



National
Qualifications
2014

X724/75/01

**English
Reading for Understanding,
Analysis and Evaluation**

WEDNESDAY, 30 APRIL

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Total marks — 30

Attempt ALL questions.

Write your answers clearly in the answer booklet provided. In the answer booklet you must clearly identify the question number you are attempting.

Use **blue** or **black** ink.

Before leaving the examination room you must give your answer booklet to the Invigilator; if you do not you may lose all the marks for this paper.



Hey, parents, leave those kids alone.

In many ways, nothing changes. We love our children. We want our children to grow up to be competent, decent human beings fit for adult purpose. These are the main things, and in these we have, I think we are all agreed, not done too badly. Our children, and I'll generalise here, are not serial axe murderers or kitten drowners. Our children do make an effort — at least on special occasions anyway — to repay the enormous investment of time, energy, money and emotion we have poured into them. Children are programmed to please, to be loved, and to love us back.

So we are not here to examine our children. What we should do is try to find out where we have gone so terribly wrong. Before we come to the wretchedly indulgent state of modern parenting, though, I suppose I'd better set out my stall. Inevitably, when one becomes a parent, one can't help revisiting one's own childhood to make comparisons.

When I was little, we were given no choices — about what we ate, what we wore, what we did, where we went to school, when we went to bed etc. I could only choose what to read.

There was not so much stuff (many of my son's 15-year-old friends have iPods, iPads, MacBooks, unlimited access to their parents' credit cards, Pay Pal, eBay and iTunes accounts — and not just iPhones, but BlackBerrys too), so we made our own fun.

Our parents provided us with the essentials, then got on with their own lives. Which makes me realise that my parents were brilliant, not for what they did, but more for what they didn't do.

So we were fed, we were clothed, we were loved, and we had all the books we could read. But there was not the expectation of having every wish granted, as there is now, and that is the best thing that my parents could ever have given us.

I remember only once going to a restaurant in the UK. It was a motorway café on the A303. My father told us, wincing as he looked at the laminated text, with its stomach-churning pictograms, that we could have the spag bol. From the children's menu.

We had a TV, but as we lived in Belgium there was nothing to watch apart from two American sitcoms, which came on only once a week.

My parents were so hard up that when we went to England for holidays on the family farm on Exmoor — mainly spent "wooding" for winter fuel on rainswept hillsides — my father would invariably book cheap overnight ferry crossings from the Continent. He would never shell out for a cabin, despite the 1am or 3am departure slots. Instead, he would tell us to go to sleep in the back of the car, parked in the lower deck, where we would eventually pass out from suffocation or diesel fumes.

We never had friends round for "playdates". Keeping children busy and happy was not a parental priority. If we were bored, that was our own fault. In fact, there was nothing to do for weeks on end except rake leaves (my father once made us spend a whole half-term raking leaves) and read on our beds. Occasionally my mother would shout up the stairs: "Stop reading!" Imagine that now, when children are on their laptops in their rooms, looking at . . . I don't even want to imagine.

As for school, well, reports were read, not dwelt upon, as they were not parents' business, but ours. As for parental involvement, all I can tell you is that my father's proudest boast as a parent is that he never, once, attended a parent-teacher meeting at any one of our schools.

It never did me any harm, but still, I can't repeat this sensible, caring regime of character-building, toughening, benign neglect for my own children . . . and nor, it appears, can anyone else. Now examples of "wet parenting" abound.

50 We also live in a world where a manic mum calls herself a Tiger Mother and writes a bestselling book by the same name about how to produce straight-A, violin-playing, tennis-champ, superkids, and where pushy, anxious helicopter parents hover over every school. A friend reports that when her son was due to visit the Brecon Beacons on a school camping trip this summer, three mothers pulled out their sons because the weather forecast was “rainy”.

55 University dons are also complaining of a traumatic level of parental over-involvement just at the exact moment that mummies and daddies are supposed to be letting go.

It was the complete opposite in my day. When I was on my gap year, I called my father from Israel in September and told him I’d decided not to take up my place at university. I announced that I wanted to stay in Galilee with a handsome local shepherd. For ever.

60 My father didn’t miss a beat. “Great scheme!” he cried, astutely divining that if he approved the plan, I would never carry it out.

65 In my lifetime, parenthood has undergone a terrifying transition. Becoming a mother or father is no longer something you just are. It is something you do, like becoming a vet—complete with training courses, parenting vouchers, government targets and guidelines, and a host of academics and caring professionals (as well as their websites, and telephone helplines) on hand 24/7 to guide you through what to expect when your twentysomethings return home.

Parenting has become subsidised and professionalised, even though anyone can (and, frankly, does) have a baby, after which they become parents.

70 I love being a parent, most of the time anyway, but we should immediately de-professionalise it, on the grounds that: one, it’s unpaid; and two, thanks to the economy, lack of housing and jobs etc, you never get to retire.

Rachel Johnson, in The Times

1. Look at line 9, where the writer gives the view that, nowadays, parents “have gone . . . terribly wrong”.
Explain **in your own words** what the writer goes on to say has gone wrong. 2
2. Explain any way in which the sentences in lines 12 – 14 help to provide a link between ideas at this point in the passage. 2
3. Look at lines 24 – 40, where the writer develops the idea of her family being “hard up”.
Show fully how examples of the writer’s use of such features of language as **word choice** or **sentence structure** helps to convey her ideas effectively. 4
4. Look at lines 45 – 47.
Explain what is meant by the expression “benign neglect”, and explain what is surprising about this expression. 3
5. Look at lines 48 – 55.
With reference to **three** examples of the writer’s **word choice** from these lines, show fully how she makes clear her disapproval of what she calls “wet parenting”. 6
6. In the expression “straight-A, violin-playing, tennis-champ, superkids” the writer tries to achieve a humorous, mocking tone.
Explain with reference to her use of language how successful you think she has been in achieving this tone. 2
7. Look at lines 59 – 60.
Show fully how the writer conveys her father’s **apparent** attitude, and his **actual attitude**, to her plan. 4
8. Look at lines 61 – 66, and then explain **as far as possible in your own words** what similarities the writer sees between “Becoming a mother or father” and “becoming a vet”. 2
9. In this article, the writer points out several differences between parenting and childhood when she was little and parenting and childhood now (she refers to “a terrifying transition”, line 61).
As far as possible in your own words, summarise what some main differences are. 5

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

[Open out for Questions]

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Article—Article is adapted from “Me, Boris Johnson and our brilliantly hands-off parents” by Rachel Johnson, taken from *The Times*, 15 October 2012. Reproduced by permission of News Syndication. © The Times, October 2012.