



General Certificate of Secondary Education  
Higher Tier  
November 2014

## English/English Language

ENG1H

Unit 1 Understanding and producing non-fiction texts

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### Insert

The three sources that follow are:

- **Source 1:** an online newspaper article called, 'Children are sent to school too young in the UK' by Deborah Orr
- **Source 2:** an article called, 'Island children bask in the glow of a virtual classroom, miles from everyone' by Lindsay McIntosh
- **Source 3:** 'Home Time', an extract from a non-fiction book by Jane Lapotaire.

Please open the insert fully  
to see all three sources

Source 1

the **guardian**

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# Children are sent to school too young in the UK

Deborah Orr

There's a huge difference between the way children are taught in Britain and the way they are taught in the rest of Europe: the age at which formal education begins.

In most European countries, children usually start formal education at six to seven, rather than our four to five. Finland has the best educational outcomes in the EU: it not only boasts a high level of income equality but also has the highest age for beginning formal education – which is seven, a full three years later than many children in the UK.



There are many reasons why it's not necessarily a good idea to get children learning in an academic way at too early an age. People tend to think that this only puts pressure on the less bright kids. Actually, it's not good for the majority of children – academically or psychologically. But, interestingly, it can be the brightest children who do least well when their natural curiosity about the world, and eagerness to learn about it, is stifled if they start formal school too early.

People think that clever kids will always be spotted and always thrive. It's a wrong assumption. The charity *Potential Plus UK* argues that such children often under-achieve for a variety of reasons, including: an inability to manage time; disorganisation and frequently losing things; problems with friendships; bullying; being disruptive in class; difficulty concentrating; overall poor presentation of work – resulting in resisting work that is more challenging because of the fear of failure.

It seems like a ghastly vision, the idea that children are being forced into formal schooling too early, then being diagnosed with learning difficulties when they react badly to the straitjacket that has been laced around them at too tender an age. This must be particularly awful for children whose intellect isn't stimulated enough at home. Imagine. You find yourself in an environment where there are books and toys, other children to play with, adults who engage with you, then just as the possibilities of the world are blossoming like fireworks in your head, you're told to sit down, be quiet, and concentrate on one thing to the exclusion of everything else.

Some children thrive on it. Many do not. In the UK, there seems to be little understanding of the fact that under-achievement at school can simply be because our highly standardised education system is inappropriate, not because there is necessarily a learning difficulty.

Start the wrong child learning formally at five, and by seven, he – and boys do have a bigger problem here – could well have had enough of education to last him a lifetime.

## Source 2

# Island children bask in the glow of a virtual classroom, miles from everyone

Lindsay McIntosh



The school could hardly be more remote. Bernera Primary, with its pupil roll of 19, lies at the end of six miles of single-track road running through a beautiful, barren Western Isles landscape. The island — population about 200 — is reached by a white bridge. The children make only one official trip to the Scottish mainland during their school career.

Yet Bernera has become central to one of the most innovative education schemes in Scotland, its remoteness serving as the key to an experiment in virtual learning that has enabled pupils anywhere in the country to attend lectures, participate in discussions or take part in events such as talent contests.

Known as Glow, it is claimed to be the world's first national education intranet, and has been winning world-wide praise. It was introduced after the Scottish government decided that it wanted to advance IT use in the country's schools.

Schools around the country can take part in "Glow meets", where they connect via webcams and can see the same virtual whiteboard. Bernera was one of the first schools to start using Glow. When *The Times* visited, head teacher Kirsteen Maclean's 19 pupils were involved in a "Glow meet" with Girvan Primary in Ayrshire on the mainland. The island school has taught the mainlanders some of the Scots language using the virtual whiteboard. Ms Maclean said: "Glow really opens up the classroom to beyond this building. It helps them see kids in other types of school doing the same type of work and that they are no different."

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### Source 3

It is the 1950s and Jane, who lives with her Gran, has recently started at Northgate Grammar School for Girls.

## Home Time

The wind rushed past my ears blotting out all other sounds.

Shops and houses flew by, blurring into one long shape at either side of my vision. There was a group of Northgate boys ahead in their black and red uniforms. I had to overtake them. It was a race, though they didn't know it.

The wind threatened to lift my beret off my head. I held the handlebars with one hand and shoved it down lower over my fringe. My blue and green scarf streamed out behind me. I clicked the three-speed and pedalled faster. I was impressive. I was sure people on the pavement were watching me admiringly as I sped along. I took one hand off the handlebars again and shifted the weight of my satchel from the middle of my back to my shoulders. I had homework to do. That was impressive too. It impressed me. We never had homework at Cliff Lane.

The street lights were coming on, piercing the dusk with pools of white. Past the bakery in Caudwellhall Road that emitted a band of warm yeast smell in the mornings that was a delight to cycle through. They bought our school doughnuts and cream buns from there for break.

I didn't mind school dinners, though. We had jam sponge with coconut on it that came with a treacly fruity sauce and cheese pudding, unlike anything Gran had ever made, served out of deep tin dishes by the monitor on our table. The sixth form and prefects sat at tables raised on a dais at the far end of the room, grand and remote. No one knew I had free school dinners except my form. My name went in a separate book each morning. But no one knew that, once I was in the canteen. The windows of the long, low room were always steamed up, making it impossible to see the netball courts and hockey pitches outside - but it was always full of chatter and laughter. I liked it.

I overtook a Vespa\* that had slowed down at the traffic lights near Derby Road Station. An icy rain had begun to fall, pricking my face and misting up my shiny handlebars. I felt unassailable. There were a couple of older Northgate girls ahead of me who lived in Hatfield Road, chatting as they cycled together. I overtook them easily - applied both my brakes and came to a squeaking halt at Felixstowe Road.

I was hot, but I'd beaten everyone. I readjusted my satchel on my shoulders again and turned round to check that no books had fallen out of my saddle-bag behind me in my race to get home. A car honked somewhere behind me and I realised the lights were green. Cobbold's horses stood outside the Royal Oak breathing great jets of steam-like breath into the cold air, stamping their hooves on the cold tarmac.

I cycled up the dip in the pavement and scooted along on one pedal till I reached the shed. It was difficult to believe that I'd played in this dark musty space for months on end. I didn't play in sheds any more now that I went to Northgate.

I didn't play with Margaret Whitman and Margaret Hayward any more either. I was a grammar school girl.

\*Vespa – a motor scooter fashionable at the time

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**Open out this page to see  
Source 2 and Source 3**