Describe important details:

- In the picture …
- In the background / in the foreground / in the middle / in the centre of the picture …
- On the right/left / to the right/left of …

Explain their meaning / what they stand for / what they symbolise:

- … suggests that … / refers to …
- … stands for/symbolises …

Concentrate on elements which are crucial for understanding the cartoon.

Remember to use the present progressive for describing a scene in a picture.

Explain the text, caption or speech bubble.

Explain the point the cartoonist is trying to make (the "message", the main criticism).

- One might come to the conclusion that …
- The cartoonist criticises / makes fun of / ridicules
- The cartoonist's message is that …
- The cartoonist's criticism is aimed at …

Comment on his/her criticism.

A dictionary is simply indispensible when studying a language, regardless if it is a monolingual dictionary, which uses the same language for the words and their definitions or a bilingual dictionary, in which words and phrases are translated into another language. Some dictionaries give you both, a synonym and the translation into another language.

Use a dictionary

- when reading a text or when doing a translation;
- to look up the words which you do not know;
- when answering comprehension questions or writing a text;
- to check the spelling;
- to find out how a word is used: is it followed by an infinitive or a gerund? Which preposition must be used?;
- to find idioms and idiomatic phrases;
- to find a synonym;
- to look up irregular forms of the verb, plural forms, etc;
- to check your punctuation;
- when preparing a presentation;
- to look up the pronunciation;
- to find explanations so that you can explain difficult words.

Most dictionaries include sample letters, thus giving you a clue about what a standard letter might look like and providing standard phrases.

Particularly when analysing a text or elements in a text, quotations are used as evidence to support a point or to illustrate a statement:

> In his impressive speech delivered in front of Washington's Lincoln Memorial in August 1963 Martin Luther King makes ample use of repetition when beginning each paragraph with the words "I have a dream" thus alluding to the American Dream while simultaneously laying emphasis on the fact that the dream of racial equality has not been fulfilled yet.

Quotation marks have to be used when quoting a phrase or passage from the text to indicate that these are not your own words. Do not forget to mention where the quotation can be found in the text.

When writing a speech or when discussing a particular topic, you might rely more heavily on data and statistics to testify to the validity of your arguments. Then you add a footnote to acknowledge the source from which the data is taken, e.g.:

> In the USA, too, the first-past-the-post system or majority vote seemed to be rather paradoxical or even proved to be highly unfair – as some people claimed – when in the 2000 election George W. Bush lost the popular vote (47.87 % of the votes) to Al Gore (48,38 % of the votes) but nevertheless won the electoral vote.[1]

[1] Data from "2000 Presidential Election: Final Results Reported" in Facts On File World News Digest 12 April 2001. Retrieved 4 September, 2007, from Facts On File World News Digest @FACTS.com database.

Ideally, an oral exam consists of two parts:

- a monologic discourse, in which you develop a topic,
- a dialogue or conversation, in which two or more participants are engaged in an interaction.

Monologic discourse

You might have to talk about a book, a play, topics dealt with in class or you might be asked to describe and analyse a cartoon or to sum up a text.

- Since the skills required in this part of the test resemble those which you need when doing a book review, giving a talk or analysing a cartoon, you should practise the techniques which are also used when doing these tasks (cf. **61, 94, 95**).
- Ask your teacher which topics are relevant and revise systematically since a good understanding of the subject matter is vital when talking about a topic.
- A good command of linking words and phrases will help you to structure your talk and to create coherence (cf. **99**).

Interactive part

You have to be able

- to initiate or to start a discussion or conversation, setting the frame for the situation,
- to maintain the discourse by responding to others or by encouraging response,
- to end a conversation.

Prepare for this part by collecting and memorising phrases which are also used in a discussion (cf. **100**).

- ⇨ Ask for clarification if you are not sure if you have understood the question correctly.
- ⇨ Take an active part in the discussion but do not monopolise it.

You give a presentation to inform people – at school invariably your classmates – on a particular topic. So use language which allows people to follow you. If you have to use technical terms or difficult vocabulary, you should explain it.

Before you start:

- Do some research: you should have a thorough understanding of the topic.
- Organise your information and arrange data in a logical order.

Giving a presentation:

- Depending on the situation, you might have to introduce yourself. Logically, at school this is not necessary, but you might have to give presentations in real life and then you have to do so.
- Define your topic. The topic and the main points should be visible on a board, transparency, etc.
- Briefly outline the structure.
- Tell the audience if they may interrupt you or if you would prefer to answer questions at the end of your talk.
- Giving people the possibility of interrupting the presentation creates the impression that you are a highly competent speaker, but you might find that interruptions can be rather disruptive.
- When talking about the main points use visual aids such as pictures and charts, which are relevant and concise. Choose a clearly legible font size.
- **Remember:** Coherence is established when one idea leads to the next in a clear and logical sequence. Short sentences make it easier to follow an argumentation.
- You might conclude your speech by briefly summing up what you have tried to convey.
- Finish by thanking people for their attention. If people did not have the opportunity to ask questions before, you should answer questions now. Allow time for a discussion.
- Perhaps you can also prepare a handout containing the most important information.

The term “debate” might simply be used to denote a public discussion, in which two sides, for instance the candidates or members of different (political) parties, present their views on major (political) issues. This form of debate requires some research to collect arguments, which the participants then exchange during the debate.

More often the term is used to refer to a formal discussion as it is held in parliament, where

- a motion or proposition is made,
- then discussed and
- finally voted on.

This procedure follows a strict set of rules. The participants do not present their personal views; they have to support the motion of their team/party.

Then the debate is conducted as follows:

- The chairperson opens the debate by stating the motion.
- The first speaker, who invariably proposes the motion, defines the stance of his/her team/party in a brief speech.
- The second speaker opposes the motion, outlining the argumentation of his/her team/party.
- The third speaker responds to these arguments, trying to refute the points made and adding more arguments to support the motion, which his/her team/party has proposed.
- The fourth speaker has to refute the points made by the previous speaker and adds more arguments to oppose the motion.
- Now the audience (called the “floor” in a debate) might contribute to the debate by expressing their views on the motion.
- One member of each team/party sums up the arguments presented before in a final statement.
- Then the motion is put to the vote.